

The logo features a colorful geometric pattern of triangles in shades of blue, purple, and green. The text is white and positioned on the left side of the pattern.

Centre of
expertise
on child
sexual abuse

The logo consists of a large, thin black square bracket on the left side. To its right, the text is arranged in three lines: 'THE CHILD' in a smaller font, 'SAFEGUARDING' in a larger, bold font, and 'PRACTICE REVIEW PANEL' in a smaller font.

THE CHILD
SAFEGUARDING
PRACTICE REVIEW PANEL

Child sexual abuse in the family environment: responding to challenges in practice

Annie Hudson, Chair, National Child Practice Review Panel

Jenny Coles, National Child Practice Review Panel

Ian Dean, Director, Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse

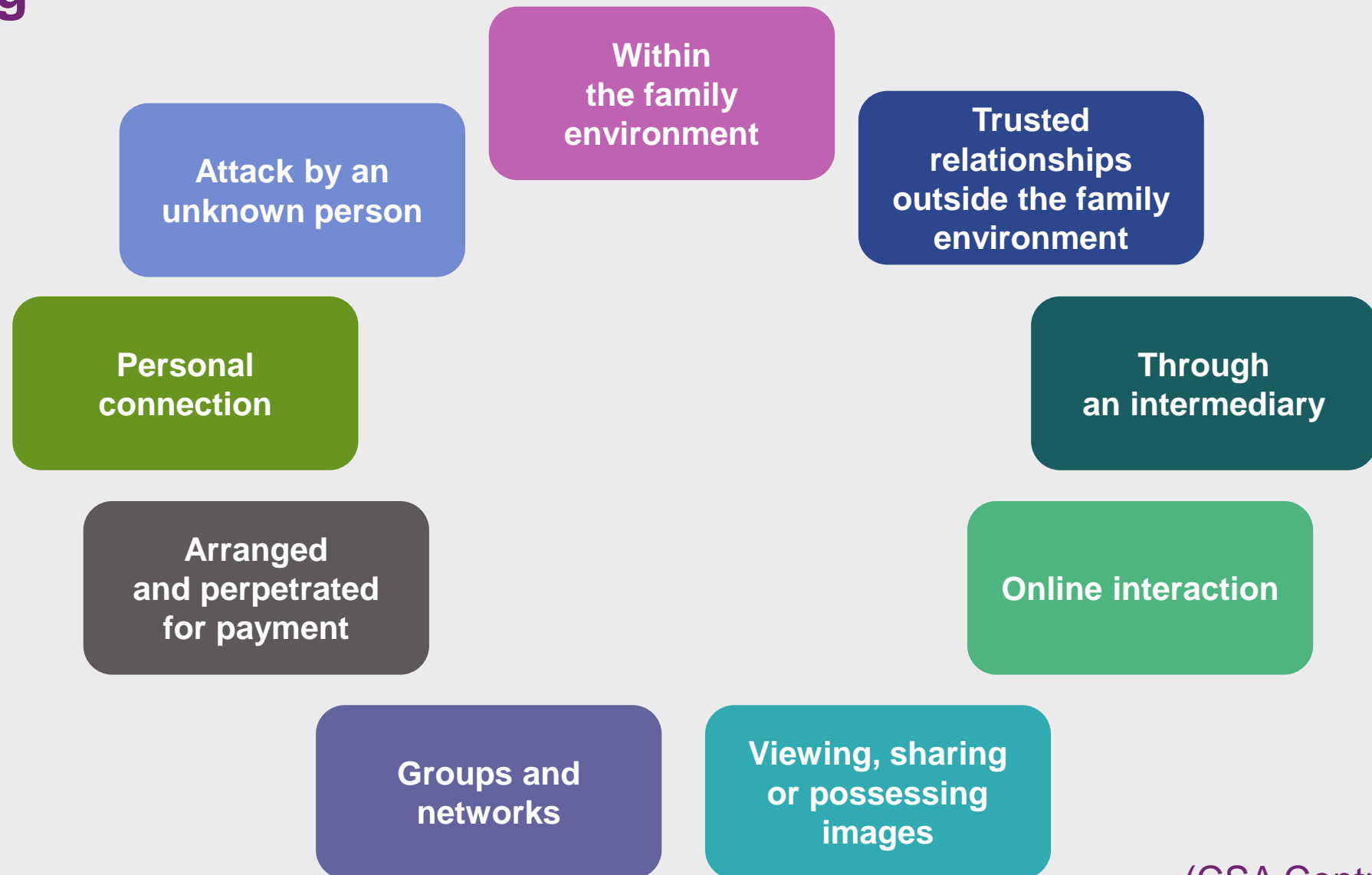
Anna Glinski, Deputy Director, Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse

20th June 2024

“Why did nobody ask me?”

(Simon, care leaver, aged 20)

Understanding the different contexts of child sexual abuse offending



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



Far more children are sexually abused than services identify

Child sexual abuse in 2022/23: Trends in official data
csacentre.org.uk



2,300 children on a child protection plan due to child sexual abuse (England)

9,500 children seen by sexual assault referral centres (England and Wales)

49,000 children assessed at risk of sexual abuse* (England)

105,000 child sexual abuse offences recorded by the police (England and Wales)

500,000

children are estimated to be sexually abused every year**

Sources: Home Office, Police recorded crime and outcomes, 2022/23; Department for Education, Characteristics of Children in Need, 2022/23. *Includes assessments recording concerns of child sexual abuse and exploitation. **Estimate calculated using single-year prevalence estimated by age group (Radford et al. 2011, Childhood abuse and neglect in the UK today) and the Office for National Statistics mid-year population estimates, 2022. Please note: numbers rounded to the nearest hundred/ thousand.

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

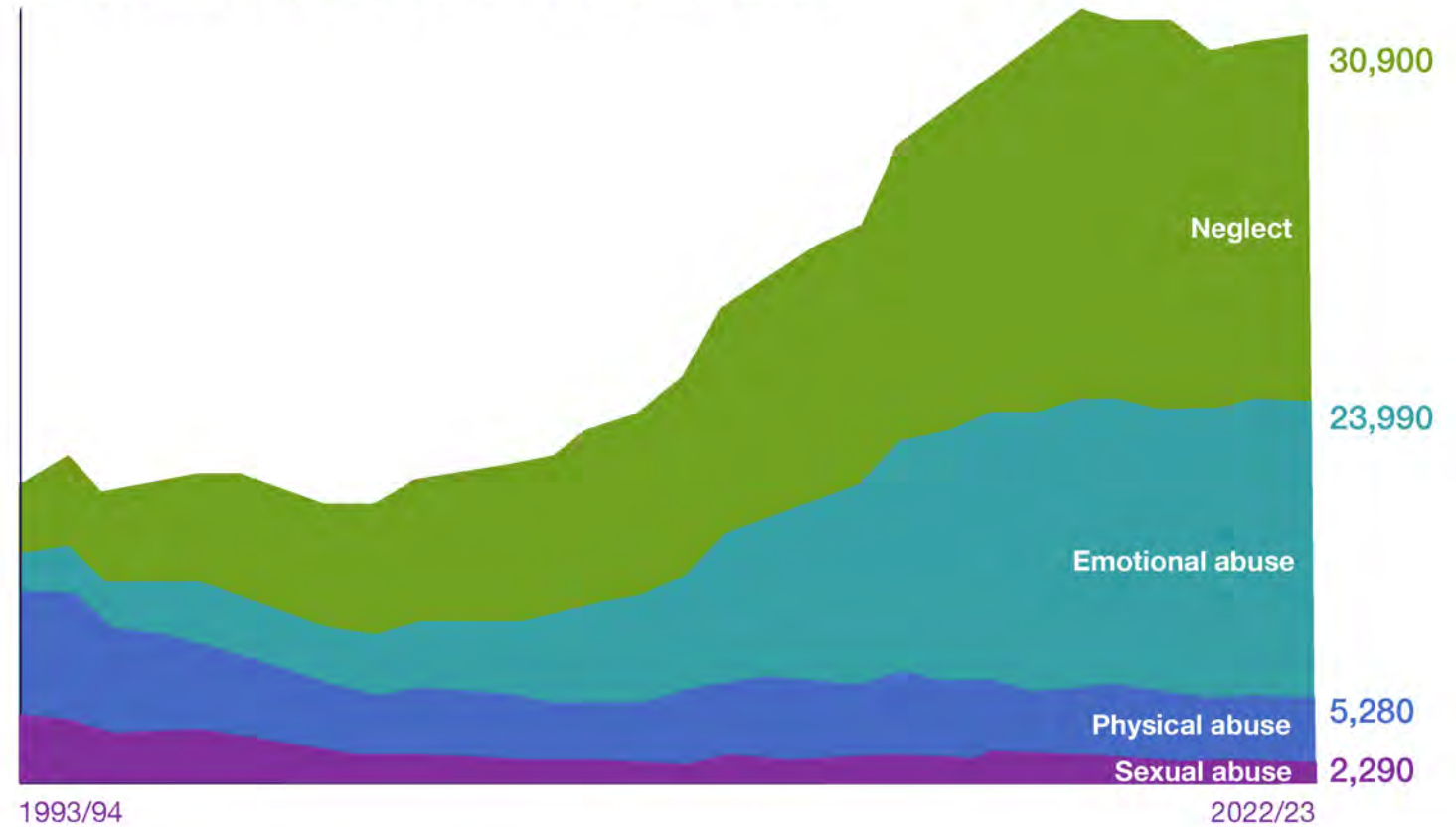
Similar levels of child abuse are identified in surveys



...but lower levels of child sexual abuse are identified in child in need assessments



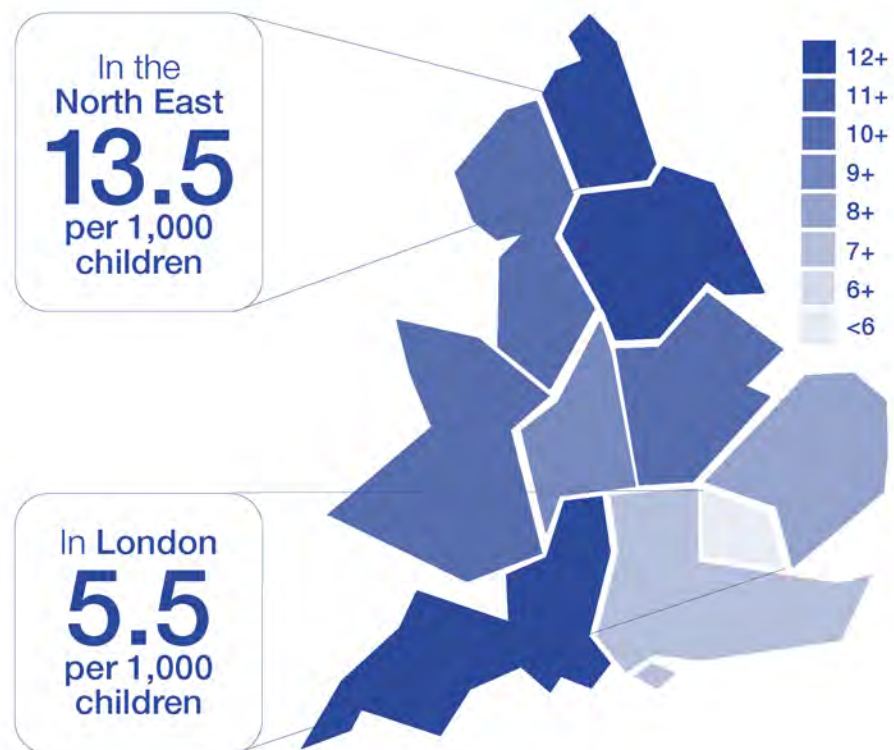
Number of child protection plans by form of abuse



Where children live matters

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

Number of child sexual abuse offences recorded by police

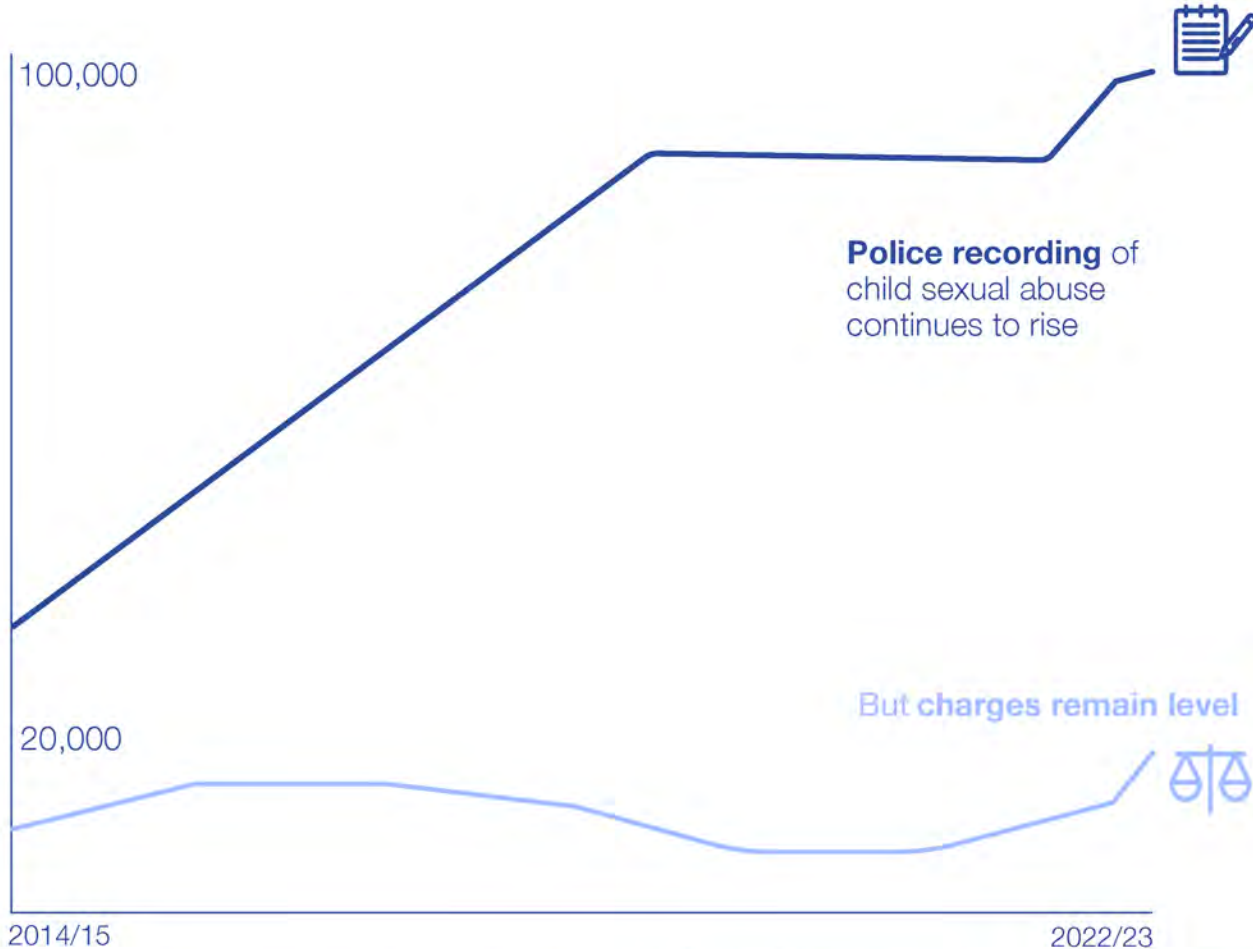


Children identified at risk of child sexual abuse in local authority assessments



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

More reporting of child sexual abuse but it takes longer to complete at court



Average time from reporting to charge

Average time from charge to completion at court

The time taken for a case to progress from charge to completion has increased by 17% while time from reporting to charge has fallen slightly.

Messages from inspections, reviews and inquiries

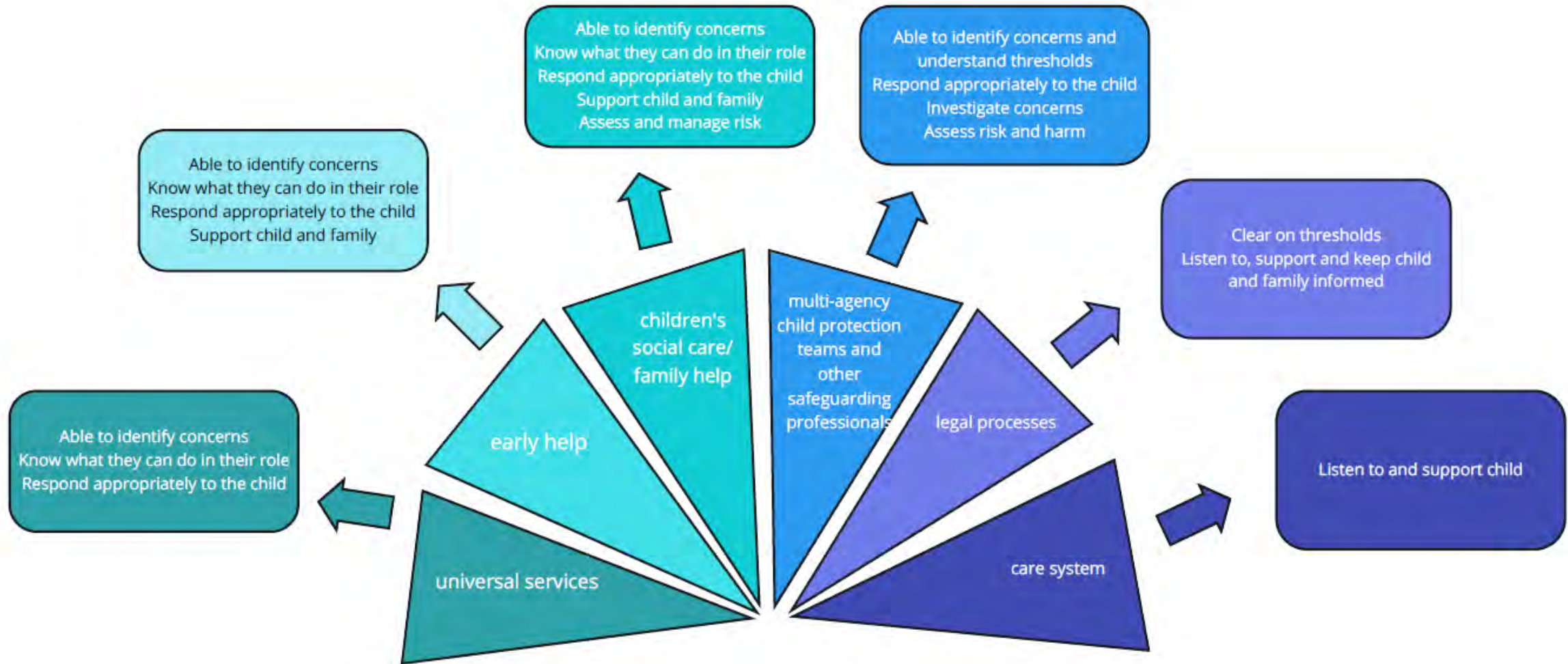
Professionals have **not been given** the knowledge and skills to confidently identify and respond to child sexual abuse

Professionals find this area of practice very difficult. Local area leaders across all agencies must provide clearer guidance to what best practice looks like for frontline professionals.

Professionals rely too heavily on children to **verbally disclose** abuse.

An **overreliance on the criminal justice system** as a means of assessing whether abuse has occurred

A proportionate, whole system response



Our response has always been too reactive

A pendulum swinging between media panics



Centre of expertise
on child sexual abuse

THE PAEDO IS LANDING

FREAKS OF NATURE

The faces of normal boys but they had hearts of unparalleled evil. Killing James gave them a buzz

50

MORE MONSTERS TOOK PART IN CHILD SEX RING

- DOZENS ARE STILL WALKING FREE
- EVIL GANG TOOK AWAY MY DIGNITY
- WE'RE SORRY FOR NOT ACTING SOONER, SAY COPS AND COUNCIL
- AND HOW THE FAR RIGHT ALMOST WRECKED THE TRIAL

SPECIAL REPORTS: PAGES 4,5,6 & 7

PERV HUNT .COM

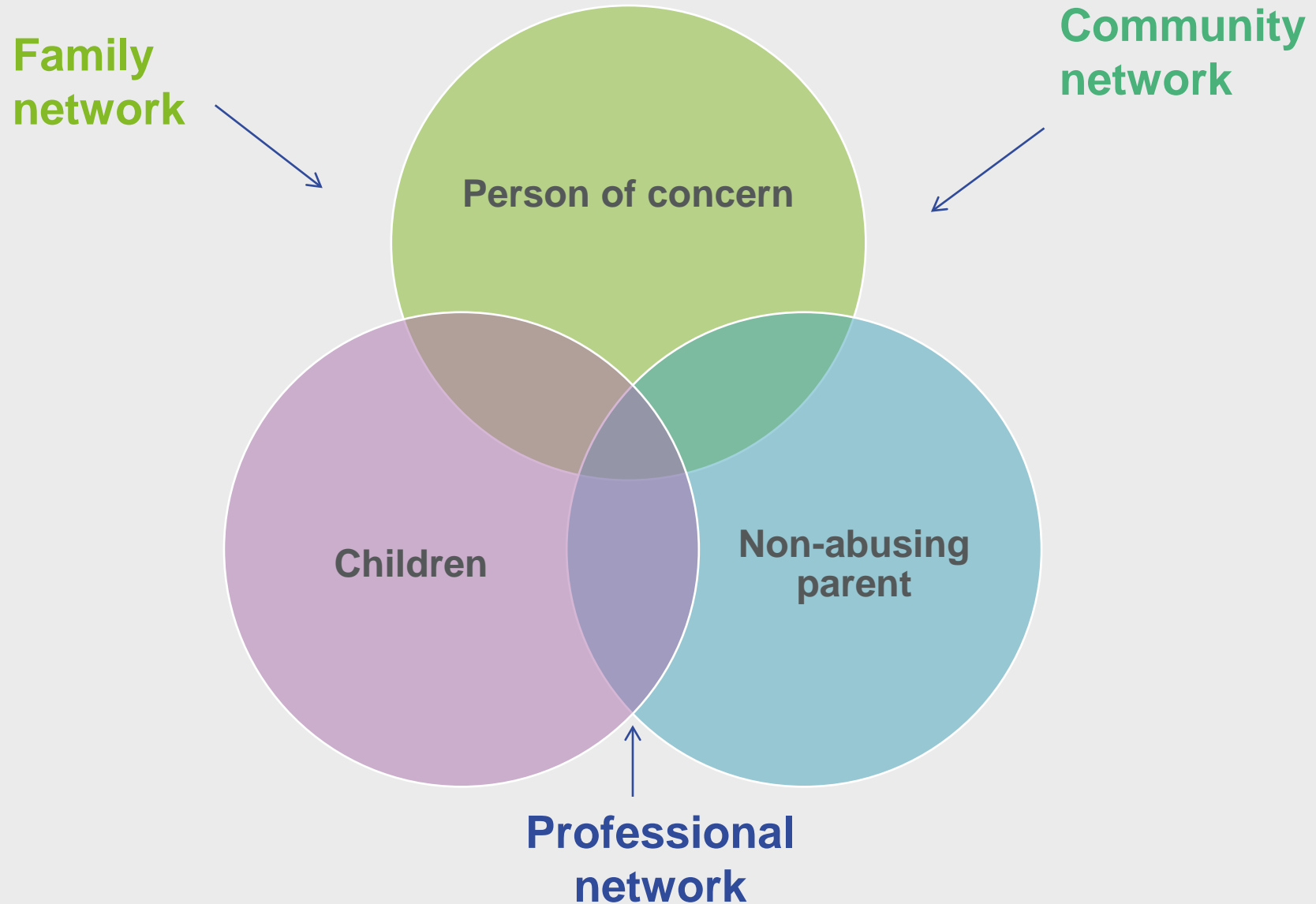
Website names
wanted paedos

28 MONTHS

SICKO JAILED

MAN SENTENCED FOR SEXUAL ABUSE

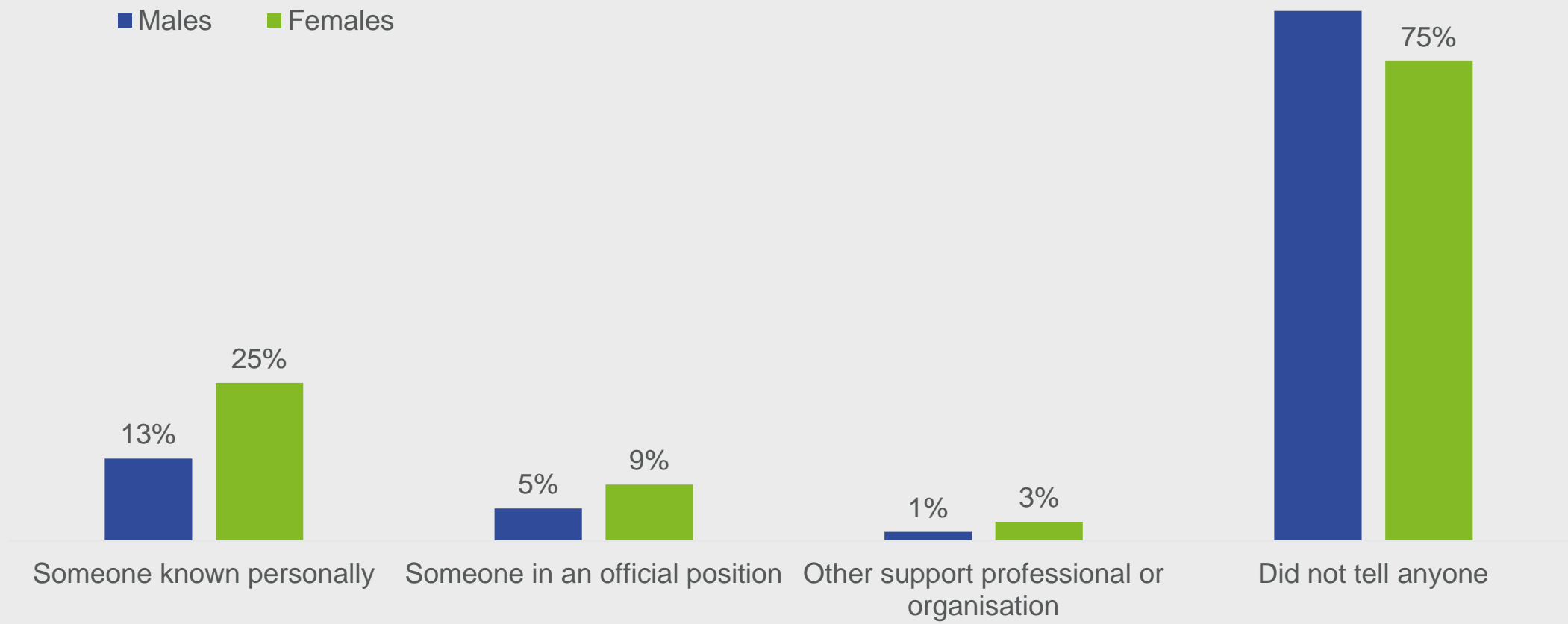
Assessing and intervening sexual risk



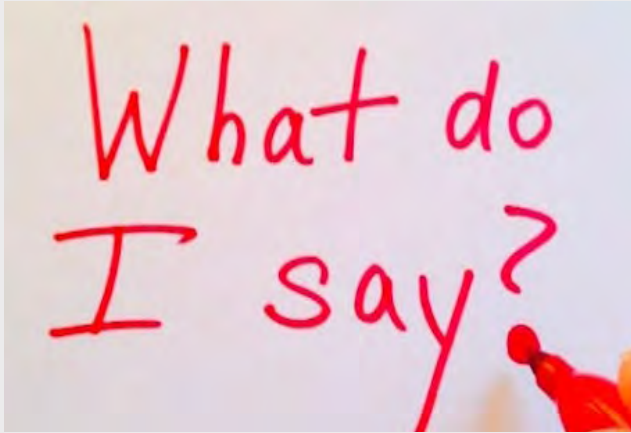
“Professionals rely too heavily on children to verbally disclose”

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

Who was told at the time



The obstacle of fear

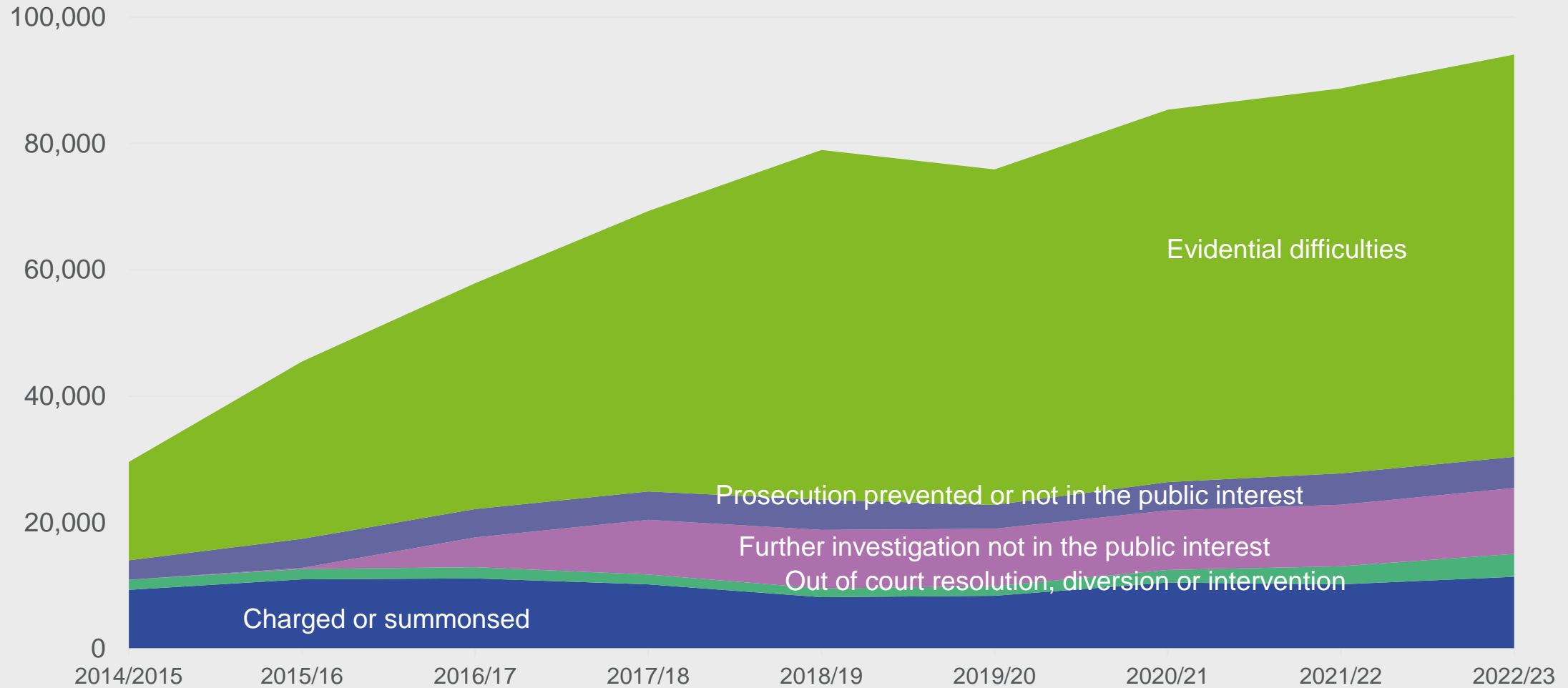


It can feel like a bit of a minefield

Asking questions...

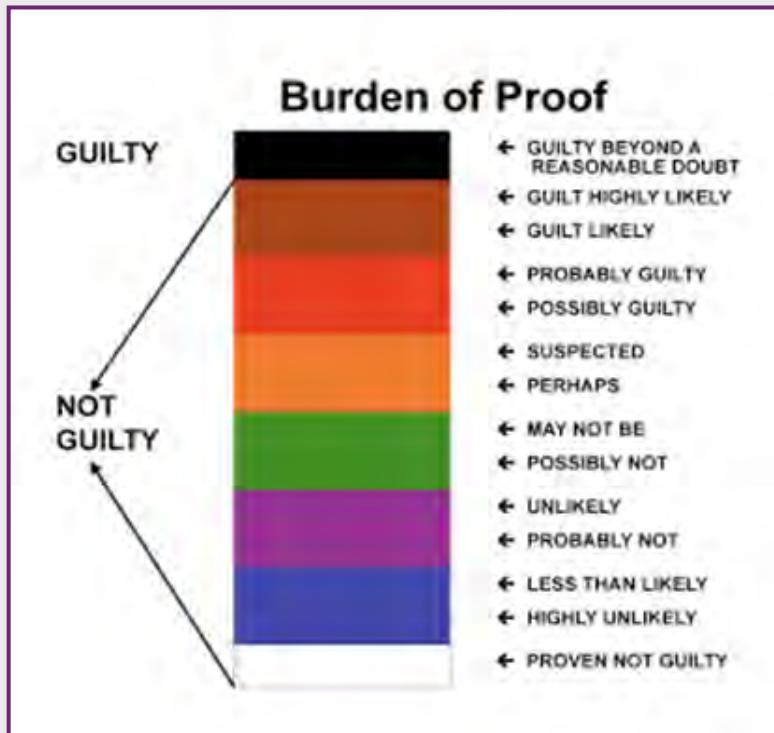
...contaminating evidence

Investigation outcomes of child sexual abuse offences England and Wales, 2022/23



The Burden of Proof

Beyond Reasonable Doubt



Balance of Probabilities



The implications of 'no further action'

The NFA decision from Police/CPS has undue influence over the remainder of the system's response to children.

- *The police have taken NFA so there's nothing we can do*
- *There's no evidence the child has been abused*
- *The child made must have made this up*
- *I can't say I believe the child if there is no evidence for it*
- *There is no evidence this child was previously abused*
- *We can't refer to specialist help as there's no evidence it happened*
- *The family won't work with us now, and we don't have the evidence to make them*

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

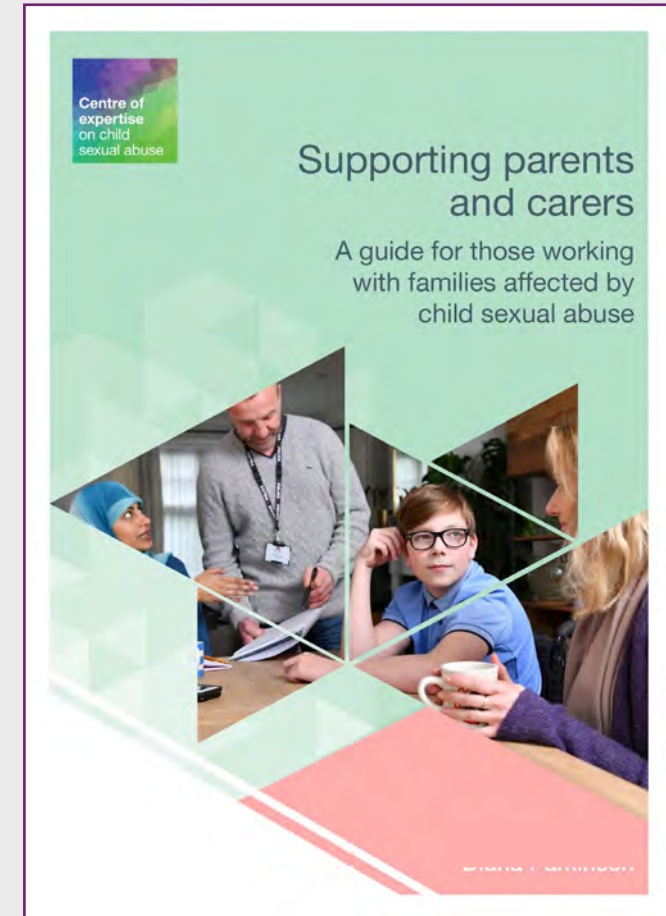
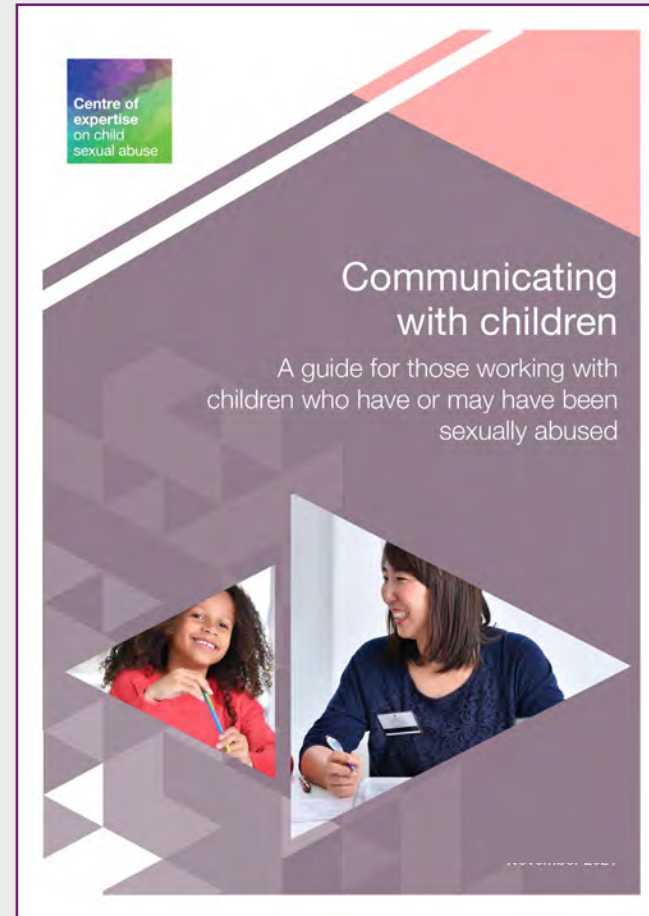
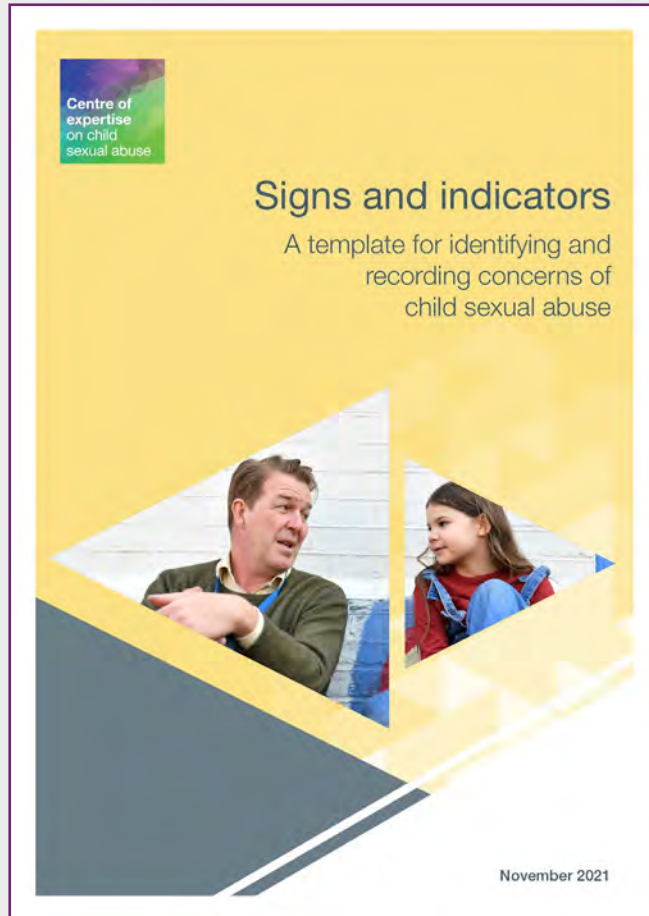
Rarely will we reach a position of 'absolute knowing'



Building a picture of concerns



Developed by practitioners, for practitioners



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/>

The Child Sexual Abuse Response Pathway

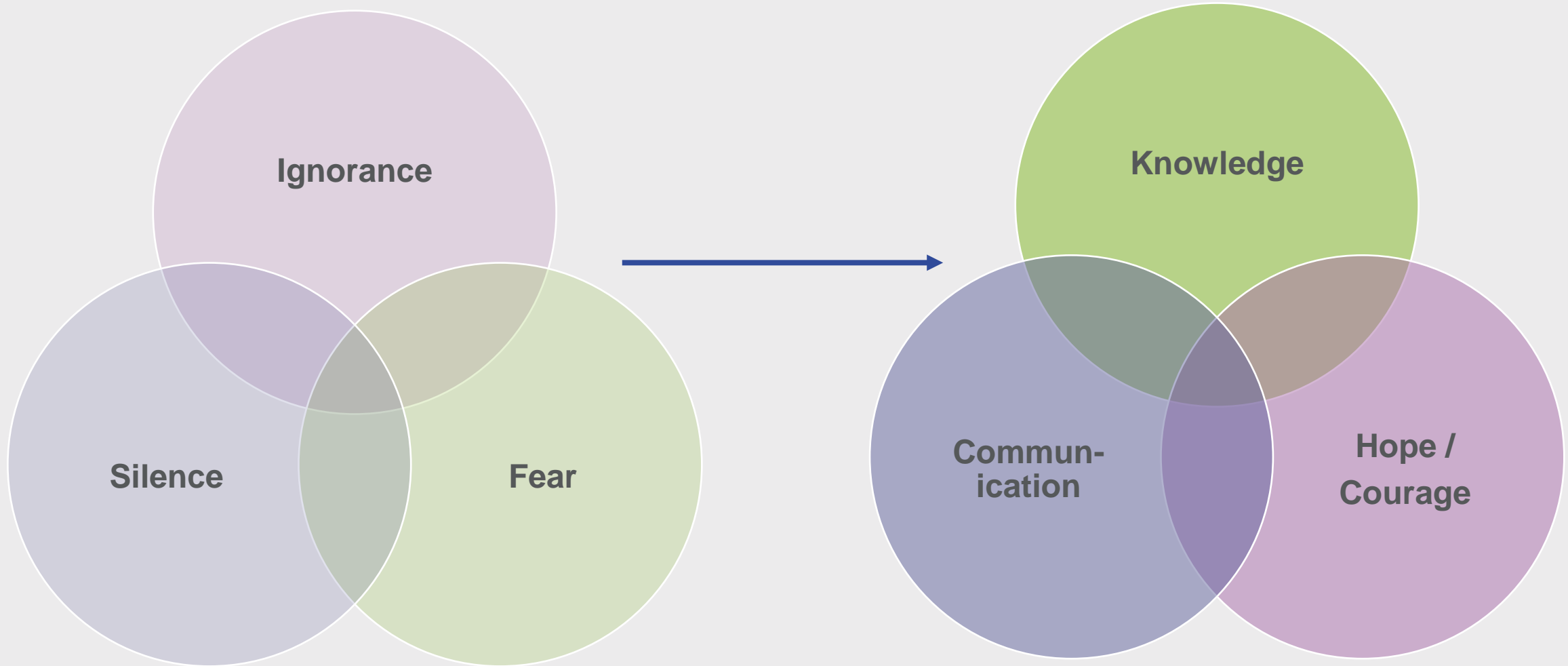
An interactive online resource to guide professionals through how they can protect and support children and their families when there are concerns of sexual abuse.

- The Response Pathway sets out **how to respond to concerns of child sexual abuse at key points**: from first concerns and early help safeguarding through to child protection and criminal justice. Throughout, the Response Pathway focuses on meeting the needs of children and their families.
- It is designed to **empower professionals** to understand the role they, and their colleagues, can play to best protect and support children. It doesn't just tell professionals what to do, **it helps them to understand how to do it.**



<http://www.csacentre.org.uk/response-pathway>

We need hope, communication and knowledge



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)

Next steps for the National Panel

Discussion

What are the current barriers preventing improved practice in response to child sexual abuse locally, and what is needed to unblock these?

- What levers do local leaders have to improve practice, and what recommendations could we make to support them to do so?
- What changes are needed nationally to improve the system response, and what recommendations could we make to drive these changes?

And more specifically:

- What needs to change within the multi-agency arrangements to ensure knowledge on sexual offending contributes to assessment and management of risk?
- How can we build a culture change in the way practice responds to child sexual abuse, particularly around talking with children and naming concerns? Does this need local or national action, or both?

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



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

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

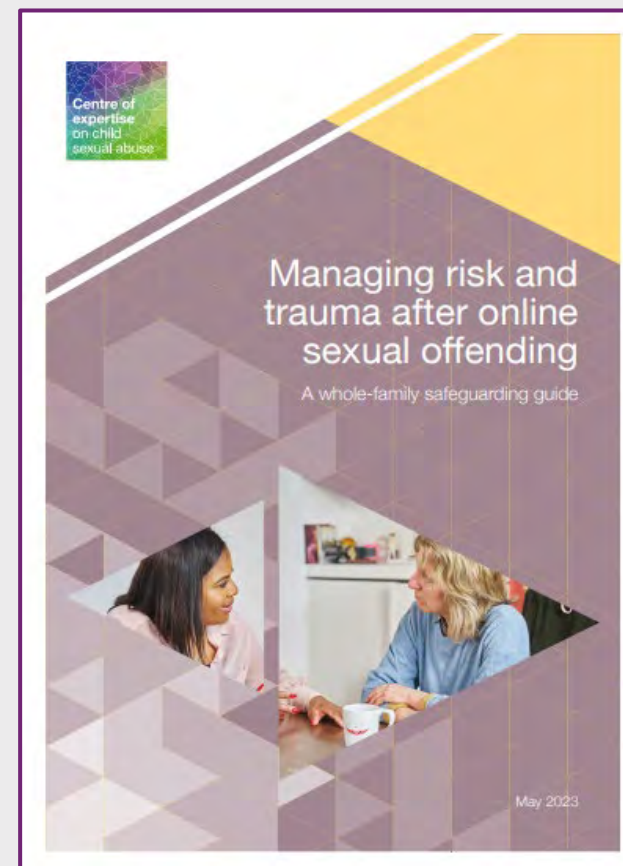
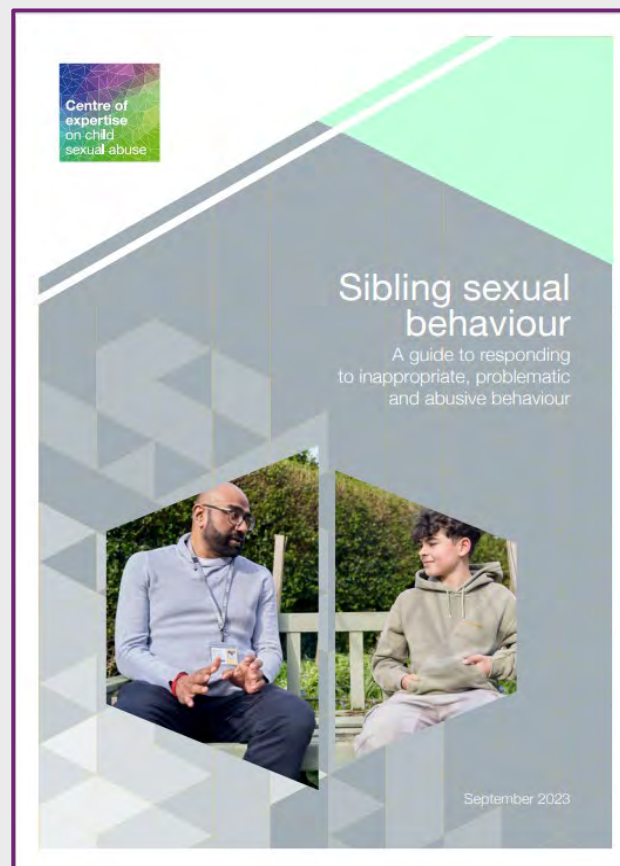
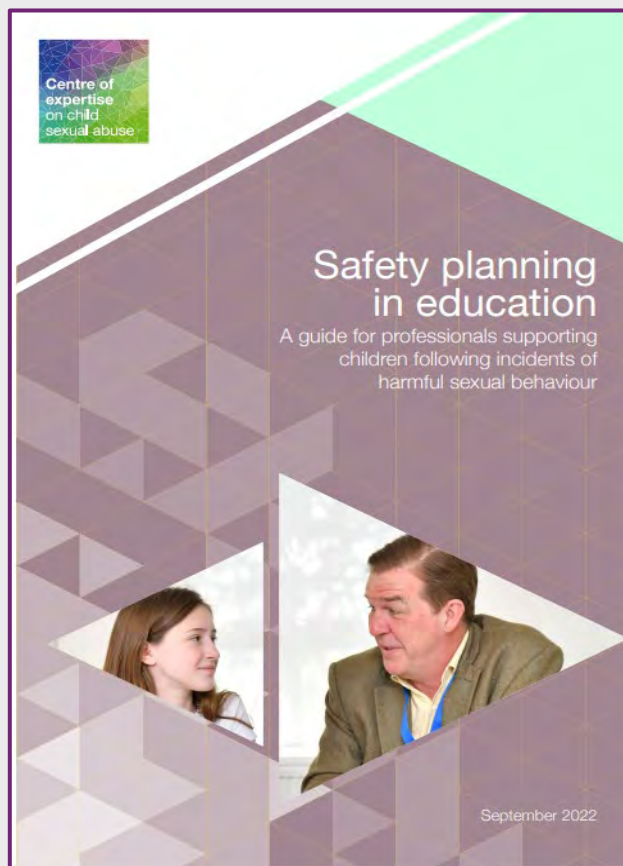


SurvivorsUK

Online help for male survivors of sexual abuse and rape.

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

More practice resources



<https://www.csacentre.org.uk/research-resources/practice-resources/>