

The logo features a square background with a geometric pattern of triangles in shades of blue, purple, and green. The text "Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse" is written in white, sans-serif font, stacked in four lines.

Centre of
expertise
on child
sexual abuse

An introduction to Intra-familial child sexual abuse

20th October 2026

Thank you for being here



Centre of expertise
on child sexual abuse

The CSA Centre

We are the Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse (CSA Centre). We want children to be able to live **free from the threat and harm of sexual abuse**.

Our aim is to reduce the impact of child sexual abuse through improved prevention and better response.

We are a **multi-disciplinary team** that works closely with key partners from academic institutions, local authorities, health, education, police and the voluntary sector.



Looking after yourself

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 (personally and professionally)
- Respect each other's learning journey

Setting the scene

“I don’t know why it started and I don’t know why it stopped...I still don’t know really, no one ever spoke with me about it”.

(Survivor, aged 41)



Understanding the different contexts of offending

**Child sexual abuse within
the family environment**

**Child sexual abuse through
attack by an unknown person**

**Child sexual abuse through
trusted relationships outside
the family environment**

**Child sexual abuse through
a personal connection**

**Child sexual abuse through
an intermediary**

**Child sexual abuse arranged
and perpetrated for payment**

**Child sexual abuse through
online interaction**

**Child sexual abuse through
groups and networks**

**Child sexual abuse through
viewing, sharing or possessing
images**

“I wanted them all to notice”

Not hearing children’s voices and understanding their needs

Understanding parents’ and carers’ contexts, vulnerabilities and needs

Challenges in identifying signs, understanding risk and raising concerns

Issues in responding to concerns of intrafamilial child sexual abuse

Understanding the scale of child sexual abuse

Far more children are sexually abused than services identify

Scale and nature of child sexual abuse: Review of evidence (2026)
csacentre.org.uk



2,190 children on a child protection plan due to child sexual abuse (England)

43,890 children assessed at risk of sexual abuse* (England)

103,550 child sexual abuse offences recorded by the police (England and Wales)

500,000

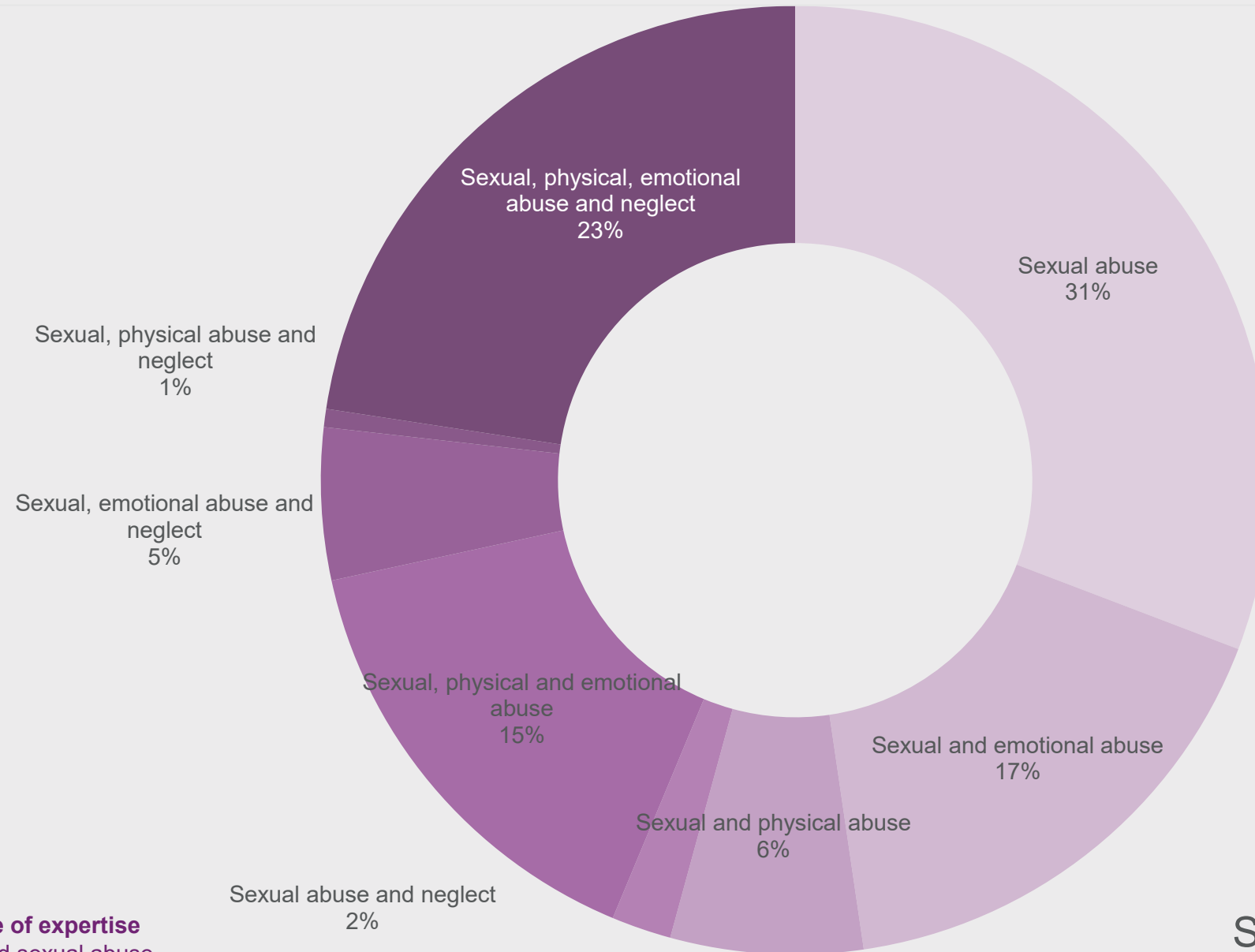
children are estimated to experience in-person contact sexual abuse every year**

Sources: Home Office, Police recorded crime and outcomes, 2024/25; Department for Education, Characteristics of Children in Need, 2024/25. *Includes assessments recording concerns of child sexual abuse and exploitation. ** Estimate calculated using single-year prevalence estimated by age group in Northern Europe, Fang et al 2026 and the Office for National Statistics mid-year population estimates, 2024. Please note: numbers are rounded to the nearest ten. Estimate calculated using single-year prevalence for contact sexual abuse estimated by age group in Northern Europe.



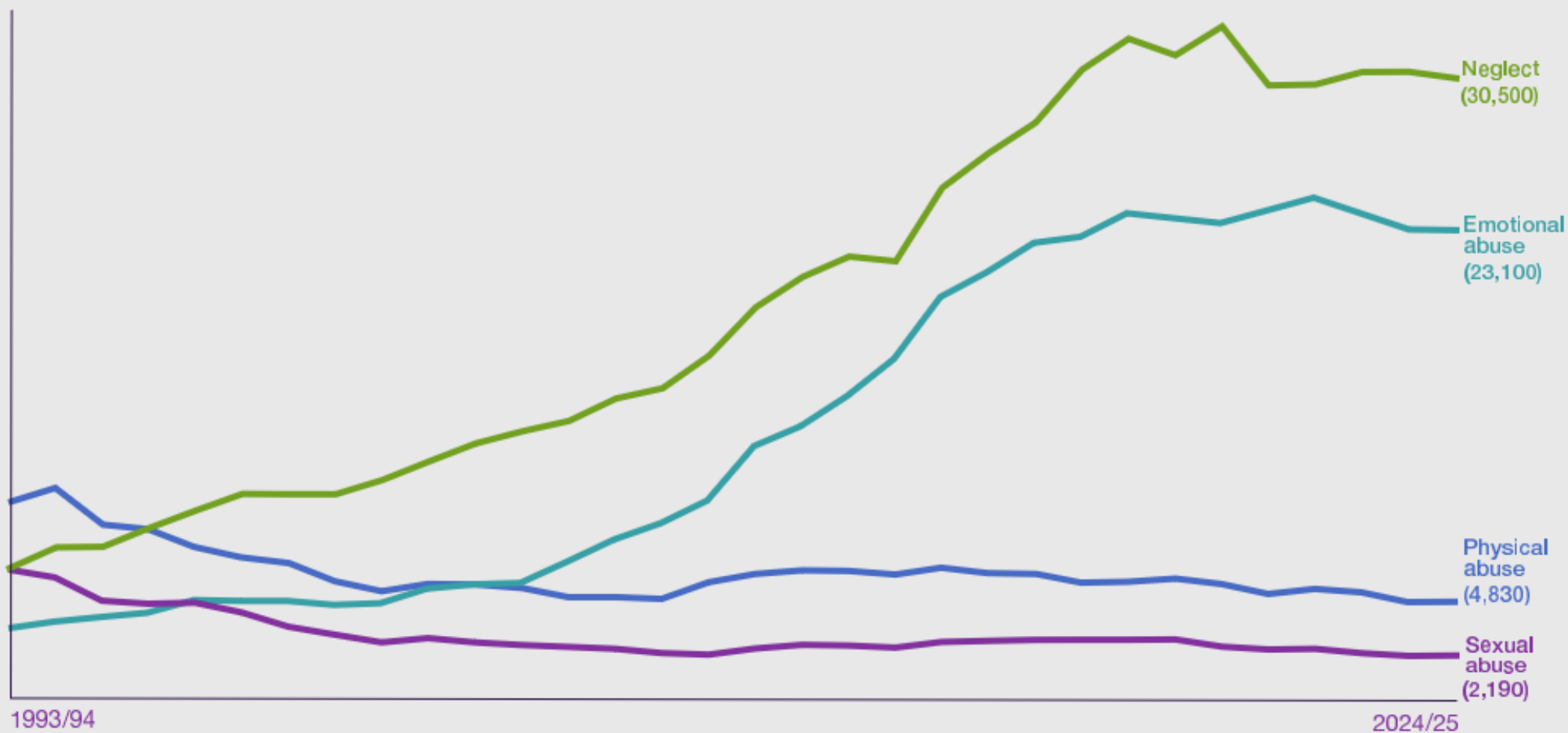
Sexual abuse usually occurs in the context of other abuse / neglect

12



Concerns of sexual abuse are far less likely to be identified and named than other forms of abuse and neglect

Number of child protection plans by form of abuse



Challenges and obstacles in practice

Our response has always been too reactive

A pendulum swinging between media panics



Centre of expertise
on child sexual abuse

THE PAEDO IS LANDING



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

FROM 10.00 PM
BY UP TO 50%
OFF

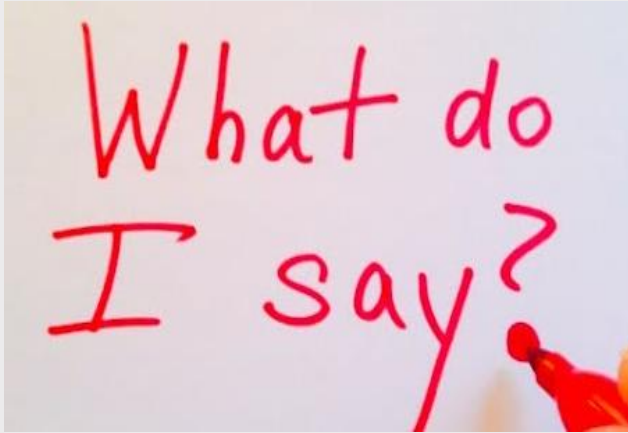
Assumptions that follow the stereotypes...

- That we can tell by looking
- That men who are ‘**good with children**’ do not sexually abuse them
- That if children say they **want to see** their abusive parent, they cannot be abusing them
- That if children don’t **appear distressed** when making a disclosure, then it must be untrue



The obstacle of fear

18



Multi-agency response

Children's need for support and protection must be considered whether or not the police have decided to pursue a prosecution, and families will also need advice and support. As sexual abuse can impact every aspect of a child's development and their family and wider relationships, there is a role for all agencies in providing support and protection

A formal, multi-agency planning meeting at the point at which police decide whether or not to take further action, and what that action will be, would enable agencies to consider together:

- what measures should be put in place to **respond to concerns** about the alleged perpetrator,
- what **support and protection** the child needs from all agencies,
- and what interventions will best **help families** to keep their children safe and supported

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel - I wanted them all to notice

How sexual abuse happens in families

Finkelhor's Precondition Model (1984)



‘Grooming’ – exploiting the non-abusing carer’s need for:



Centre of expertise
on child sexual abuse

Mutual love/trust

Emotional/psychological/economic security

Companionship/belonging

Sharing the burden

Family life for the children

An intimate partner

‘Grooming’ – exploiting the child’s need for:

A special bond/relationship

Attention

Favouritism over siblings

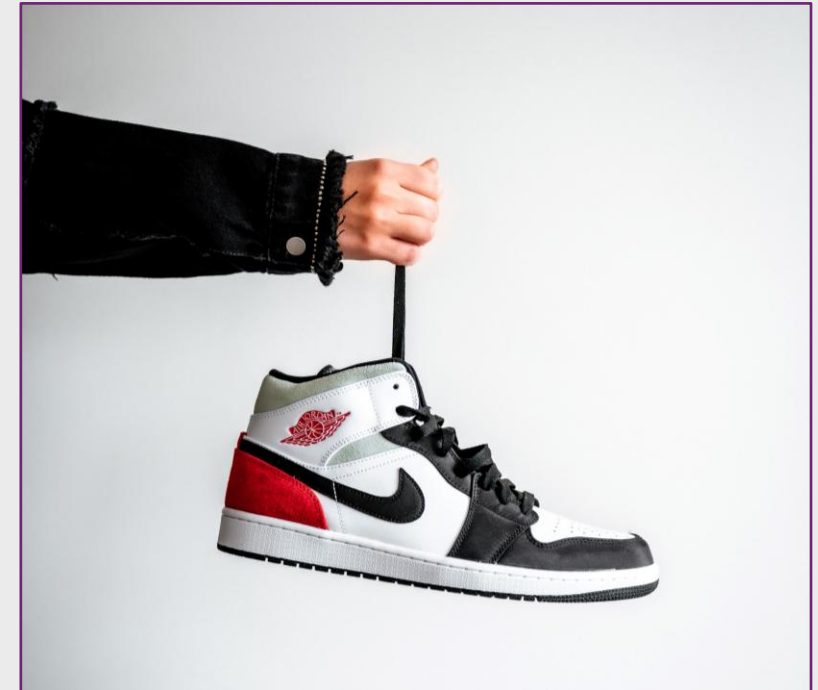
‘Stuff’

Feeling grown up

Soothing

Power-secrets

Sexual curiosity/experimentation



The impact of child sexual abuse

The impacts of child sexual abuse

IICSA, 2017

Physical health	Emotional wellbeing, mental health and internalising behaviours	Externalising behaviours	Interpersonal relationships	Socio-economic	Religious and spiritual belief	Vulnerability to revictimisation
- Physical injuries - High BMI - Problems related to child birth - Unexplained medical problems	- Emotional distress - Trauma / PTSD - Anxiety - Depression	- Substance misuse - Risky and inappropriate sexual behaviour - Offending	- Reduced relationship satisfaction and stability - Issues with intimacy and parent-child relationships	- Lower educational attainment - Higher unemployment - Financial instability - Homelessness	- Dillusionment with religion - Faith as a coping mechanism	- Sexual revictimization in childhood and adulthood - Other types of victimisation

How impact differs...

The nature of the abuse

Whether the abuse is chronic

The relationship between the child who has been harmed and the person who has harmed them

The nature of the child's previous life experiences

The support within the family and wider support networks

The child's inherent resilience

I joined in

**I
encouraged
it**

**I should
have told
someone**

**It was
something
about me**

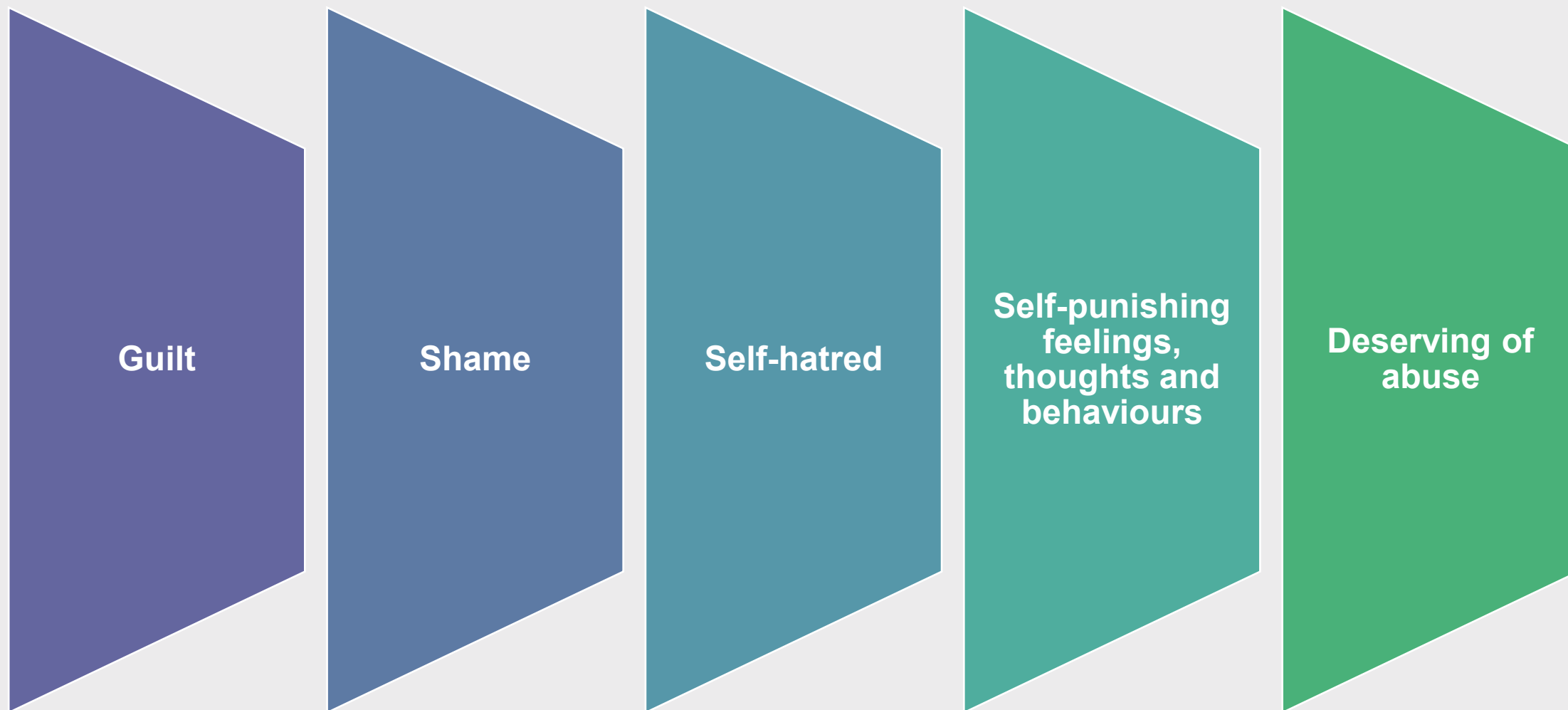
Sense of responsibility

**I should
have
stopped it**

**I enjoyed
it**

**I could have
protected my
siblings**

And this may lead to...



Avoid assumptions

Especially those based upon:



Gender



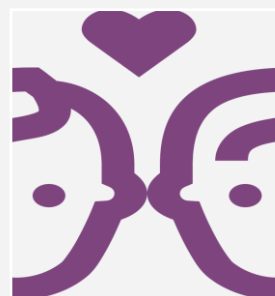
Ethnicity



Religion



Disability



Sexuality

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'



“Safeguarding decisions must be based on all indicators of sexual abuse and should not rely solely on verbal statements from children”

An extract from National Recommendation 3 – The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel – I wanted them all to notice (2024)

Communicating with children

“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

Barriers for children



Lacking language



Don't recognise it as abuse



Shame or embarrassment



Threat or manipulation



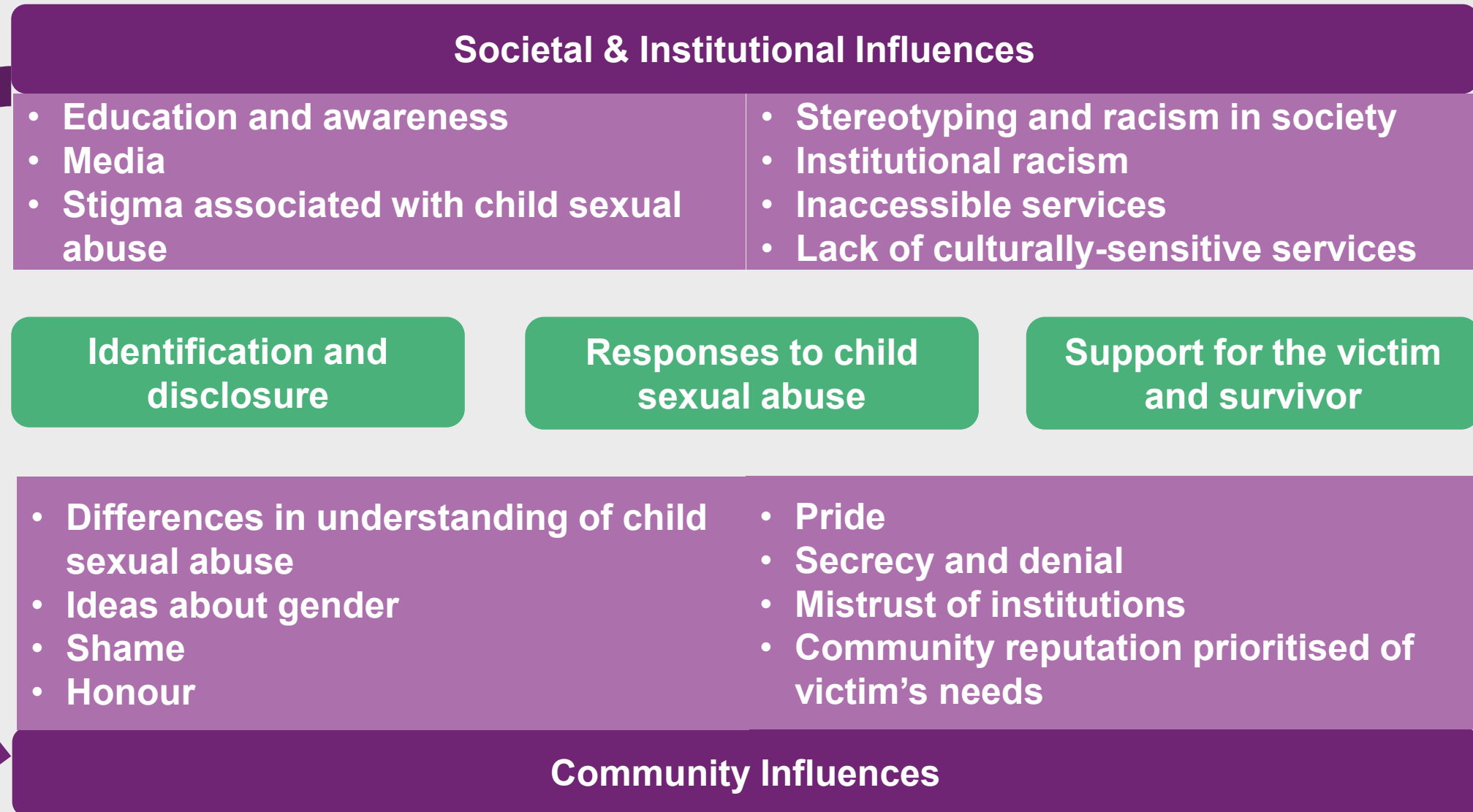
Fear of the consequences



Feeling responsible

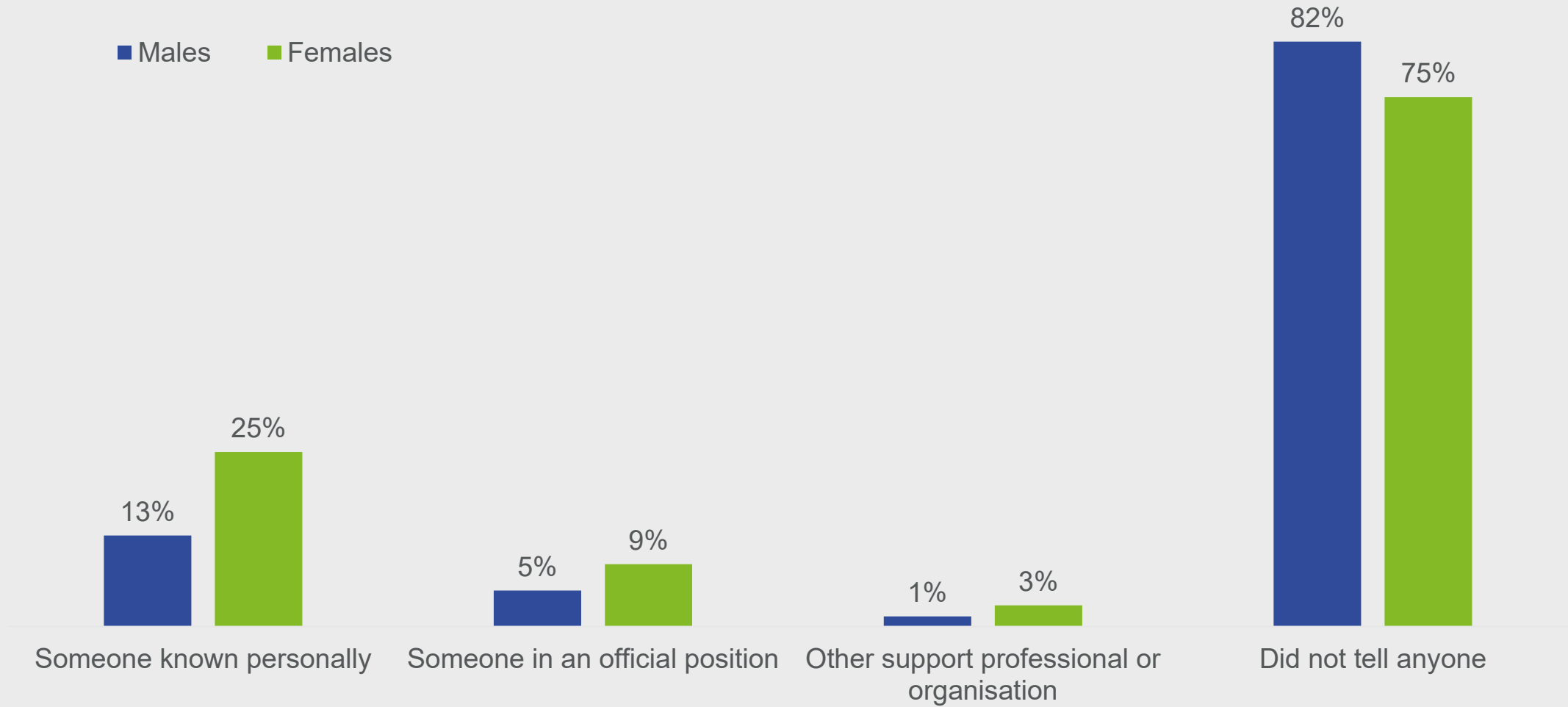
“People don’t talk about it”

Child sexual abuse in ethnic minority communities, (IICSA, 2020)



Who was told at the time

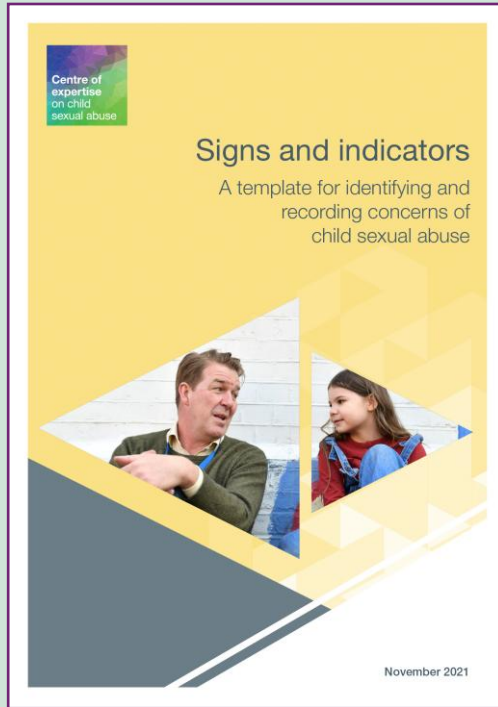
Rape or penetrative abuse



“I wanted them all to notice” National Recommendation 5
Talking to children

**Government should ensure that practitioners
understand that they can and should talk directly to
children, and families, about concerns of sexual
abuse**

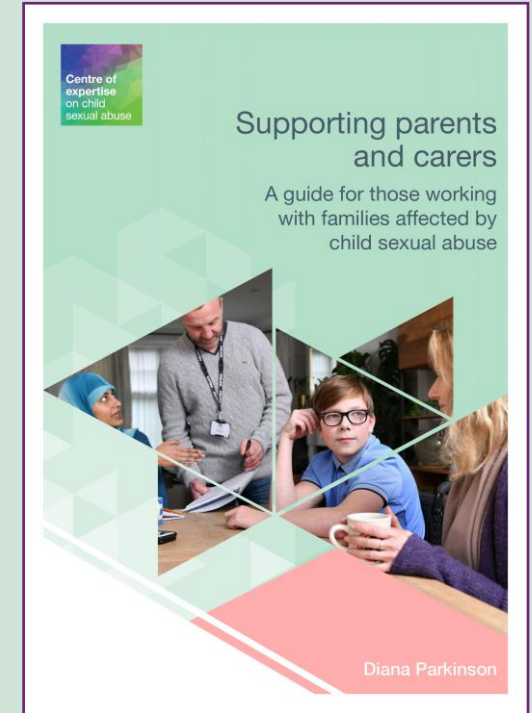
The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel – I wanted them all to notice
(2024)



A template for professionals to identify and record concerns of child sexual abuse



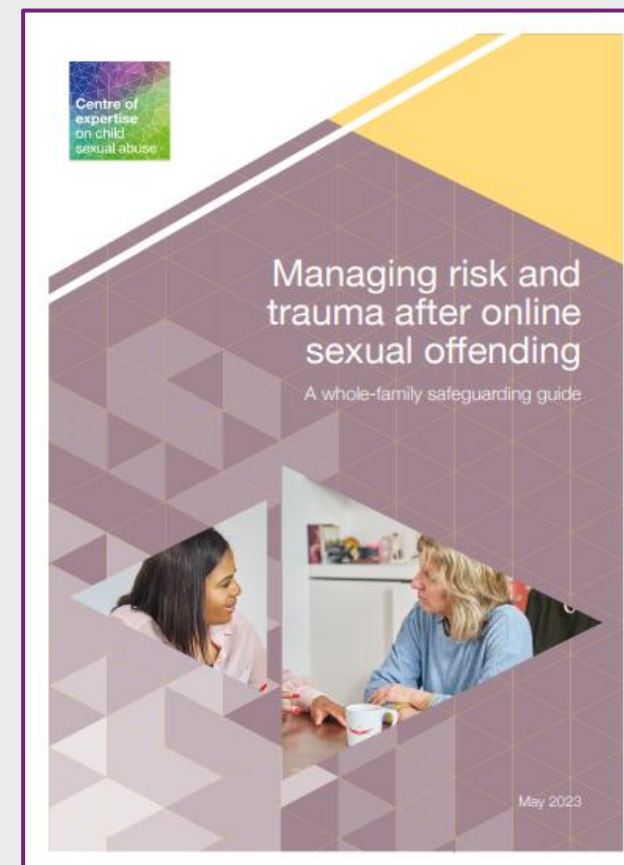
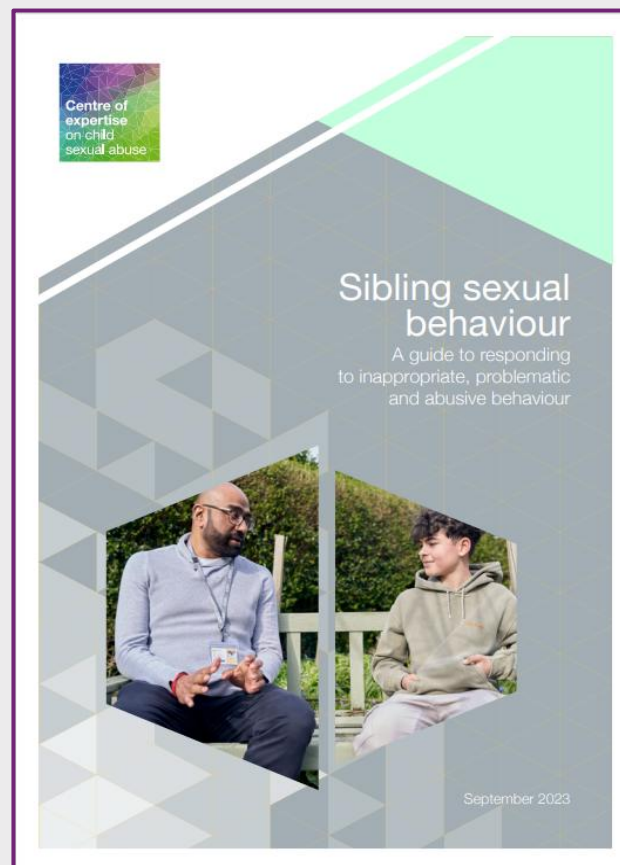
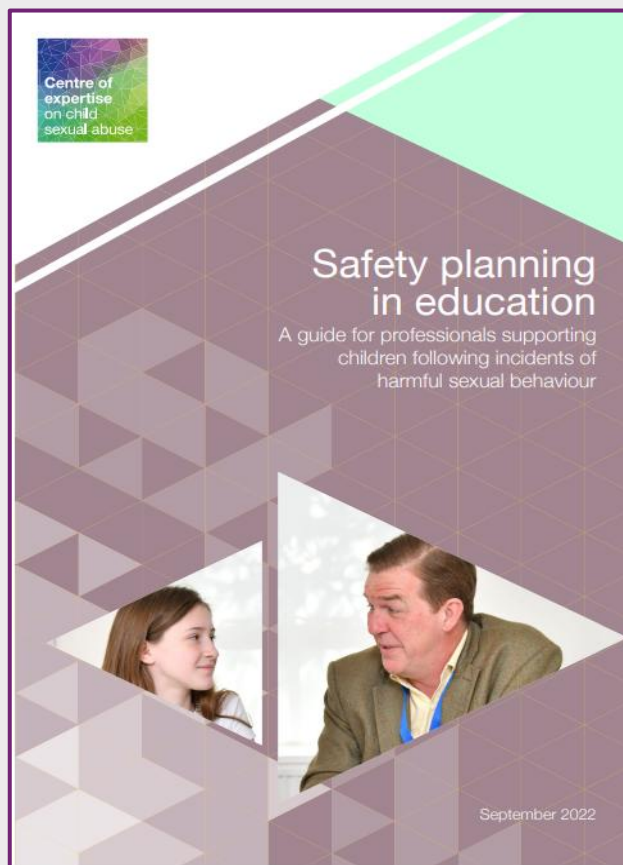
A guide for professionals working with children who have or may have been sexually abused



A guide for professionals working with families affected by child sexual abuse

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

More practice resources



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

If you are affected by anything discussed today...



The Survivors Trust - Helpline: 08088 010 818

Find help, support and advice in your area:

<https://www.thesurvivorstrust.org/>



Rape Crisis helpline 0808 500 2222 (24 hours)

www.rapecrisis.org.uk



National Association for People Abused in Childhood 0808 801 0331

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



SurvivorsUK

Online help for male survivors of sexual abuse and rape.

<https://www.survivorsuk.org/>

Centre of expertise
on child sexual abuse

Stop It Now Helpline

If you are worried about your own thoughts or behaviours or are worried about the behaviours of someone around you, you can contact the **Stop It Now Helpline** for **free, confidential advice:**

0808 1000 900

Thank you!

For more information please contact:

info@csacentre.org.uk



**Centre of expertise
on child sexual abuse**

Tanners Lane
Barkingside, Ilford
Essex IG6 1QG

info@csacentre.org.uk

csacentre.org.uk

13 October 2026