



Centre of  
expertise  
on child  
sexual abuse

# Working with children and families where there are concerns of child sexual abuse

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24 January 2023

# The CSA Centre

- We were established to help bring about **significant and system-wide change**
- We are funded by the **Home Office**, hosted by **Barnardo's** and work closely and in partnership with wider institutions
- We aim to identify, generate and share high quality evidence to **tackle and prevent child sexual abuse**



## Reminder: Looking after yourself - health warning

Sexual abuse can be difficult to think about and talk about. Thinking about it and talking about it will affect us all in **different ways**, at **different times**.

It is important that we...

- Be aware of the feelings and experiences of other delegates
- Be kind to ourselves
- Respect each other's learning journey

*“Why did nobody ask me?”*

(Simon, care leaver, aged 20)

# What we will cover today



**The scale and nature of child sexual abuse**



**The challenges in practice**



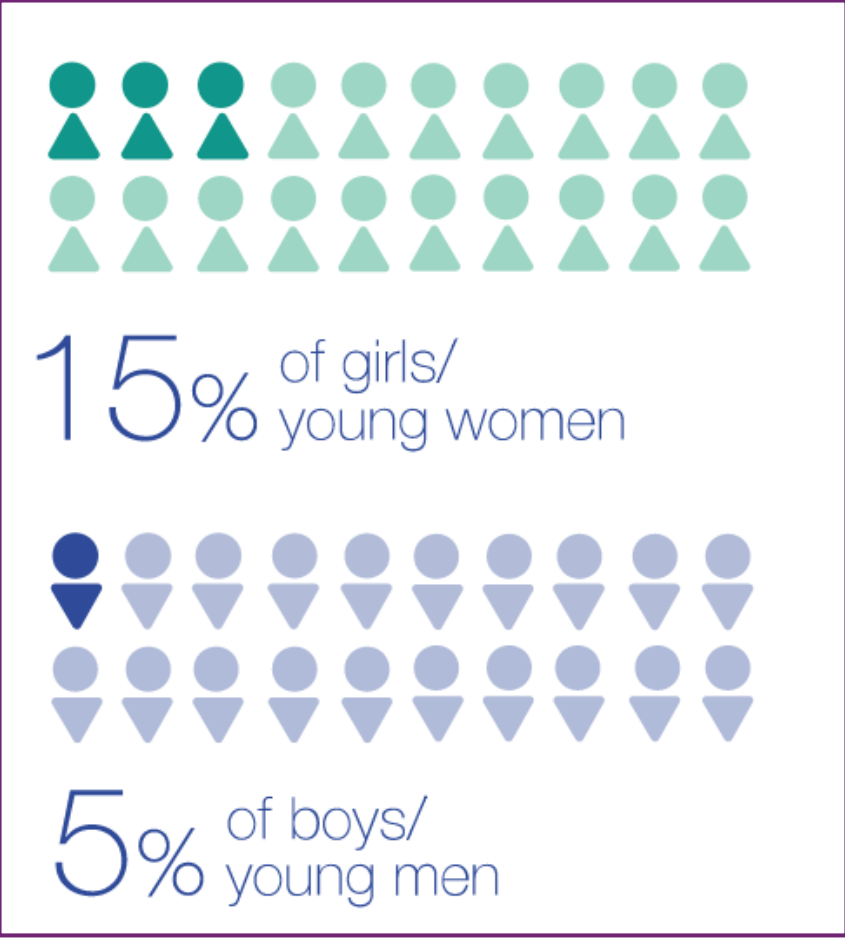
**Resources to support practice**

# The scale and nature of child sexual abuse

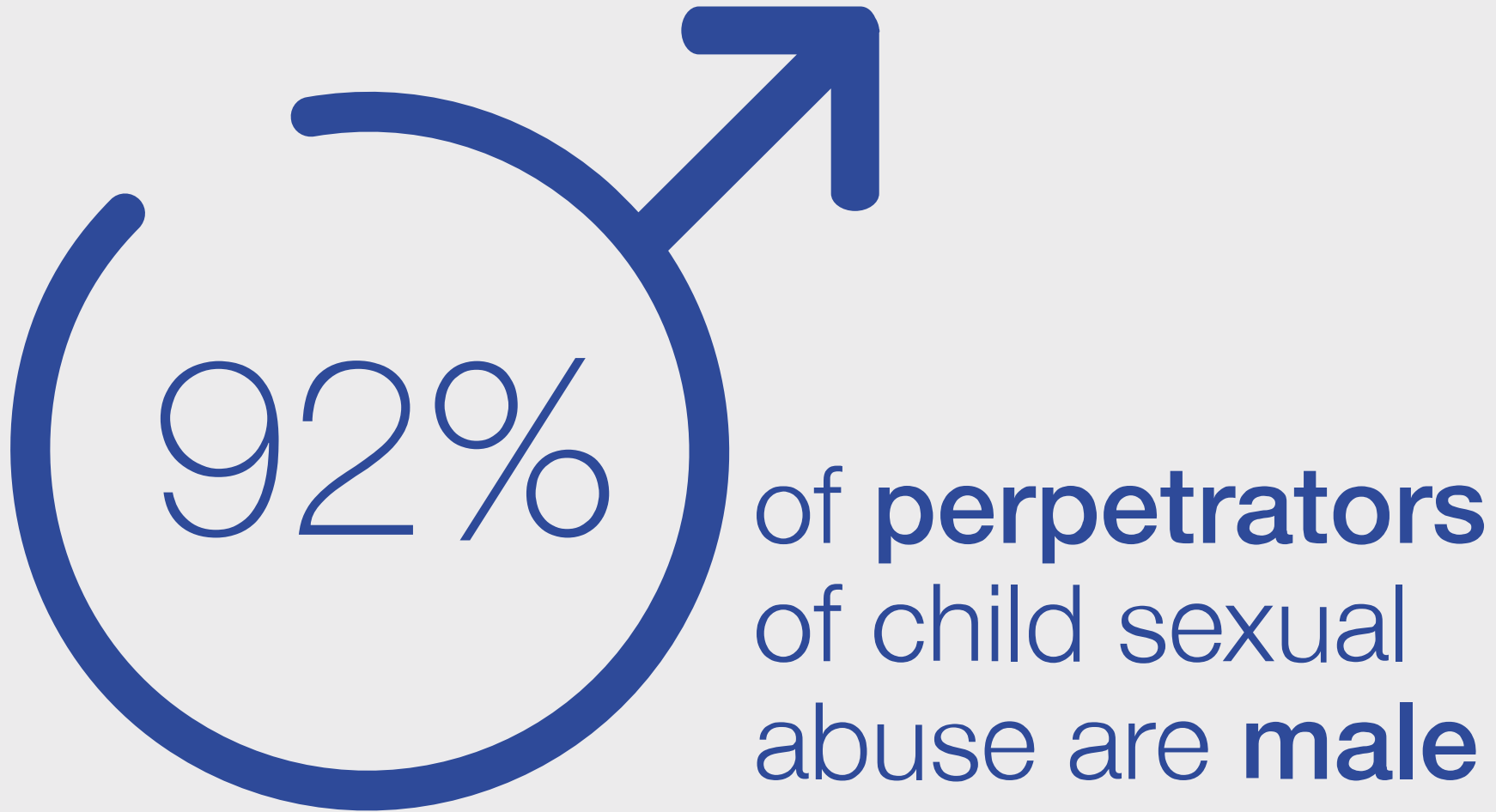
What *do* we know?

# More than one in ten children has been sexually abused by the age of 16

And this is much higher for girls than for boys.

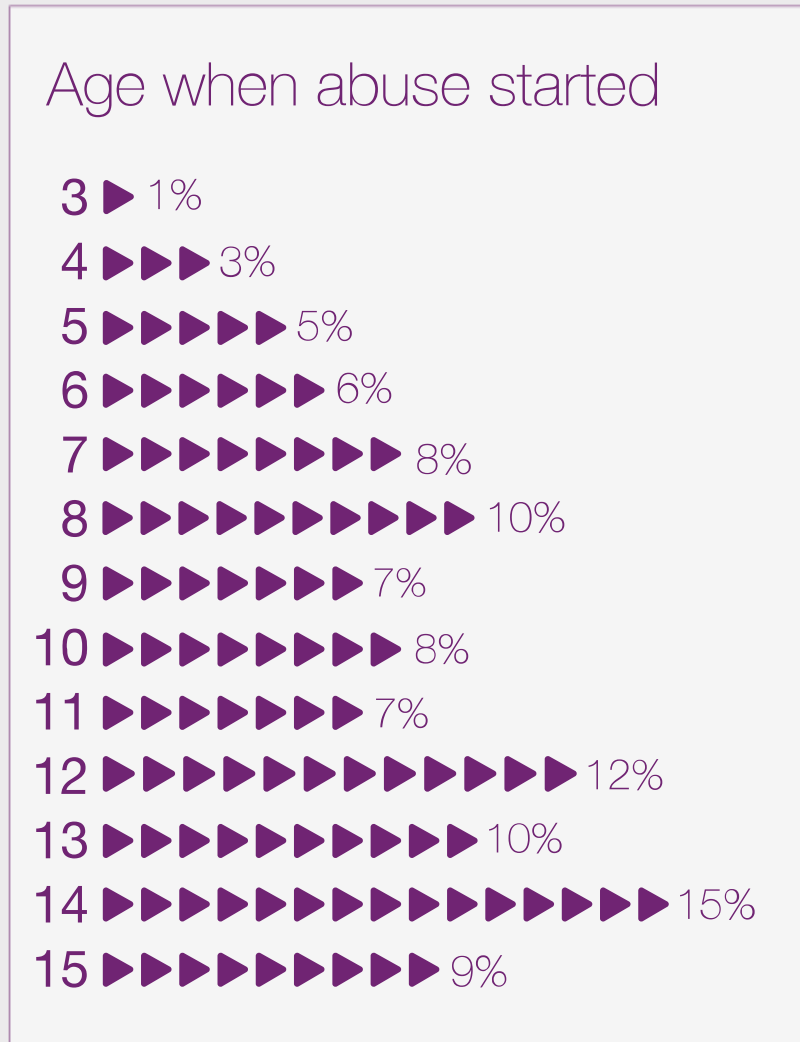


# Sex of perpetrators



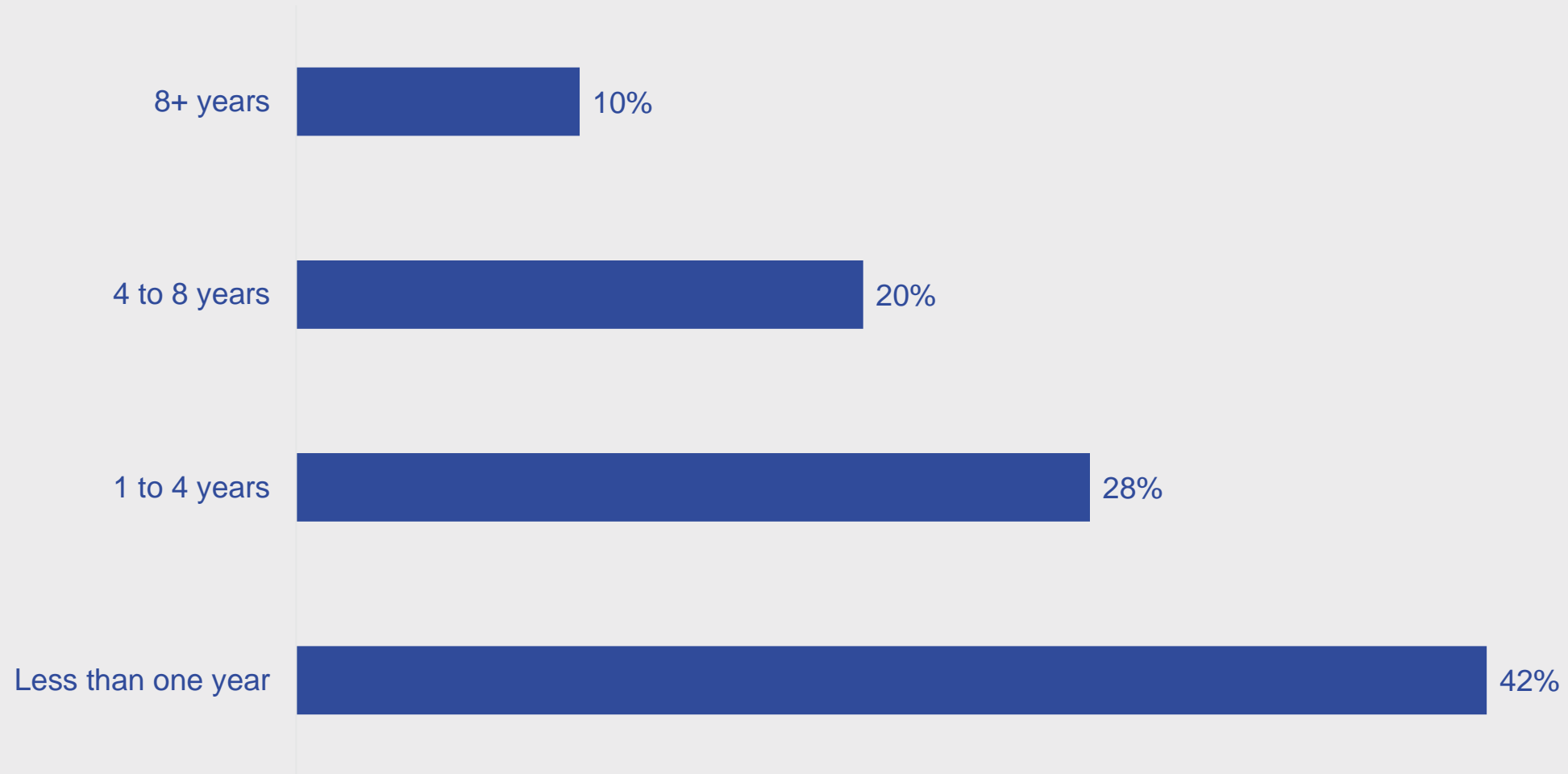


# Age of victims



- **1 in 3** reported start of abuse before the **age of 9**
- **1 in 3** said it started between ages **9 to 12**
- **1 in 3** said it started between **13 to 15**
- We are **missing 16-17** year olds in this data
- Emerging evidence of abuse of **very young children**

# Duration of rape / penetrative abuse



## Associations with...

Disabled adults are **2x**

As likely as non-disabled adults to say they had been abused in their childhood



of those who had lived in a care home reported experiences of child sexual abuse - almost **4x as many as those living with family / carers**

**1** in **3**

**also experienced neglect**

# Far more children are sexually abused than services identify

Child sexual abuse in 2020/21: Trends in official data  
[csacentre.org.uk](https://www.csacentre.org.uk)

An iceberg graphic where the tip above the water represents identified cases and the much larger part below the water represents estimated cases. The water level is indicated by a horizontal dashed line.

2,600 children on a child protection plan due to child sexual abuse  
(England and Wales)

46,000 children assessed at risk of sexual abuse\*  
(England)

89,000 child sexual abuse offences recorded by the police  
(England and Wales)

500,000

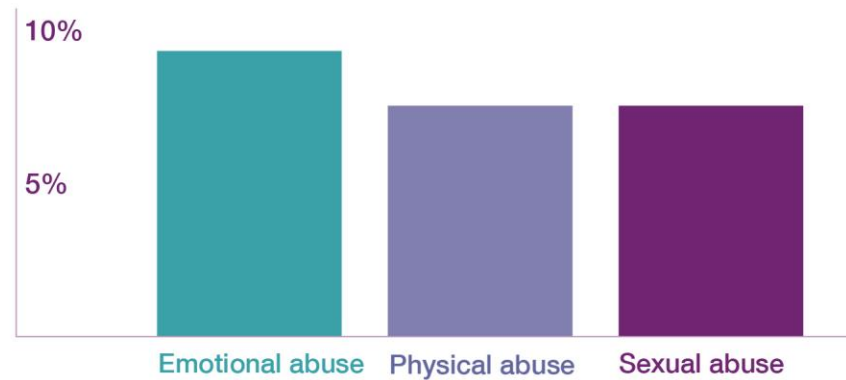
children estimated to experience child sexual abuse every year\*\*

Sources: Home Office, Police recorded crime and outcomes, 2020/21; Department for Education, Characteristics of Children in Need, 2020/21. \* Includes assessments in child sexual abuse and exploitation. \*\* Estimate calculated using single-year prevalence estimates by age group (Radford et al, 2011, Childhood abuse and neglect in the UK today) and the Office for National Statistics 2020 population estimates. Please note: numbers rounded to the nearest hundred.

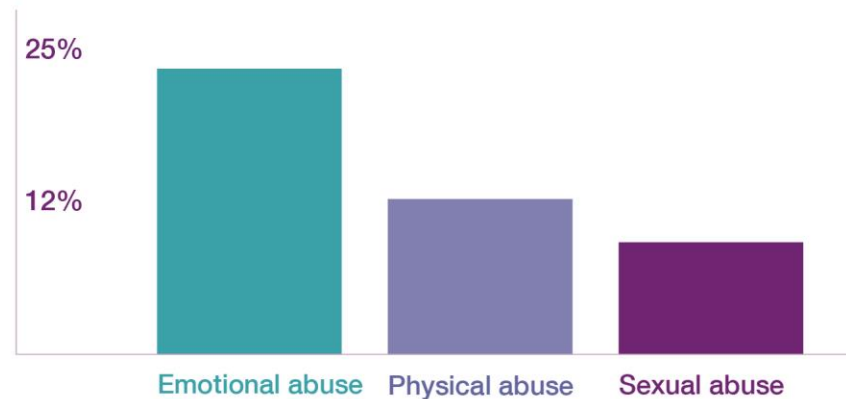
# Sexual abuse is just as common as other forms of childhood abuse

But concerns of sexual abuse are far less likely to be identified and named

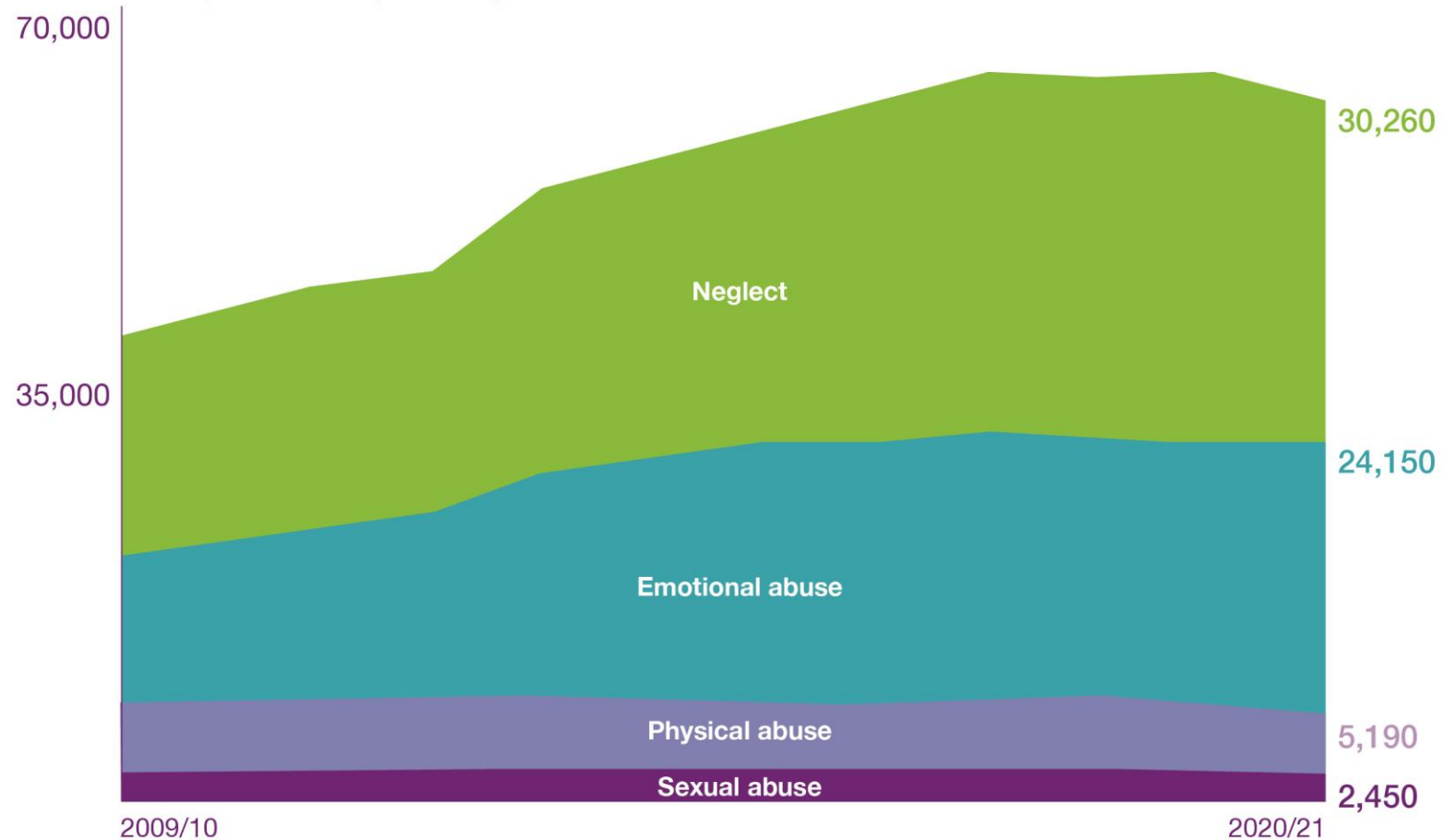
Levels of child abuse identified in surveys



Levels of child abuse identified in child protection assessments



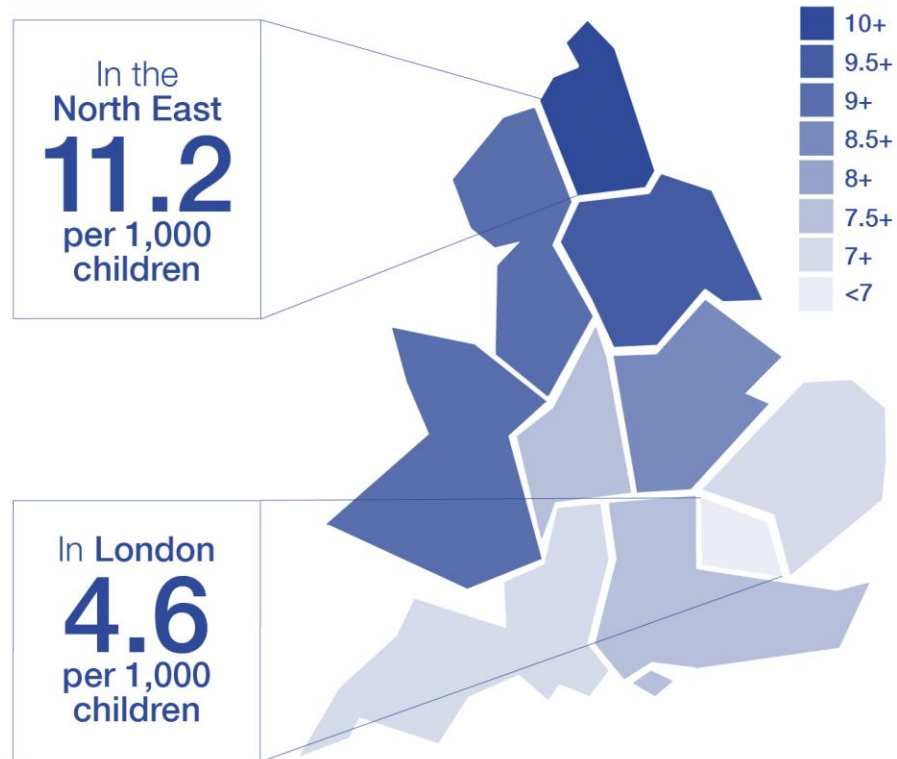
Child protection plans by forms of abuse



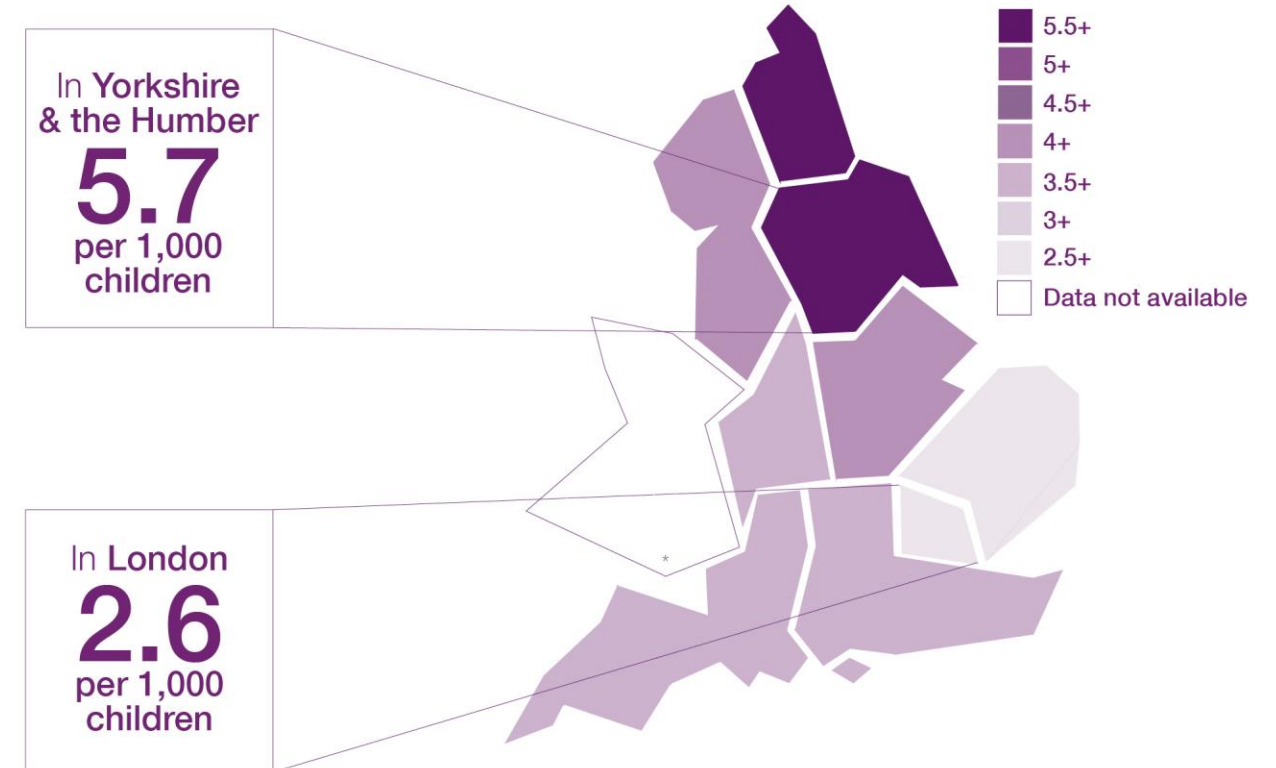
# Where children live matters

Child sexual abuse is prevalent across England and Wales but where children live impacts whether that abuse is identified.

Recorded child sexual abuse offences by region



Children at risk of child sexual abuse in local authority assessments

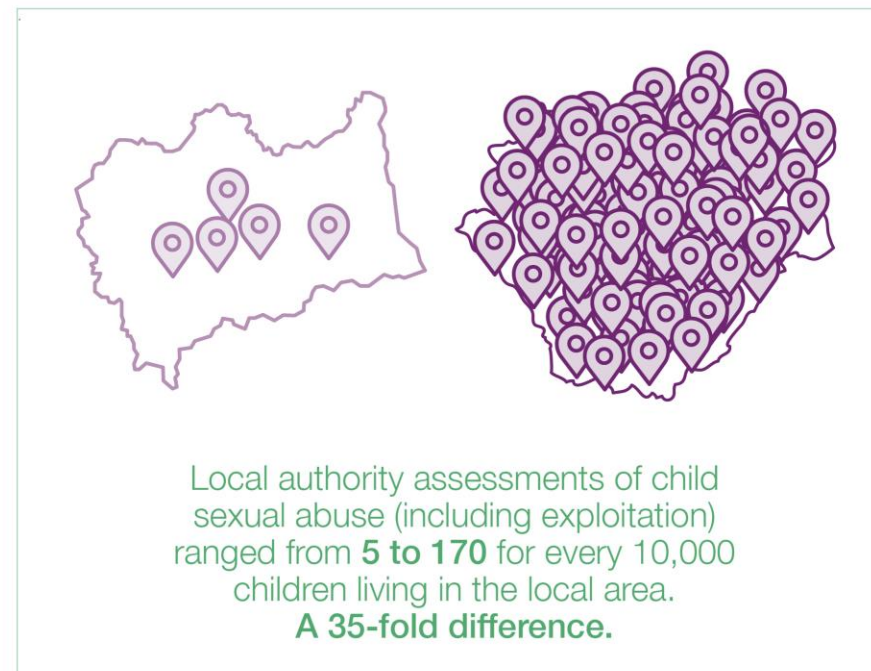


These maps show the **average rates** within each region; there are wide differences in rates across regions between individual police forces/local authorities.

## Where children live matters

Child sexual abuse in 2020/21: Trends in official data  
[csacentre.org.uk](https://www.csacentre.org.uk)

Child sexual abuse is prevalent across England and Wales but where children live impacts whether that abuse is identified.



Sources: Home Office, Police recorded crime and outcomes 2020/21; Department for Education, Characteristics of children in need 2020/21

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# More reporting of child sexual abuse but fewer prosecutions and convictions



Sources: Home Office, Police recorded crime and outcomes 2020/21; Ministry of Justice, Criminal justice system statistics 2020; FOI request. Please note: numbers rounded to the nearest hundred.

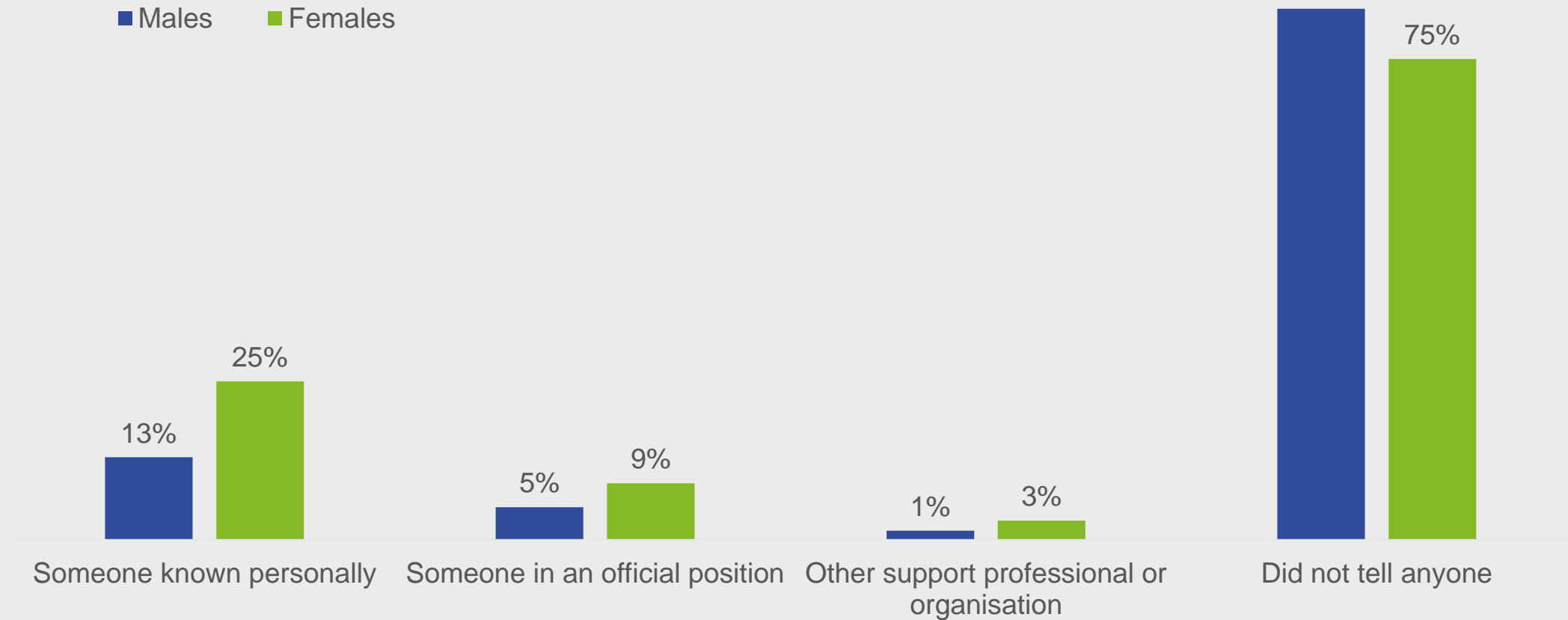


# Challenges in practice

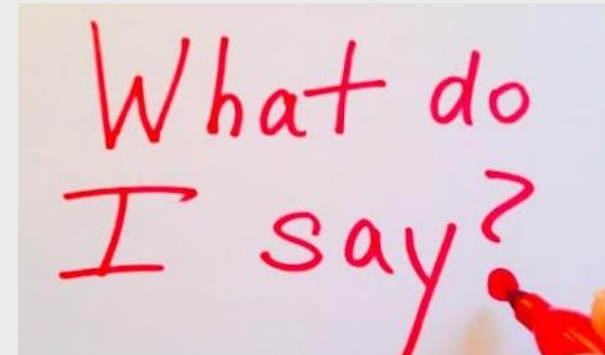
*“There were so many times when I thought about telling someone but it was just like, how do you bring it up? How do you just walk into a room and go to someone, ‘oh by the way this happened’?”*

**Making Noise (2017): IV29, Female 18 years**

# Who was told at the time



# What prevents professionals from identifying and responding?

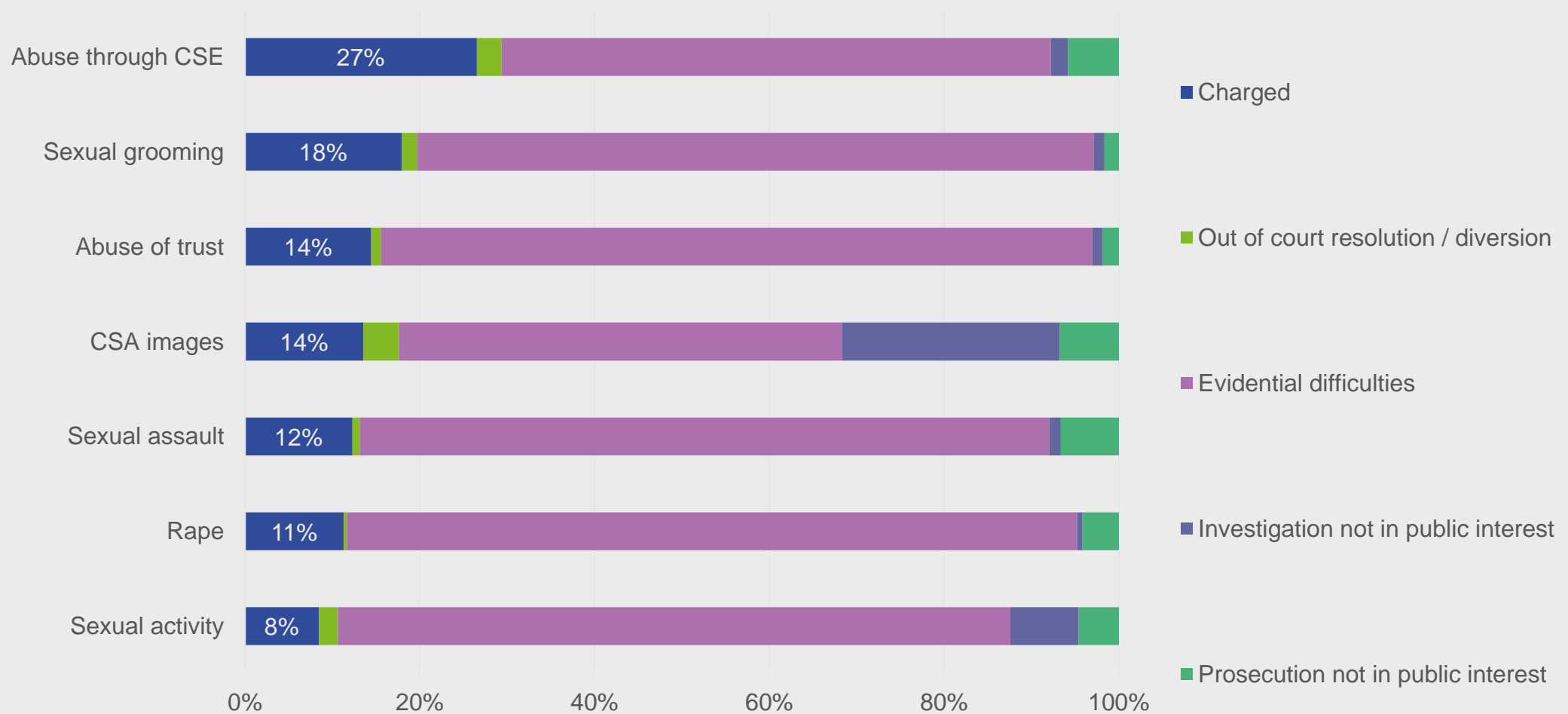


# It can feel like a bit of a minefield

...Asking questions

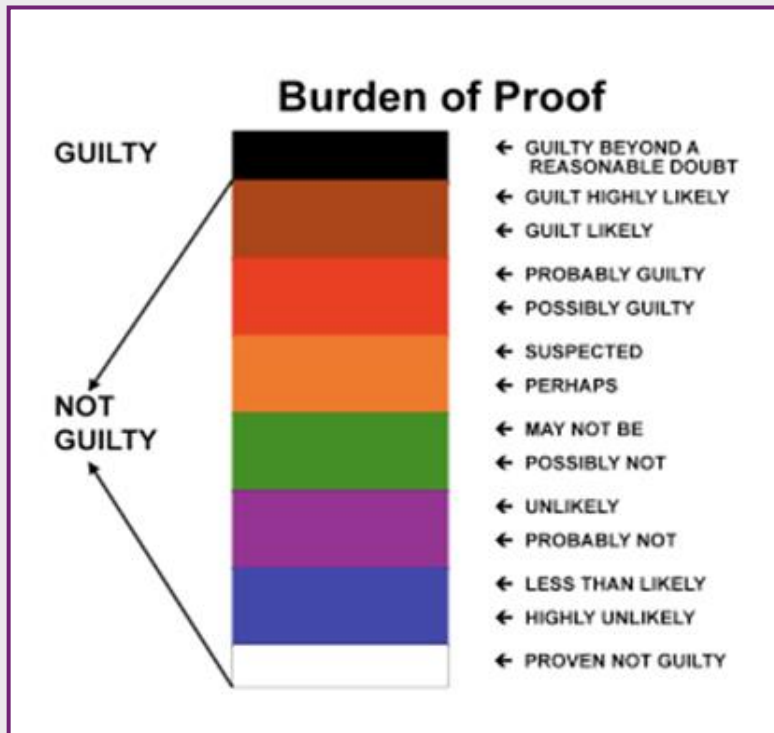
...Contaminating evidence

# Police investigation outcomes by child sexual abuse offence type (Home Office, 2020/21)



# The Burden of Proof

## Beyond Reasonable Doubt



## Balance of Probabilities



## The evidence:

Sexual abuse is rarely 'clear cut'

How can we 'absolutely know' abuse has taken place?

- Clear disclosure...repeated at least twice
- Medical evidence of sexual harm
- Admission of guilt from perpetrator
- Witnessed by someone else
- Images/computer records of the abuse exist

Rarely will we reach a position of 'absolute knowing'







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## Behaviour of the child/young person

Sexual abuse is a hidden crime and many of those who experience it do not report their experience for a number of years. Professionals must remember that all behaviour is communication

## Physical signs

There may be physical signs in a child which may indicate sexual abuse

## Signs & Indicators of Potential Concern

## Behaviour of those around the child

When building a picture of concerns it is important to note the signs and indicators of abusive behaviour (including grooming behaviour) in **the people around the child**

## Environmental signs

It is useful to understand the family or environmental context within which the child is living, as some factors increased vulnerability to sexual harm

# Using the template in Children's Social Care

To inform discussion  
at a strategy meeting

To gather evidence to  
identify if further action  
can be taken

To identify risk factors  
and vulnerabilities to  
address in  
interventions with  
families

As a recommendation  
by Conference  
Chairs/IROs

Within a bundle of  
evidence for Court

For use in supervision  
for case discussion

To support learning  
about signs and  
indicators of sexual  
abuse

*“Professionals rely too heavily on children to verbally disclose”*

(Report into Child Sexual Abuse in the Family Environment, JTAI 2020)

# Communicating with children

A guide for those working with children who have or may have been sexually abused



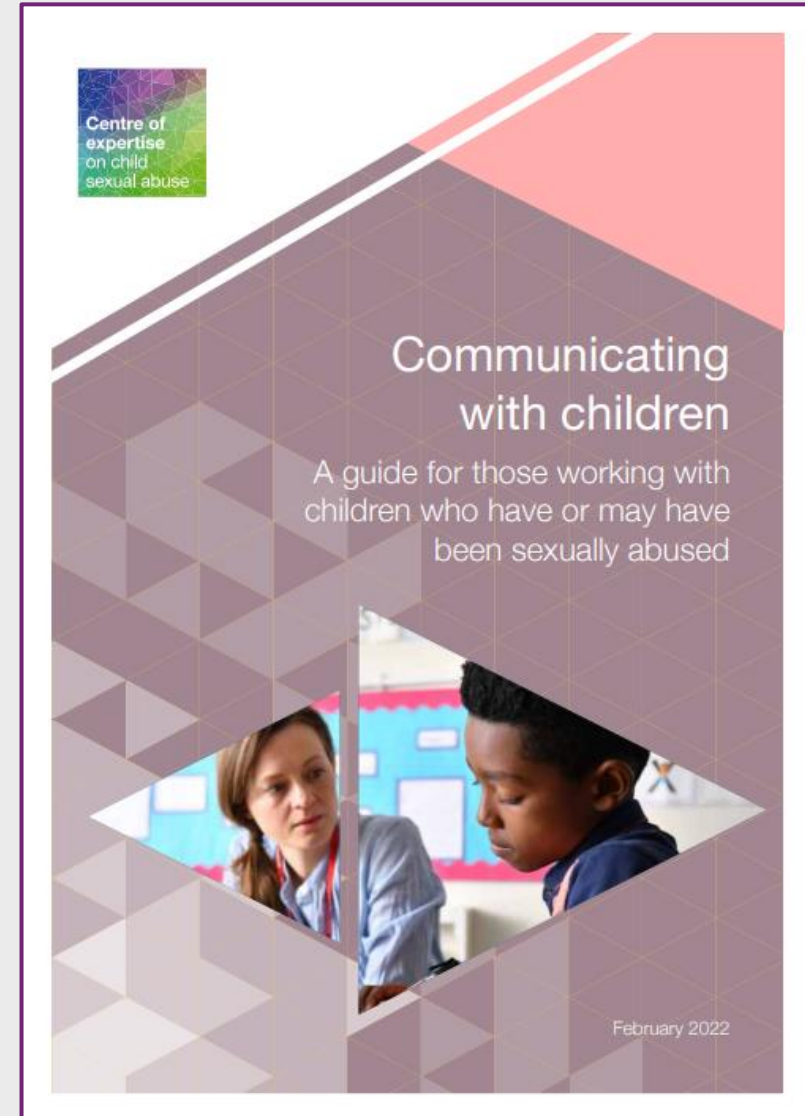
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# Continuum of question types

General invitations	Cued invitations	Open ended questions	Closed ended questions	Option posing questions	Suggestively worded questions
<p>Open questions inviting the child to tell in their own words unprompted, encouraging longer answers</p>	<p>Open questions using a cue from the child or undisputed facts</p>	<p>Who', 'what', 'when', 'where', 'how' questions which invite a narrative</p>	<p>'Who', 'what', 'when', 'where', 'how' questions which can be answered in one word or a few words</p>	<p>Questions that can be answered "yes" or "no", or that prompt the child to select from given choices</p>	<p>Questions that force the response in a specific direction, or use false or unknown information</p>

# A guide grounded in evidence and expertise

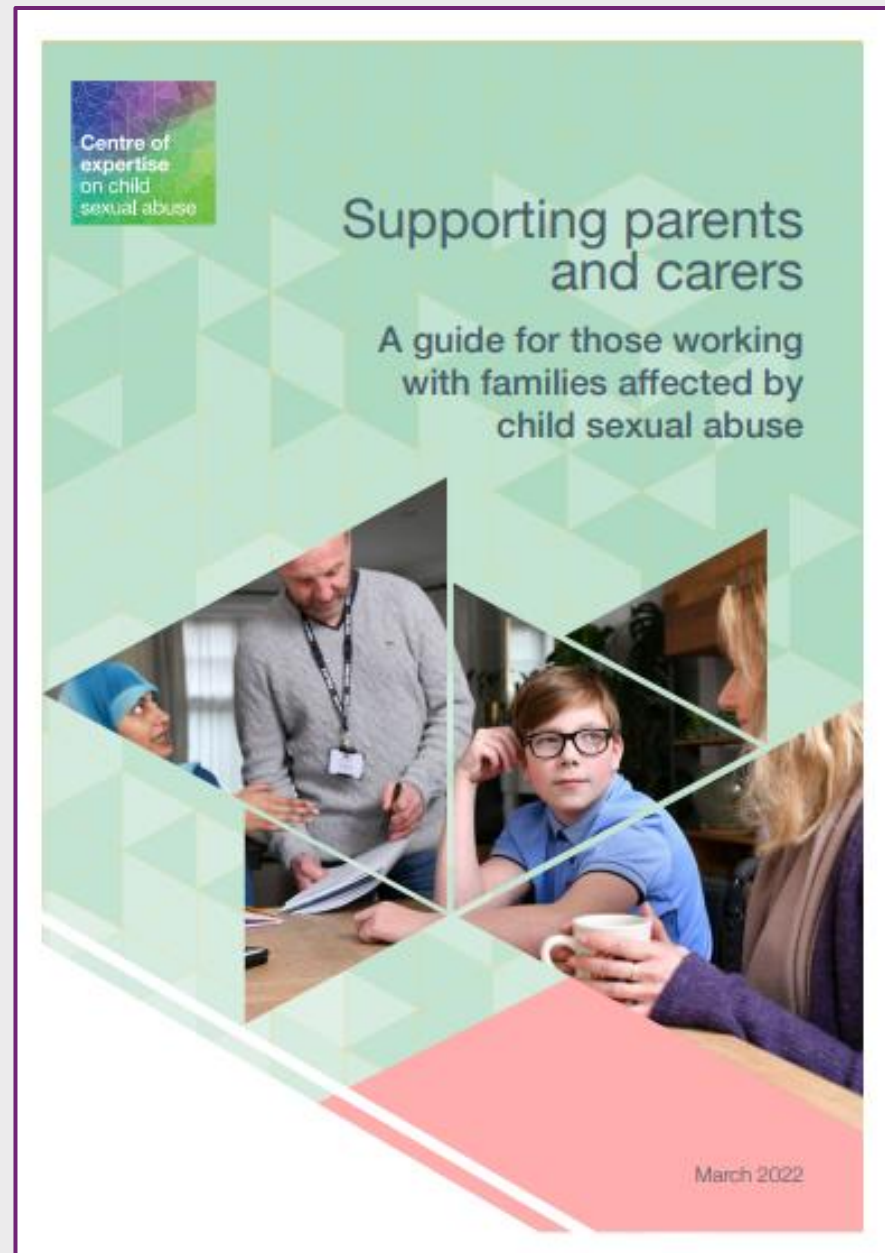
- Scoping the research/evidence base
- Formation of an expert advisory panel
- Seeking consensus on disputed areas of practice
- Ongoing consultation, including with experts by experience
- Review by frontline professionals working across health, education, social care and criminal justice





# Supporting non-abusing parents and carers

*The better we support the parent, the better we support the child*



# Overview of the guide

## Part A: Parents are victims of the abuse too

- Why parents need support
- Understanding parents' and children's reactions when abuse is identified
- The impact of abuse on parents and children

## Part B: What can you do to support parents

- Key elements of a supportive approach
- Supportive actions you can take with parents
- Supporting parents' relationship with their child

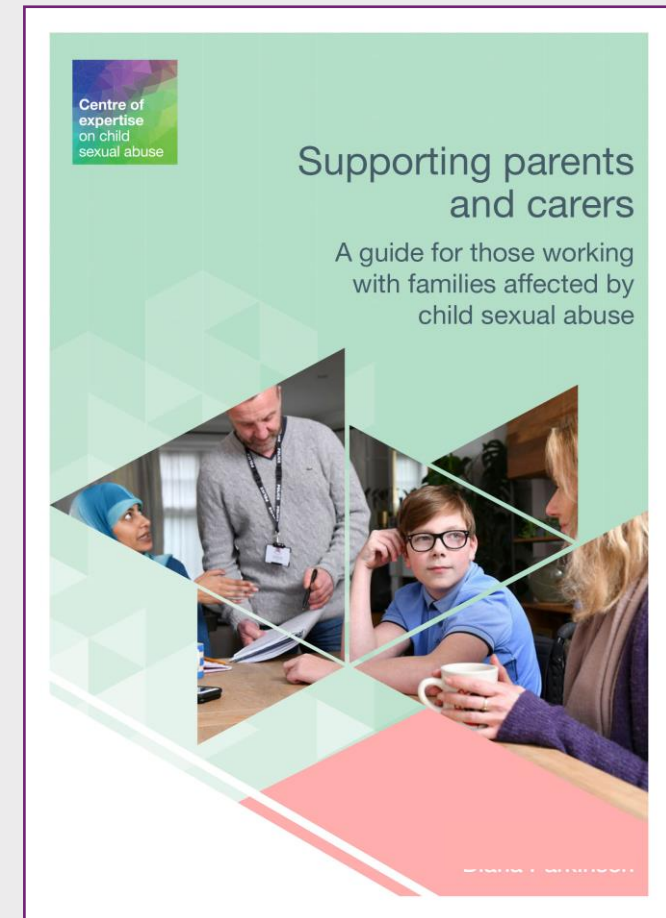
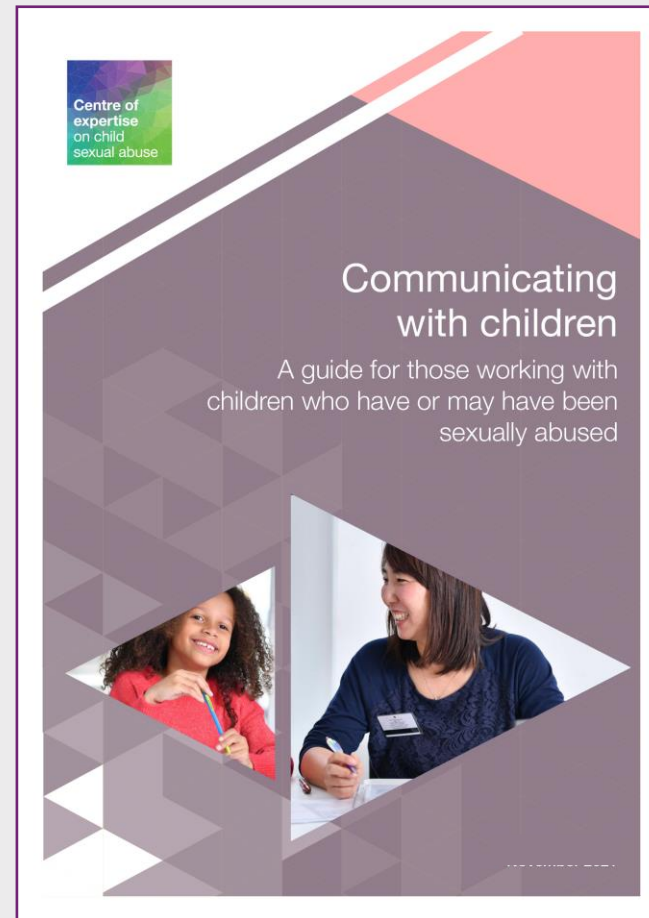
## Part C: Tailoring your approach

- What you can do in your professional role
- Support relating to child sexual abuse in different contexts
- Support for parents in specific situations

## Part D: Meeting your own needs

- Looking after your own wellbeing
- Resources for professionals
- Resources for parents

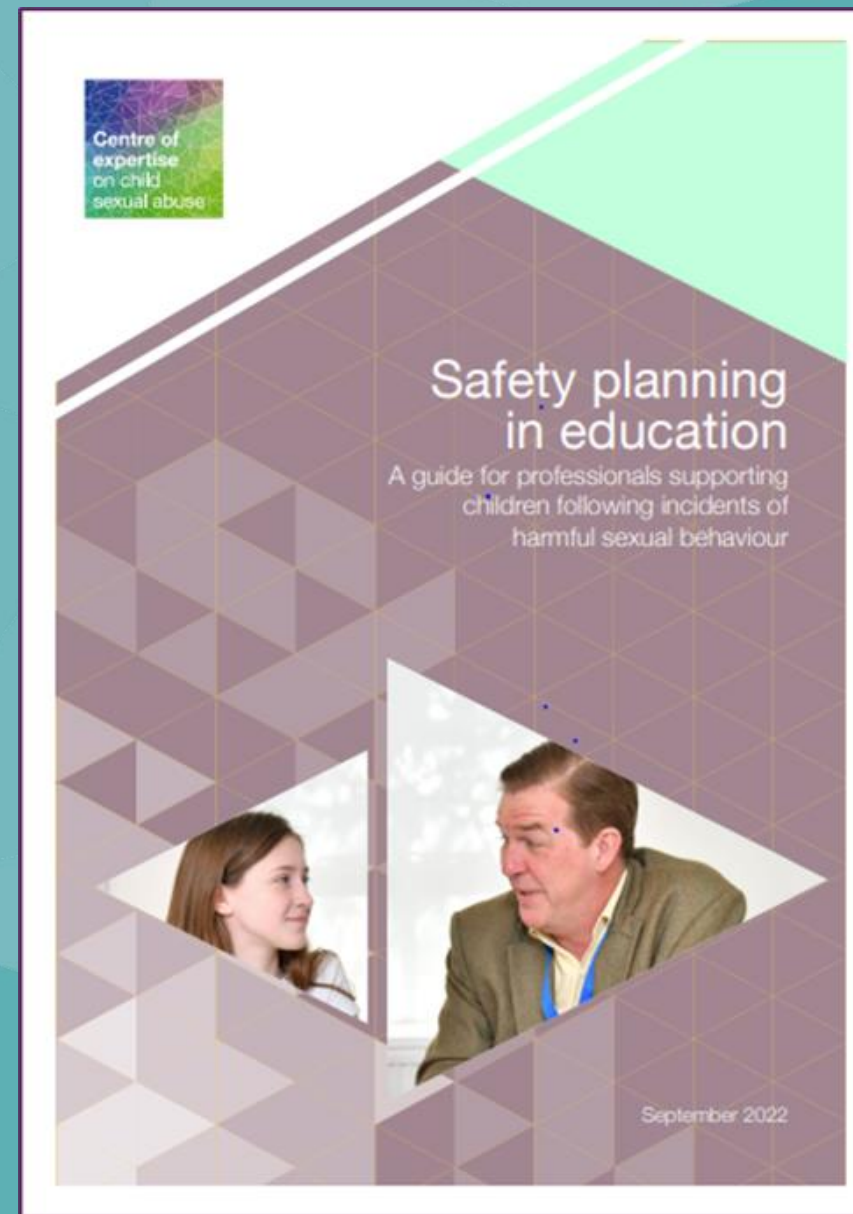
# Resources for practice



All resources are free to download on our site. With 12 short videos covering key themes:  
<http://www.csacentre.org.uk/knowledge-in-practice/practice-improvement/>

# Safety planning in education

A guide for professionals supporting children following incidents of harmful sexual behaviour.



# Three helpful parts

## Part A

Outlines **key actions** for the school to consider after an incident of harmful sexual behaviour. It includes a **safety plan template** for recording and reviewing arrangements for each child.

## Part B

Contains **practical advice** on safety planning. It suggests approaches for communicating with the children involved and their parents/carers. It provides a **detailed list of arrangements** to consider to ensure the safety of all children involved.

## Part C

Sets out how the **school can prepare** itself for incidents of harmful sexual behaviour. Provides links to **useful resources** for schools and parents/carers.

# Key messages from research

## What are they?

- Succinct, relevant information for frontline practitioners and commissioners
- The most up-to-date research combined with guidance supporting confident provision of the best possible responses, in one accessible overview

## Topics include:

- Child sexual abuse perpetrated by adults
- Children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviour
- Looked-after children and child sexual abuse
- Intra-familial child sexual abuse

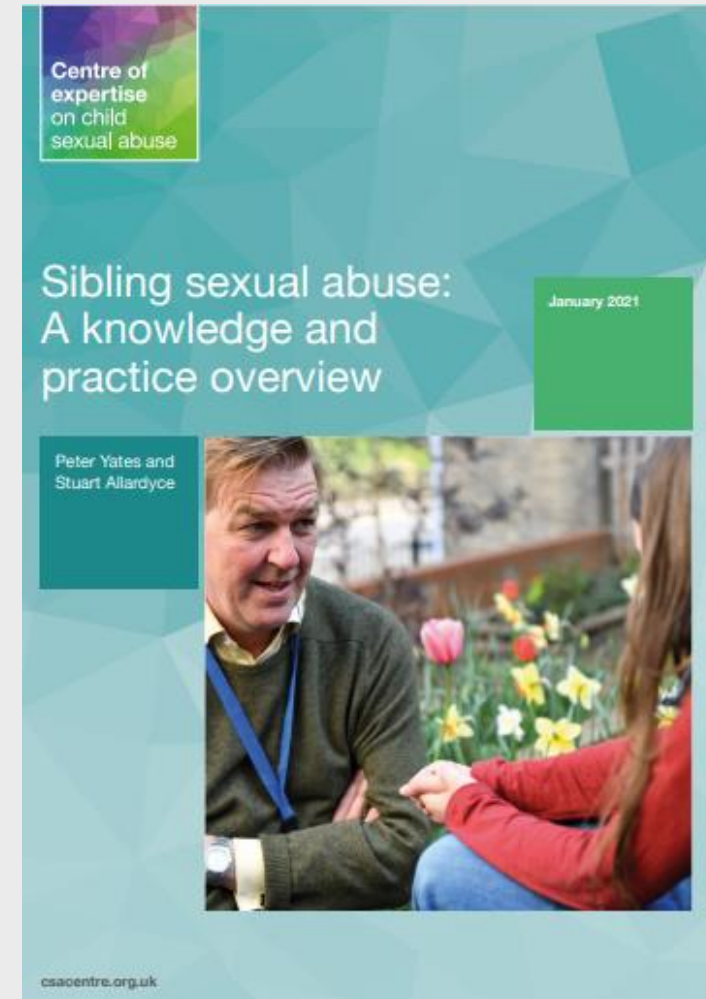
<http://www.csacentre.org.uk/resources/key-messages/>

# Sibling Sexual Abuse

**Sibling sexual abuse is an issue that most protection practitioners will encounter at some stage in their careers.**

This report provides an overview of the current research and practice knowledge into sibling sexual abuse.

It focuses on supporting practice, providing an accessible resource to help professionals understand the issues and challenges raised by sibling sexual abuse.





# Coming soon...

**Free 90 minute e-learning course** – An introduction to intra-familial child sexual abuse (Feb 2023)

**Sibling sexual behaviour:** A summary guide to responding to inappropriate, problematic and abusive behaviour (date TBC)

**Supporting children and families where a parent has been arrested for indecent images of children offences – guidance for social workers** (March 2023)

**Key messages from Research:** The impact of child sexual abuse (March 2023) and Online sexual abuse (young people and adults) (May 2023)

# Dedicated child sexual abuse training



We see our role as **pivotal** in addressing the gaps in existing training.

We offer 17 separate courses, 8 CPD accredited, including:

- Intra-familial child sexual abuse
- Sibling sexual abuse
- Harmful sexual behaviour
- Working with non-abusing parents/carers

Including 'Train the Trainer,' the Practice Leads Programme and bespoke courses.

Consultation offer in development

<http://www.csacentre.org.uk/training/training-courses-and-professional-development>

# Embedding learning for the longer term: Train the trainer

## *Teaching Partnership funding:*

A train the trainer course for LA social work staff and academics from HEIs to deliver the 1 day Introduction to Intra-familial child sexual abuse

Delivery of the 1 day training every month to LA social workers over the first year (in pairs)

Moving to delivery of the 1 day training every month to the multi-agency partnership

*“The feedback is excellent with staff feeling a lot more confident in their assessment and how to respond to cases where child sexual abuse is an issue.”*

# Embedding learning for the longer term: The Practice Leads Programme

*LA/SCP funding:*

10 month Practice Leads Programme (6 – 12, ,13 – 25 people)

In house consultation service delivered by Practice Leads (supported by ongoing monthly consultation sessions with CSA Centre)

Practice Leads sitting in key forums (strategy meetings, fostering and adoption panels, legal meetings)

Social work only or multi-agency (multi-agency consultation sessions)

Practice Leads leading on auditing work, lite bite training and other activity

Full evaluations available:

<https://www.csacentre.org.uk/documents/csa-practice-leads-programme-in-social-work-evaluation/>

<https://www.csacentre.org.uk/documents/piloting-the-multi-agency-child-sexual-abuse-practice-leads-programme-in-wales/>

# Developing teaching materials for social work students

Majority of social work courses do not include teaching on child sexual abuse

Setting up a working group to explore how sexual abuse can be included in the curriculum, across all relevant modules

Developing training content, case study material, reading and resource lists for HEIs

Develop train the trainer type sessions for academic staff

Transferable to ASYE programmes

*Would anyone like to be involved in the working group?*

*Please email me at [anna.Glinski@csacentre.org.uk](mailto:anna.Glinski@csacentre.org.uk) if you are interested.*

*We need your social work expertise!*

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- ✓ Practice guidance
- ✓ Comment
- ✓ News
- ✓ Ideas

<https://www.csacentre.org.uk/subscribe-to-csa-centre-mailing-list/>



# Together, we have collective strength

*“Remember there are always far more people who want to protect children than those who want to abuse them. We should use – and be heartened by – the great potential in collective strength”.*

(Sarah Nelson, 2016)

# If you are affected by anything that has been discussed today...



## The Survivors Trust

Find help, support and advice in your area: [Survivors Trust directory of services.](#)



## Rape Crisis helpline [0808 802 9999](tel:0808 802 9999)

[www.rapecrisis.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk)



## National Association for People Abused in Childhood [0808 801 0331](tel:0808 801 0331)

<https://napac.org.uk/>



## SurvivorsUK

Online help for male survivors of sexual abuse and rape.

<https://www.survivorsuk.org/ways-we-can-help/online-helpline/>



# Any questions?



# Thank you

**For more information please contact**  
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