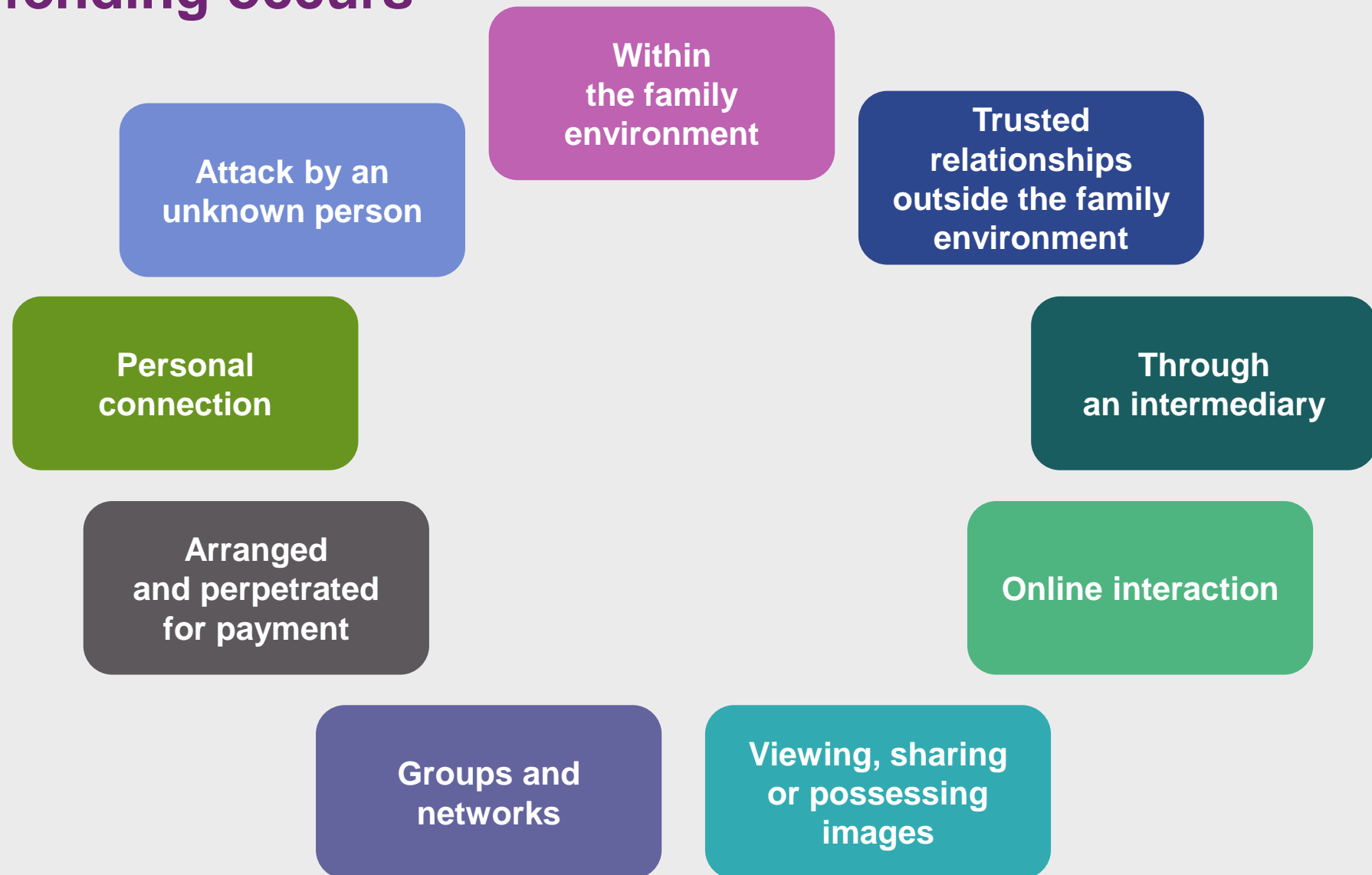




Supporting children and families: Identifying and responding to child sexual abuse with confidence

27 September
2023

Understanding the different contexts where child sexual abuse offending occurs



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 |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical injuries • High BMI • Problems related to child birth • Unexplained medical problems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional distress • Trauma / PTSD • Anxiety • Depression | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substance misuse • Risky and inappropriate sexual behaviour • Offending | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced relationship satisfaction and stability • Issues with intimacy and parent-child relationships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower educational attainment • Higher unemployment • Financial instability • Homelessness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dillusionment with religion • Faith as a coping mechanism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual revictimization in childhood and adulthood • Other types of victimisation |

Scale and nature of child sexual abuse in Wales

What do we know?

Far more children are sexually abused than come to the attention of services



2,600 children on a child protection plan due to child sexual abuse (England and Wales) **221**

46,000 children assessed at risk of sexual abuse* (England) **No data**

89,000 child sexual abuse offences recorded by police (England and Wales) **5,097**

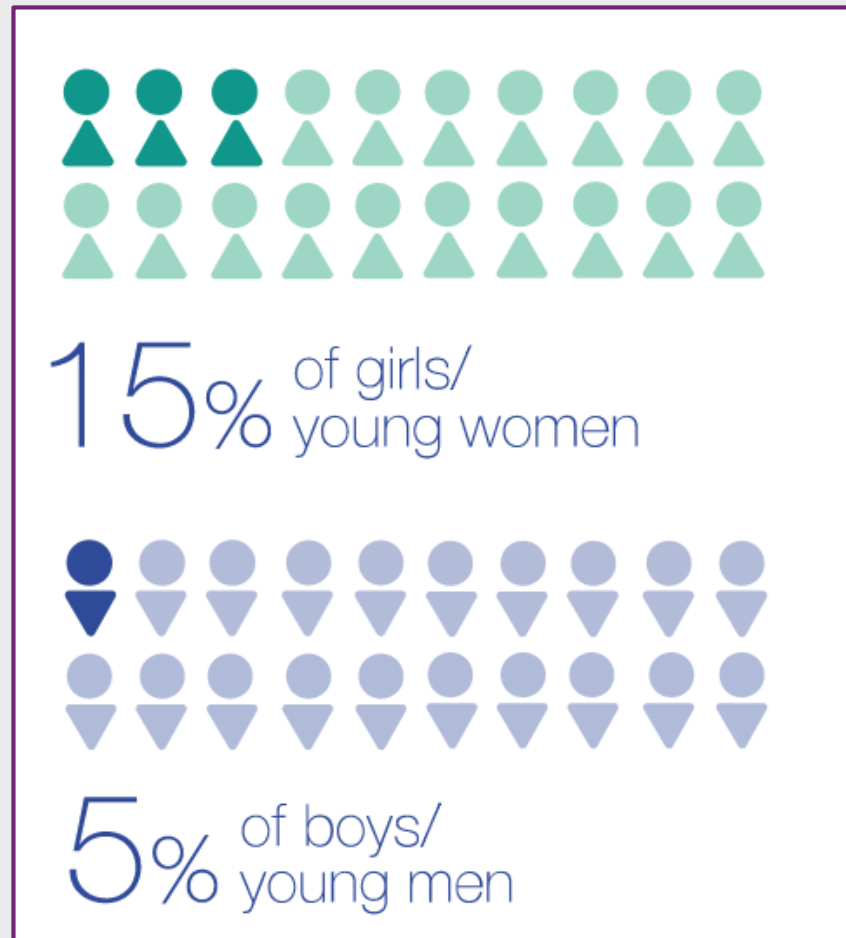
500,000 **25,000**
In Wales

children estimated to experience child sexual abuse every year**

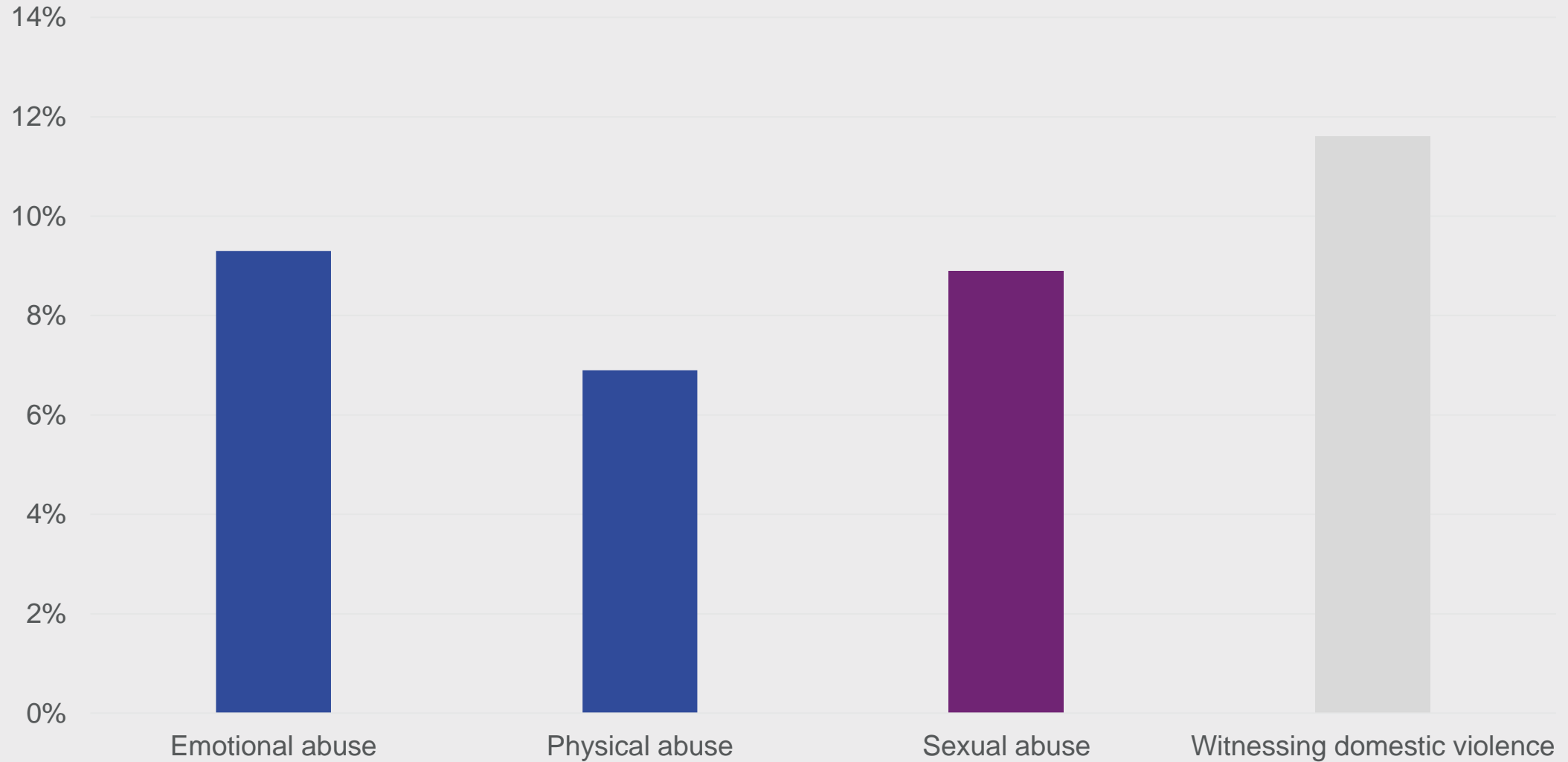
Sources: Home Office, Police recorded crime and outcomes, 2020/21; Department for Education, Characteristics of Children in Need, 2020/21. * Includes assessments in child sexual abuse and exploitation. ** Estimate calculated using single-year prevalence estimates by age group (Radford et al, 2011, Childhood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

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.

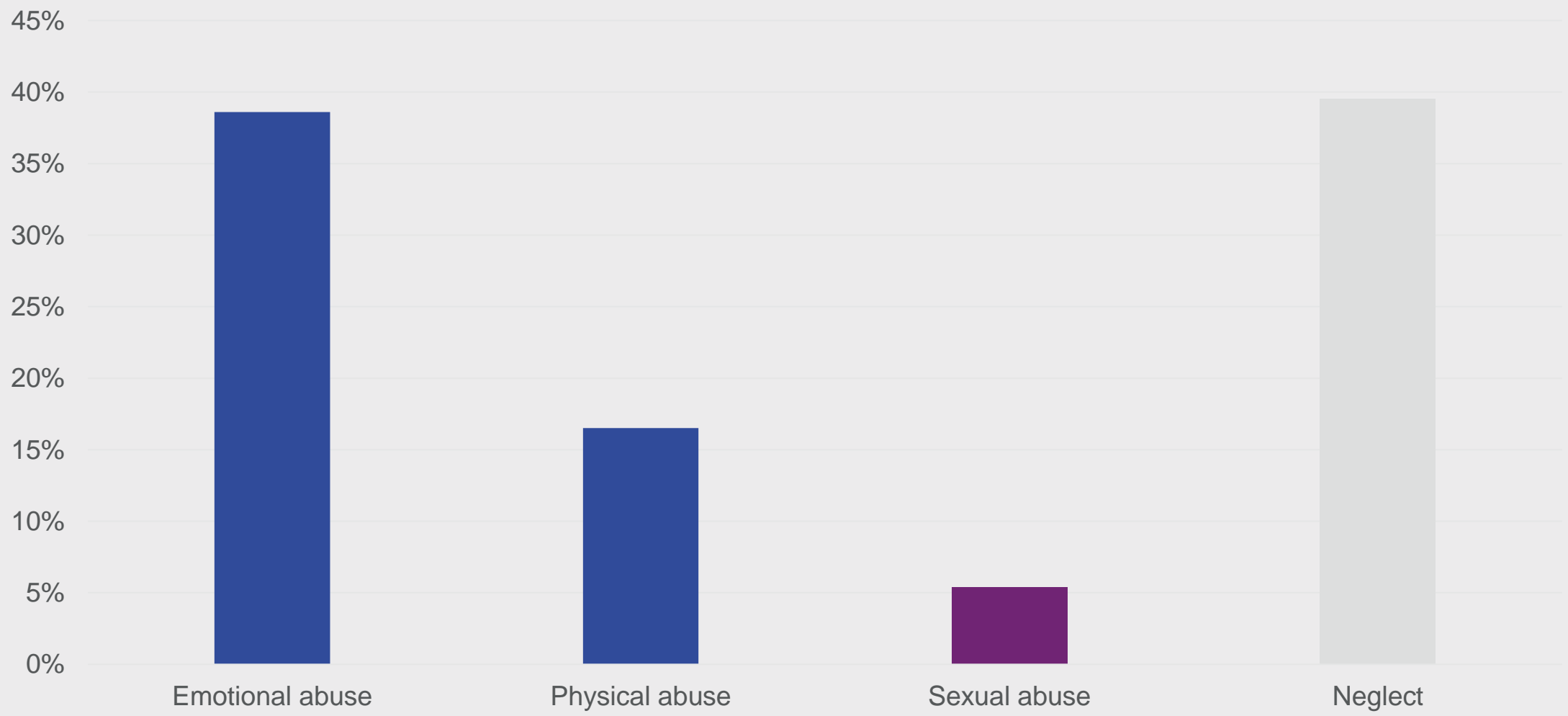


Child sexual abuse no less common in Wales than other forms of childhood abuse..



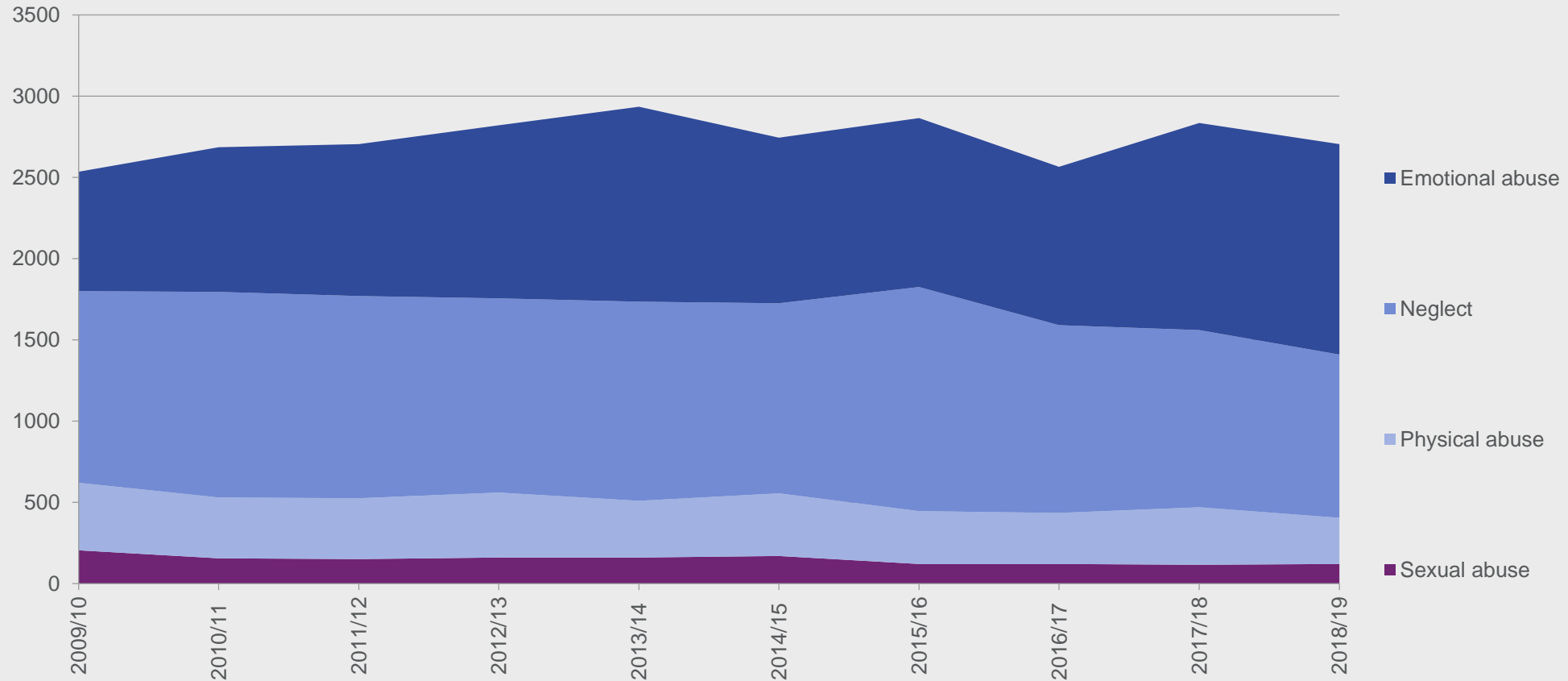
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But is much less likely to be recorded as a concern on the child protection register⁸

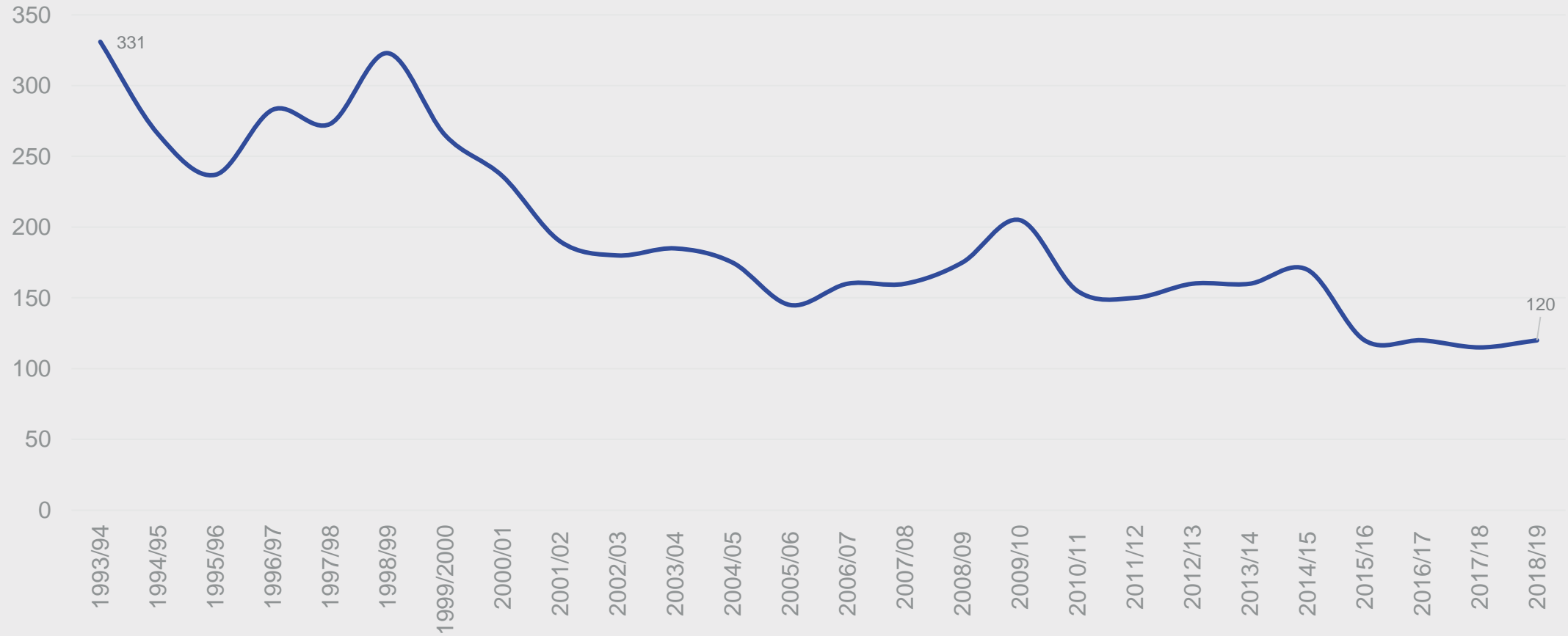


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Only 4% of child protection registrations record sexual abuse as a primary concern



Child protection registrations under the category of sexual abuse are at their lowest in Wales

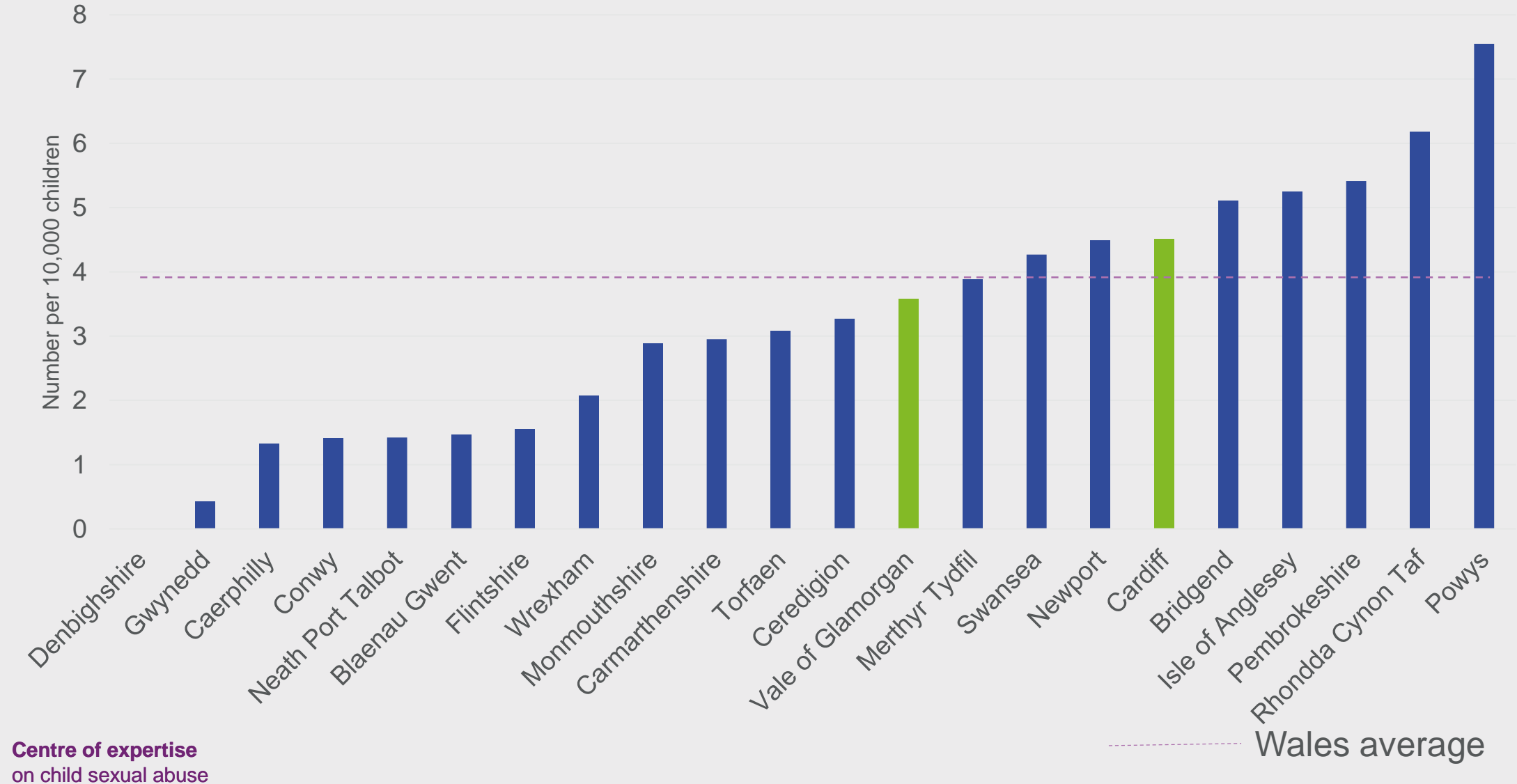


Total CPRs: 1,610

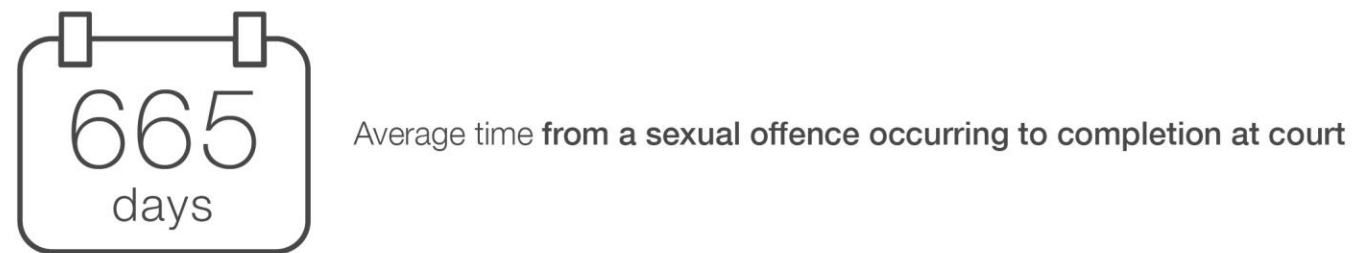
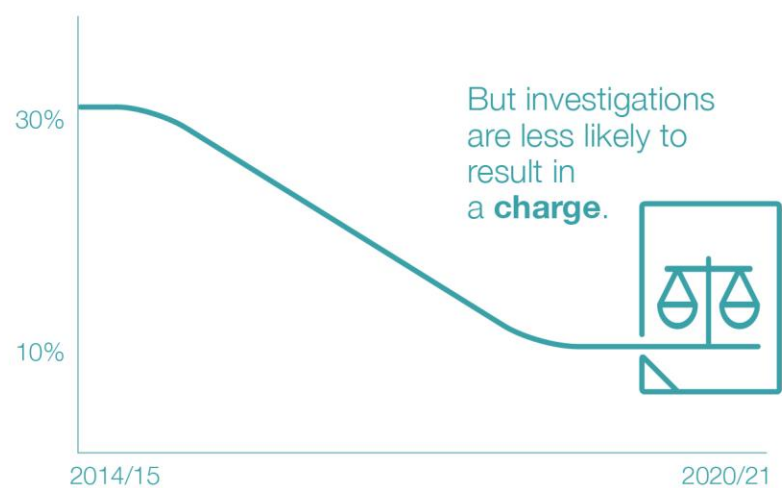
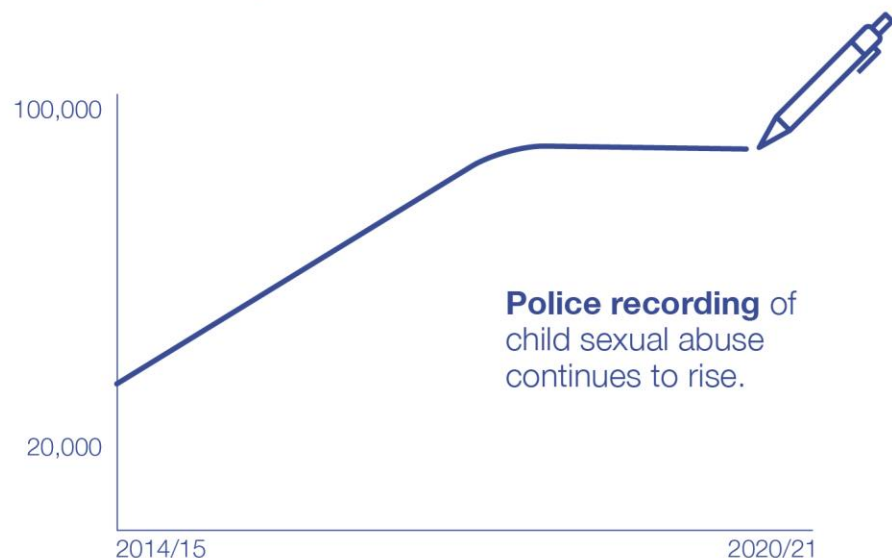
Total CPRs: 2,810

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Child protection registrations due to sexual abuse (incl. multiple¹) as a rate per 10,000 children, Wales, 2020/21

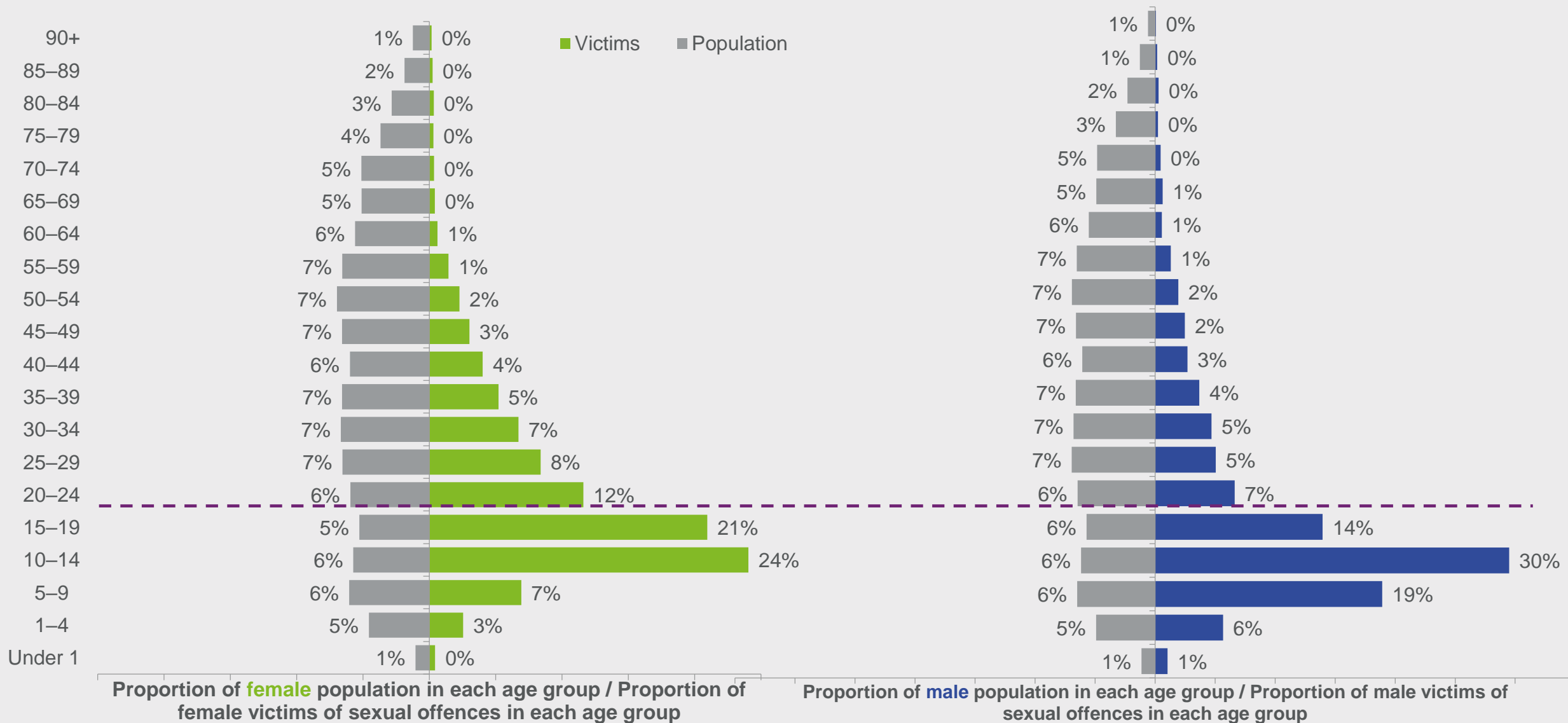


More reporting of child sexual abuse but fewer prosecutions and convictions

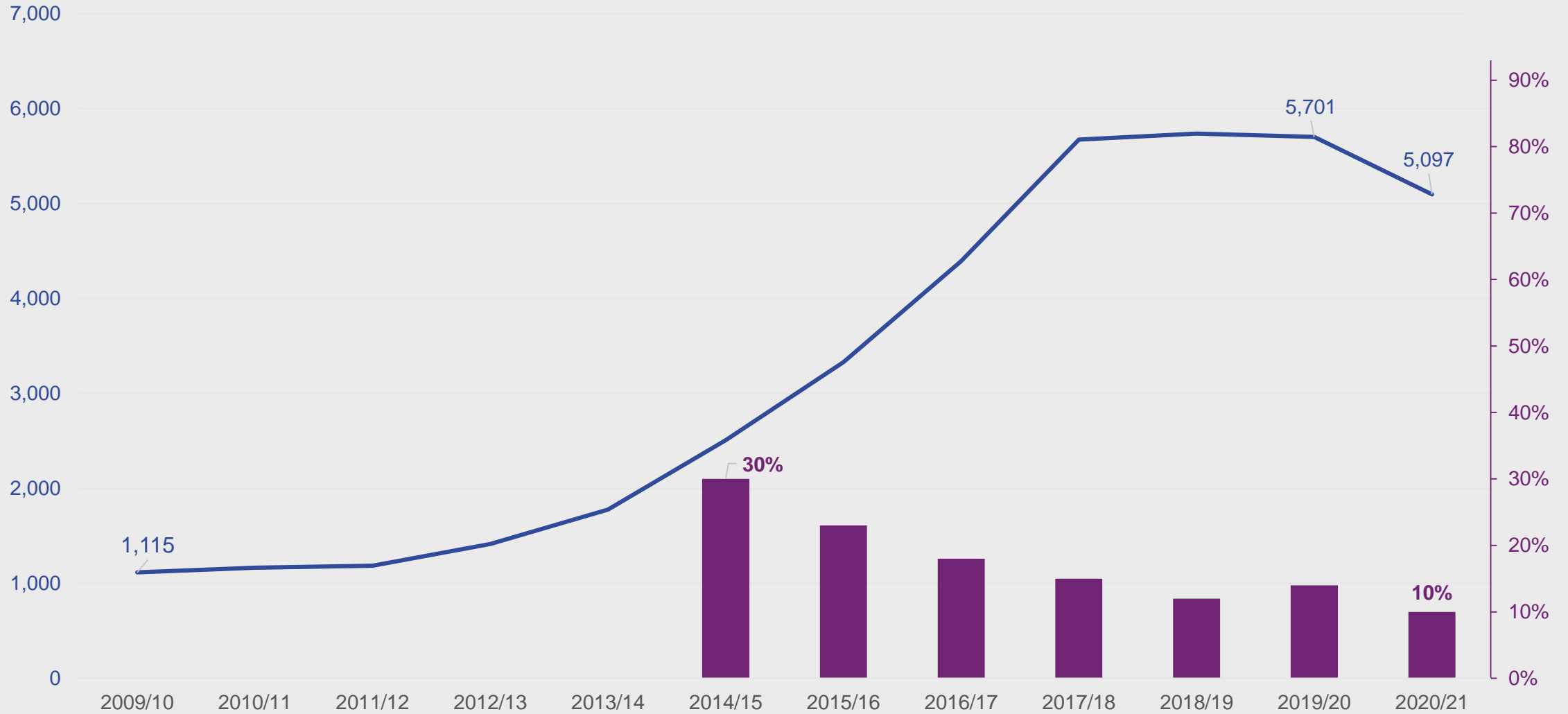


Sources: Home Office, Police recorded crime and outcomes 2020/21; Ministry of Justice, Criminal justice system statistics 2020; FOI request. Please note: numbers rounded to the nearest hundred.

Ages of victims of sexual offences in police data (Office for National Statistics, 2021)



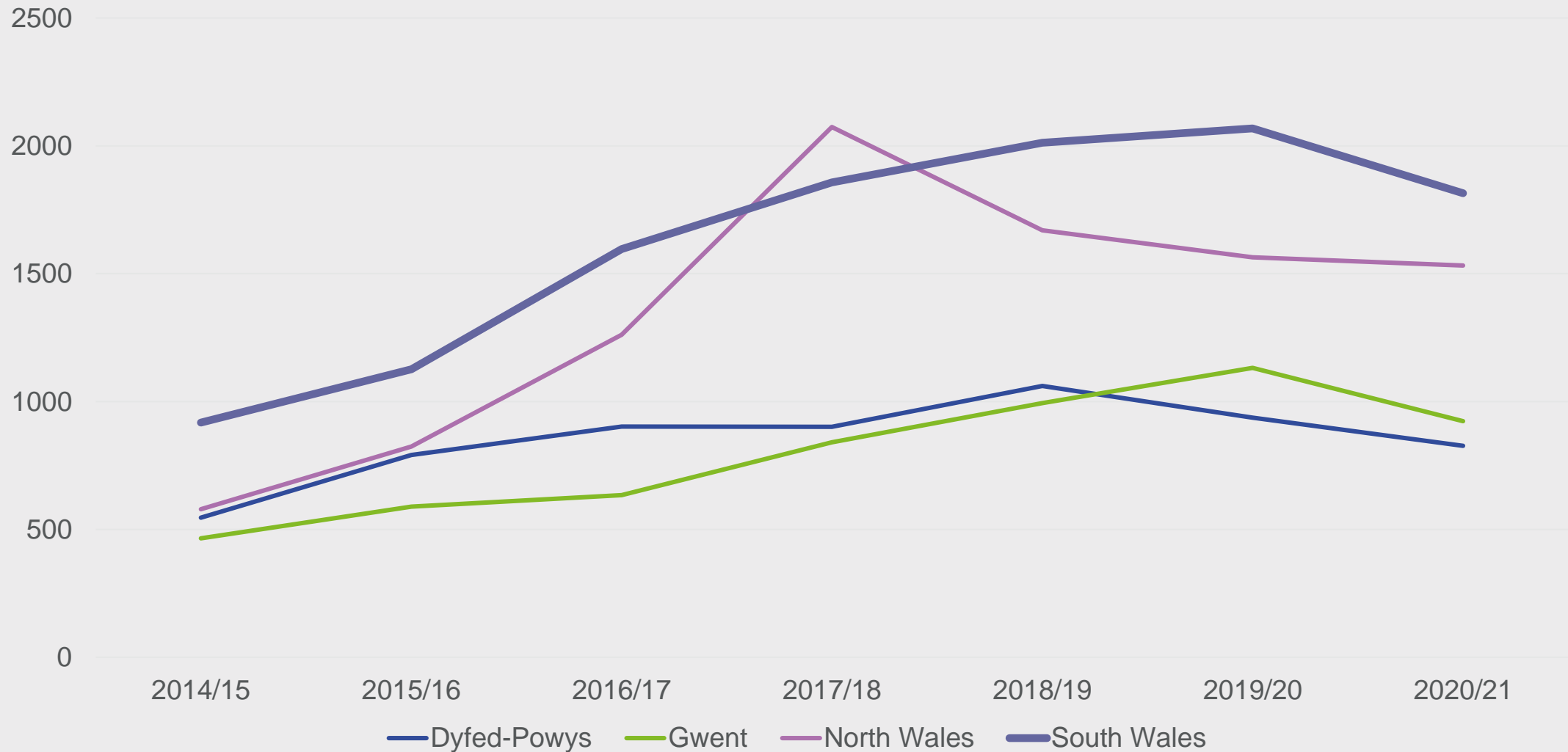
Child sexual abuse offences recorded by the police in Wales increased significantly..



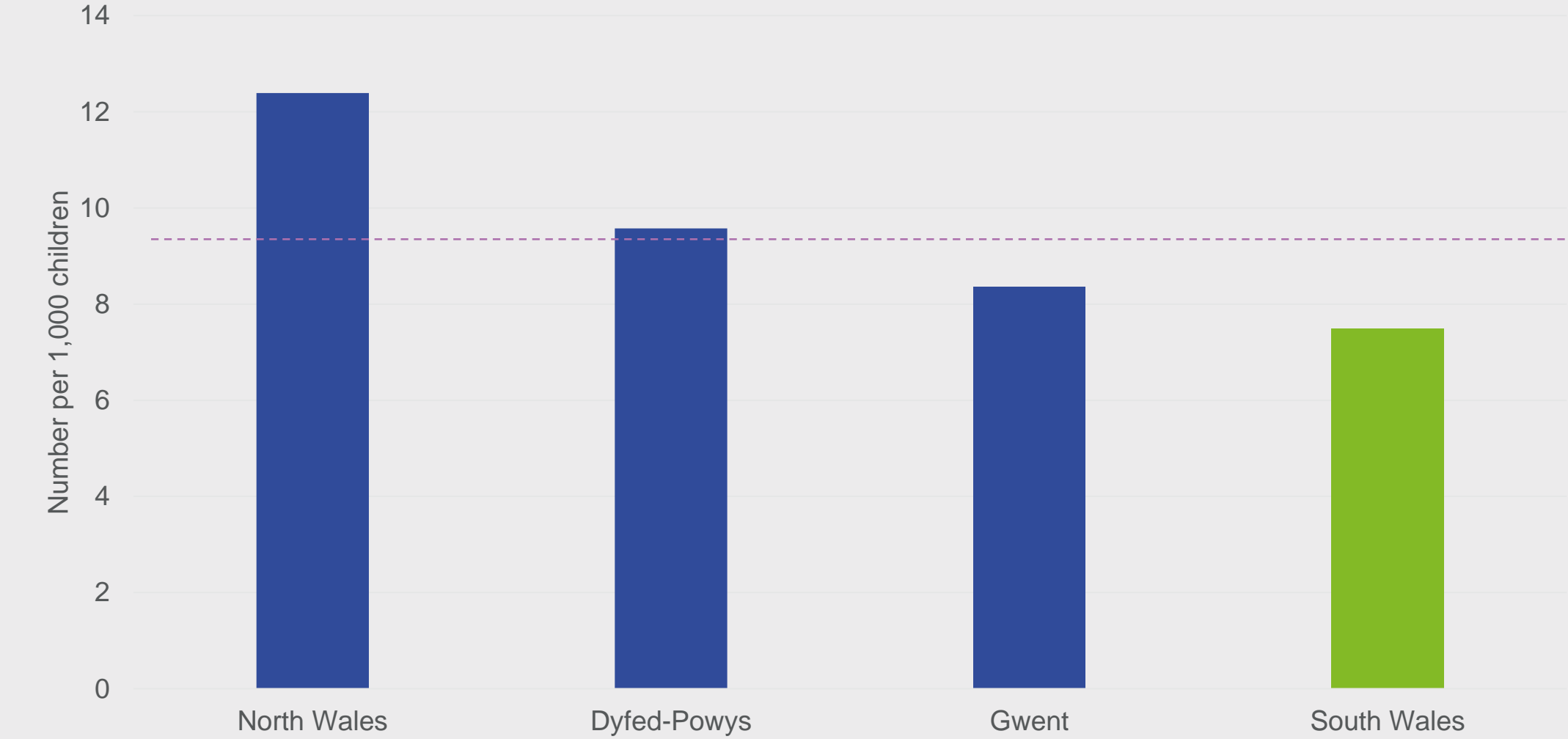
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... while the charge rate fell by two thirds

Child sexual abuse offences by police force, Wales, 2014/15-2020/21¹⁵



Child sexual abuse offences per 1,000 children, Wales police forces in 2020/21



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----- Wales average

Barriers to identifying and naming child sexual abuse

Time constraints reduced staff ability to build relationships with children, which in turn reduced the number of disclosures they received.

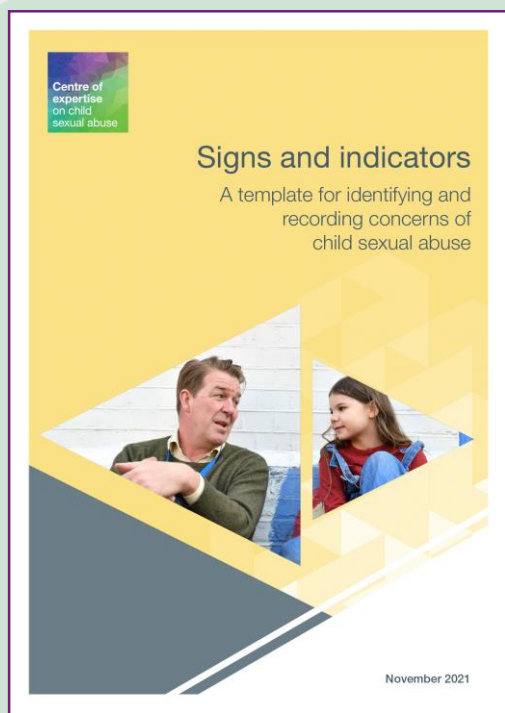
Differences in practitioners' level of knowledge in working with cases of child sexual abuse; lack of training.

Caution was expressed with regards to talking to the child about potential abuse, for fear of asking leading questions.

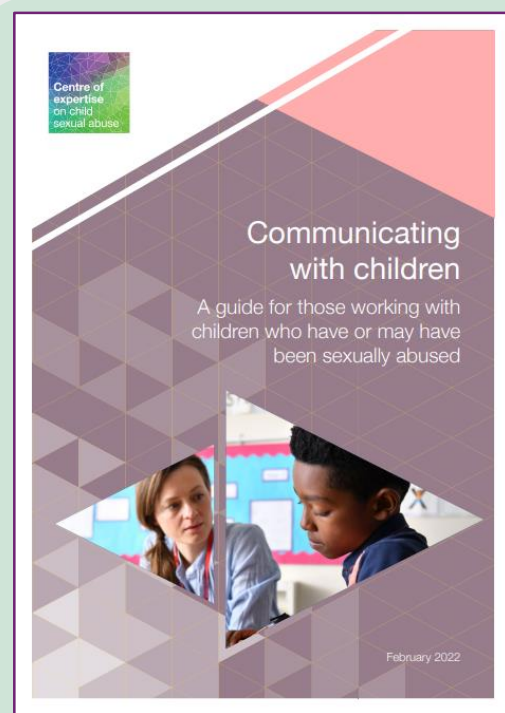
Some appeared hesitant to record their concerns about child sexual abuse in case records if a child had not verbally disclosed

CSA Centre resources to support your practice

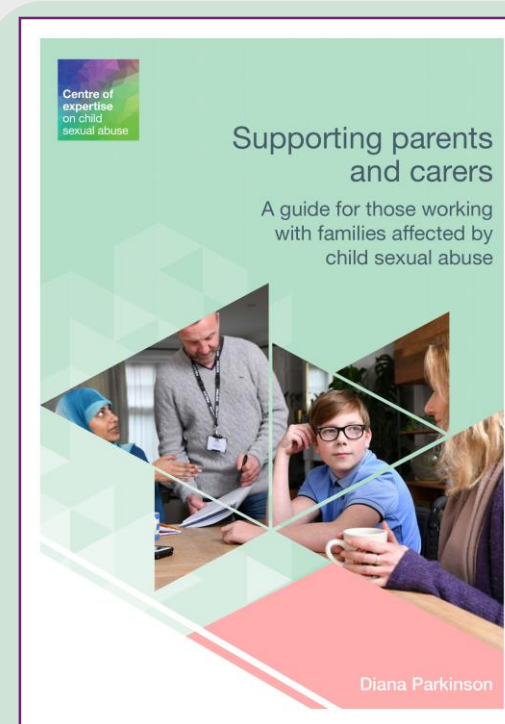
Resources for practice



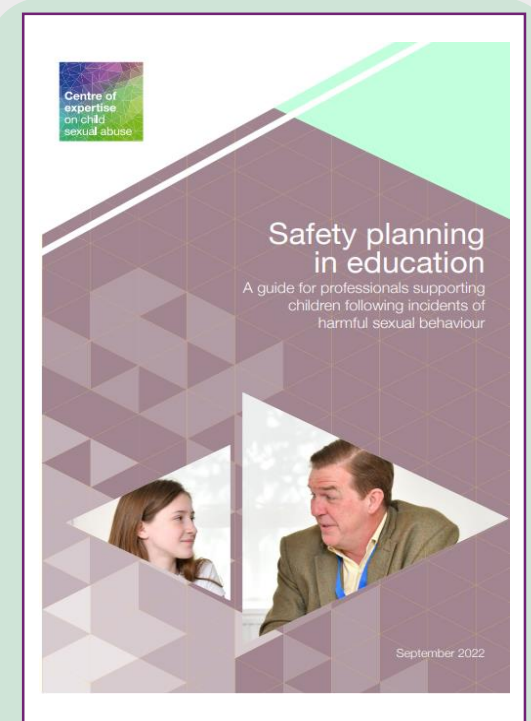
A template for professionals to identify and record concerns of child sexual abuse



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



A guide to support education professionals responding to incidents of harmful sexual behaviour

“Professionals rely too heavily on children to verbally disclose”

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

The impact of sexual abuse on children

How does the impact of child sexual abuse present in children?

Fear

- The child may be scared of the person who has harmed them and be reluctant to see them
- Fear of others
- Lonely and isolated-wary that people will find out about the abuse and reject them

Anxiety

- May feel anxious about the abuse and been threatened by the abuser
- Can manifest as worries about going to school, friendships, being alone, difficulties sleeping

Low mood

- May become quiet and withdraw from friendships, and may appear sad or reluctant to talk.
- Non-organic symptoms (e.g. tummy pain or headaches)
- Immune system may be affected

How does the impact of child sexual abuse present in children?

Difficulty regulating emotions

- Struggle to regulate
- Appearing more irritable, hostile, impatient or angry towards peers or adults

Confusion with roles

- May oscillate between appearing 'grown up' and wanting to look after others, and...
- Appearing more 'child like' in their inability to complete tasks

Sexual pre-occupation/discomfort or confusion about their body

- May display sexualised behaviour which is incongruent with developmental stage, or have sexual knowledge not expected for their age
- May be preoccupied with sexuality, engage in repetitive sexual behaviour, masturbating or being fascinated with body parts
- Puberty particularly challenging time

How does the impact of child sexual abuse present in children?

Grief

- If abuse by someone the child loves or likes, they may experience a grief reaction in relation to loss of trust
- Can also include anticipatory grief

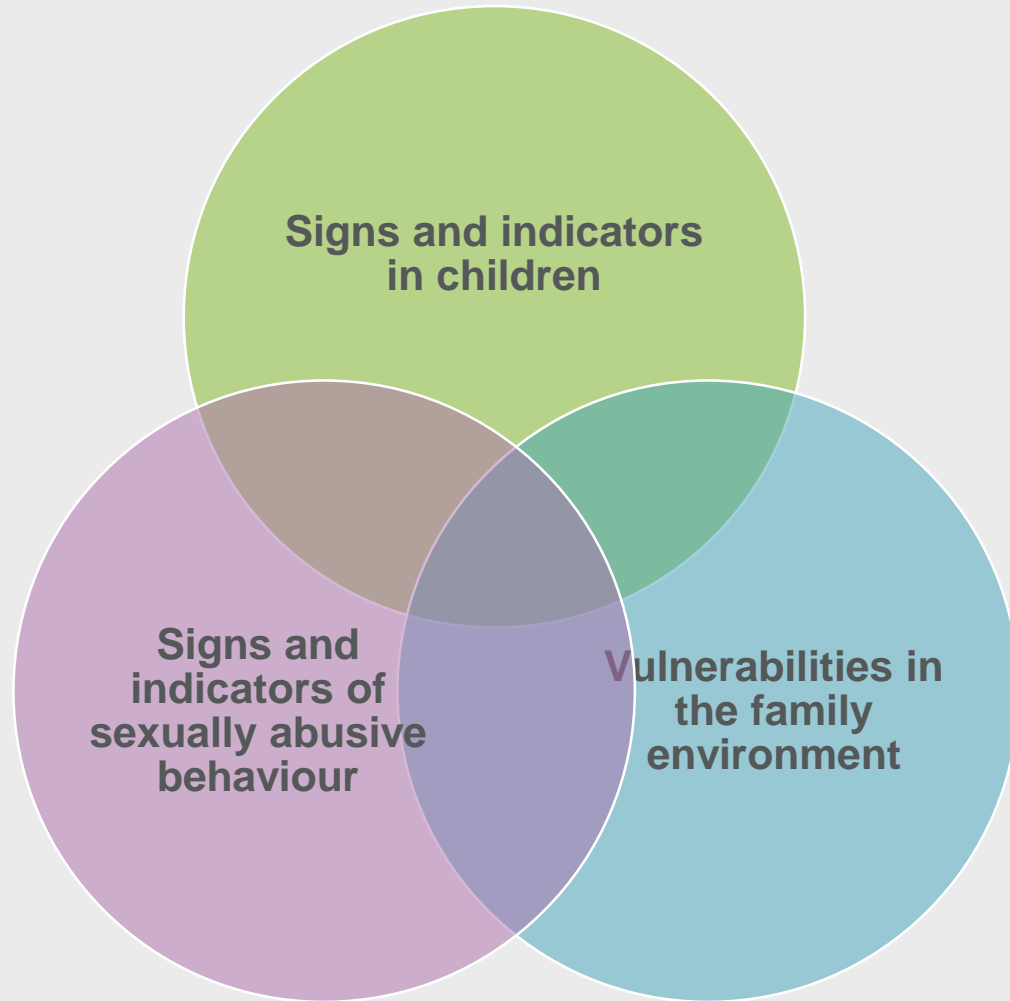
Disrupted relationships with others

- May be less trusting of others
- Or, they may not want to separate from others and may appear dependent on adults around them

Becoming abusive to others

- May wish to have control over others in response to feeling a loss of control in their own lives
- May manifest as bullying

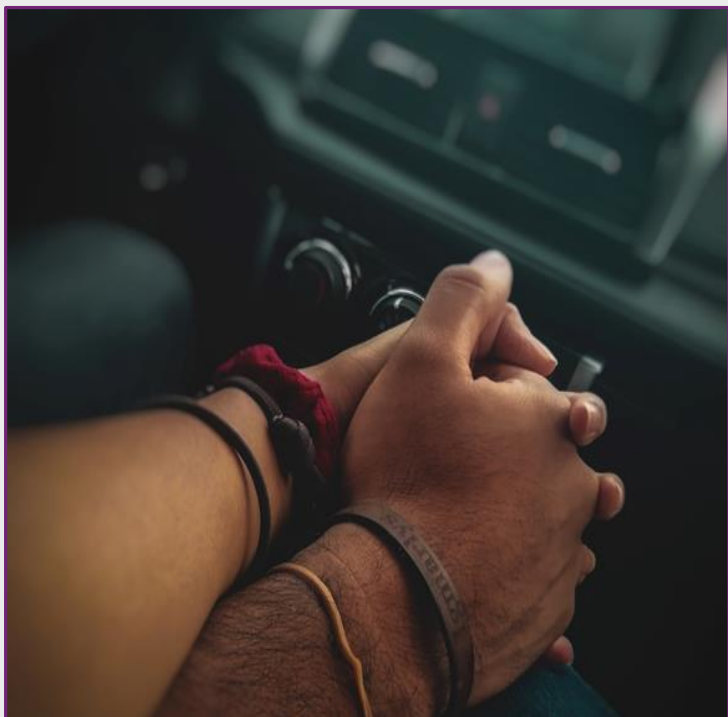
Building a picture of concerns



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Signs and indicators in those around the child



Grooming

Normalising inappropriate and sexual behaviours

Developing an overly exclusive relationship with the child

Controlling both children and adults in the family and their relationships with others

Vulnerabilities in the child's environment

Factors which may increase the opportunities for abuse to occur.

Including:

- Children who live in conditions of neglect are **five times more likely** to be sexually abused than those with no experience of neglect.
- Children who spend time in residential care are **four times more likely** to be (or have been) sexually abused than those who live only in a family home.
- Disabled children are **at least twice as likely** as non-disabled children to be targeted by abusers.

Factors which increase the pressure on families and can undermine their ability to protect children.

Including:

- Children who live in a household with someone misusing alcohol or drugs are **three times more likely** to be sexually abused than children not exposed to parental substance misuse.
- **Over a half of children** who are sexually abused also experience other forms of child abuse, most frequently emotional abuse or domestic abuse.

The aim of our resource

To create a **common language** among professionals to discuss, record and share concerns that a child is being, or has been sexually abused.

It aims to help you:

- Consider, identify and clearly record signs which indicate that sexual abuse is or has been taking place
- Discuss and explore concerns that a child is being or has been sexually abused, and communicate these concerns to other organisations and agencies

Do note, it is not a diagnostic tool, nor is it intended for use as a “risk assessment” or a “box-ticking exercise”

Supporting practice in tackling child sexual abuse: A film series for professionals, by professionals

Bitesize:

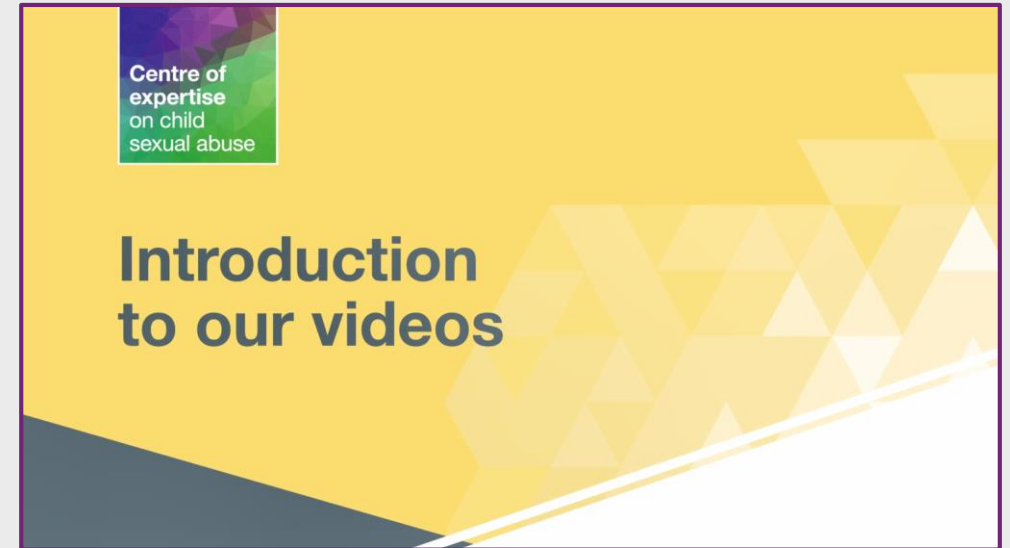
- 12 short videos, less than 5mins each
- Can be watched as a series, as 3 chapters, or in one go!

Accessible:

- Free to watch
- Available on YouTube to watch on desktop, or phone

Concise:

- Short, engaging, supportive content
- Uses animations to highlight key points



<https://www.youtube.com/c/CSACentre/playlists>



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Communicating with children

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



“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. Female, aged 18

Giving children the confidence to tell

It is a very powerful motivator for young people to disclose if an adult takes notice of their struggles and asks about them.

“When someone noticed the signs and impact of abuse and asked about it”

Containing the secret and the 'pressure cooker' effect

Three key dynamics in the process of 'containing the secret', whereby children and young people:

- actively withhold the secret (for fear of the consequences of telling)
- are torn between needing to tell (to make the abuse stop and to get support) and wanting to keep the secret (for fear of the consequences of telling) – the 'pressure cooker effect'
- confide in the context of a trusting relationship.

It is important to understand the emotional struggle of the second stage, in order to be able to support children and young people empathically, respectfully and patiently through their disclosure journey.

Taking a graduated approach

“I have noticed you don’t seem yourself at the moment”

“I have noticed you shouting a lot at the moment”

“I notice you are very quiet at the moment”

“Help me understand”

“Can you tell me more about that”

“I have noticed X and would like to understand more about that”

‘Sometimes we worry about what may happen if we tell someone what is going on (e.g. that we’ll get into trouble/that we’ve been told to keep it a secret/that we’ll upset people) – can you tell me what you are worried may happen if you tell someone what is going on?’

‘Sometimes things happen that young people find really difficult to talk about’

How it can help

Dispelling some of the myths surrounding what can and should happen when children talk to professionals about sexual abuse, it will help you to:

- respond when you are concerned that a child is being sexually abused (because, for example, you have **noticed** a change in their behaviour)

know what you **should** and should not do or say in your conversations with children

consider the situation that each **individual child** is in, so you can plan your conversations with them

understand the professional behaviours that can give children the **confidence** to tell

make a **record** of your communication with the child

The guide explains what may be going on for children when they are being sexually abused; what **prevents** them from telling about their abuse; and what **you** can do to give them **confidence** to tell you what is happening

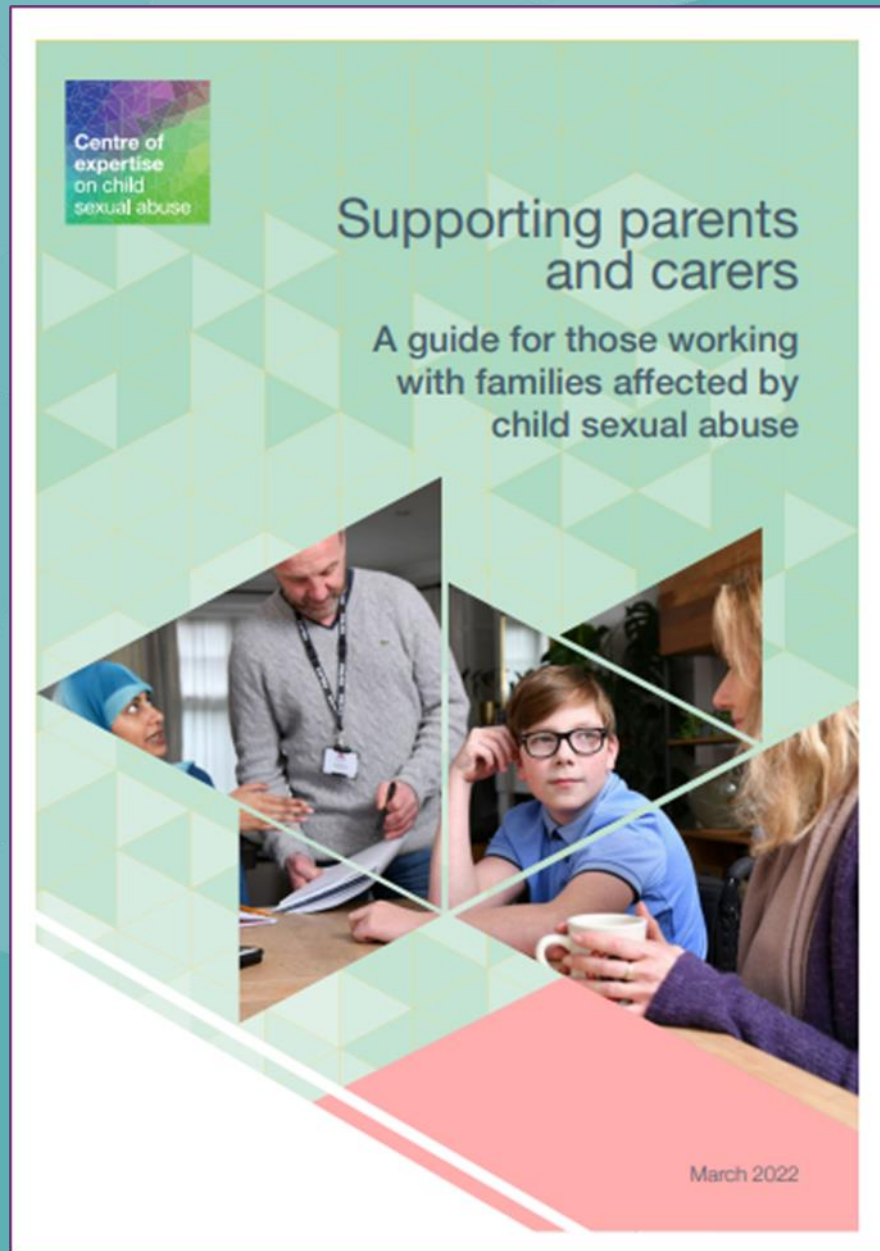
Let them know what will happen if they tell

“The only grown up that spoke to me about what would happen if I spoke about my abuse was the person who was abusing me.”

(May Baxter-Thornton)

Supporting parents and carers

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



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

Why parents need support

Support helps parents to mitigate the impact of the abuse on their child

Support helps parents and their children engage with services

Support helps parents to protect their child from further abuse

Providing effective support to parents whose circumstances and/or backgrounds mean they may have particular needs

- Parents experiencing domestic abuse
- Fathers
- Parents with learning disabilities/difficulties
- Parents experiencing other forms of stigma and discrimination



Resources and sources of information for parents

Organisations supporting parents

Organisations supporting women and children from minority ethnic groups

Online resources for parents

Easy-read booklets for parents with learning difficulties/disabilities

Books on caring for a child who has been sexually abused

Safety Planning in Education



The resource covers:

- Key actions for a school when an incident of harmful sexual behaviour has occurred, including a safety plan template for recording and reviewing arrangements
- Broader practical advice such as how to communicate with children, and their parents

Dedicated child sexual abuse training



We see our role as **pivotal** in addressing the gaps in existing training. We offer 16 further courses, a number of which are CPD certified, including:

- Sibling sexual abuse
- Harmful sexual behaviour
- Practice Leads Programme

Including 'Train the Trainer,' multi-agency offerings and completely tailored bespoke offerings.

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

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:

- Identifying and responding to disclosures of child sexual abuse
- Institutional child sexual abuse
- Looked-after children and child sexual abuse
- Children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviour

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

Any questions?



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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/>

Thank you!

For more information please contact:

info@csacentre.org.uk



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