

The logo for the Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse. It features a square background with a geometric, low-poly pattern 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

# **Driving improved practice in response to child sexual abuse: the Child Sexual Abuse Response Pathway**

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# What we'll be talking about

Background and practice context

Introduction to the CSA Centre's Response Pathway

Overview of the guidance and resources available throughout the Response Pathway, and how it can support professionals to respond to child sexual abuse

# Shared vision

**Enable** children to talk about child sexual abuse and to be heard by professionals

Improve the way professionals **identify** child sexual abuse.

Improve the way children who have experienced sexual abuse are **supported and protected** by professionals.

**Improve the response** to families of children who are sexually abused.

# What is the Response Pathway?

- The Child Sexual Abuse Response Pathway is an **interactive online resource**
- 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.**



## Overall aims:

Centre the needs and **perspectives** of children in professionals' identification responses



Clarify professionals' actions and considerations at identification and response decision points



Support improved professional response through evidence and good practice-based guidance



Children who experience sexual abuse get the **support and protection** they need

# The audience

The **Response Pathway** is designed for professionals working with children, each with their own safeguarding responsibilities.

It's particularly helpful for social workers, teachers, police officers, health professionals and those in the voluntary sector who work with children and families.

**Created to supplement, not replace, existing statutory guidance.**

Carefully grounded in the principles of **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.**




# Background and practice context

Why did we develop this resource?

# 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.



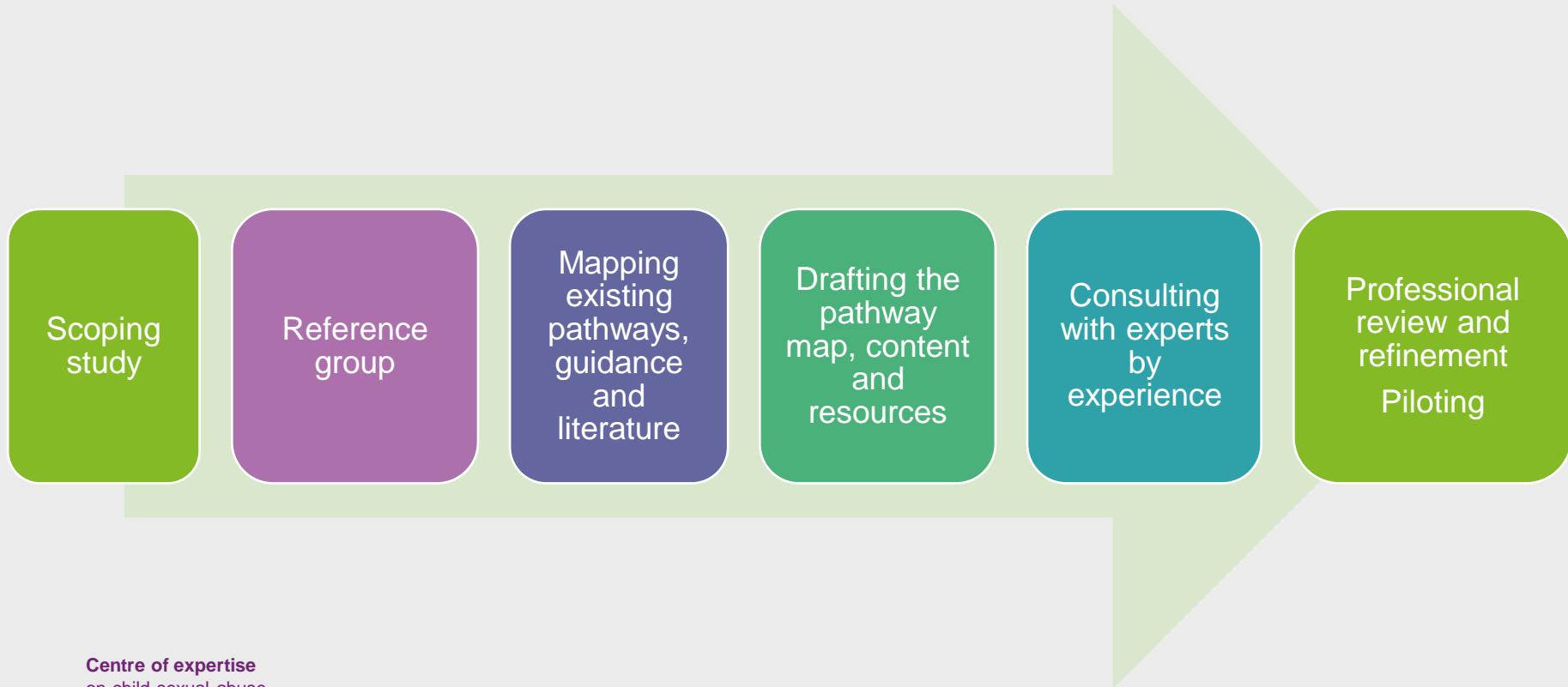
An **overreliance on the criminal justice system** as a means of assessing whether abuse has occurred



# Developing the CSA Centre's Response Pathway

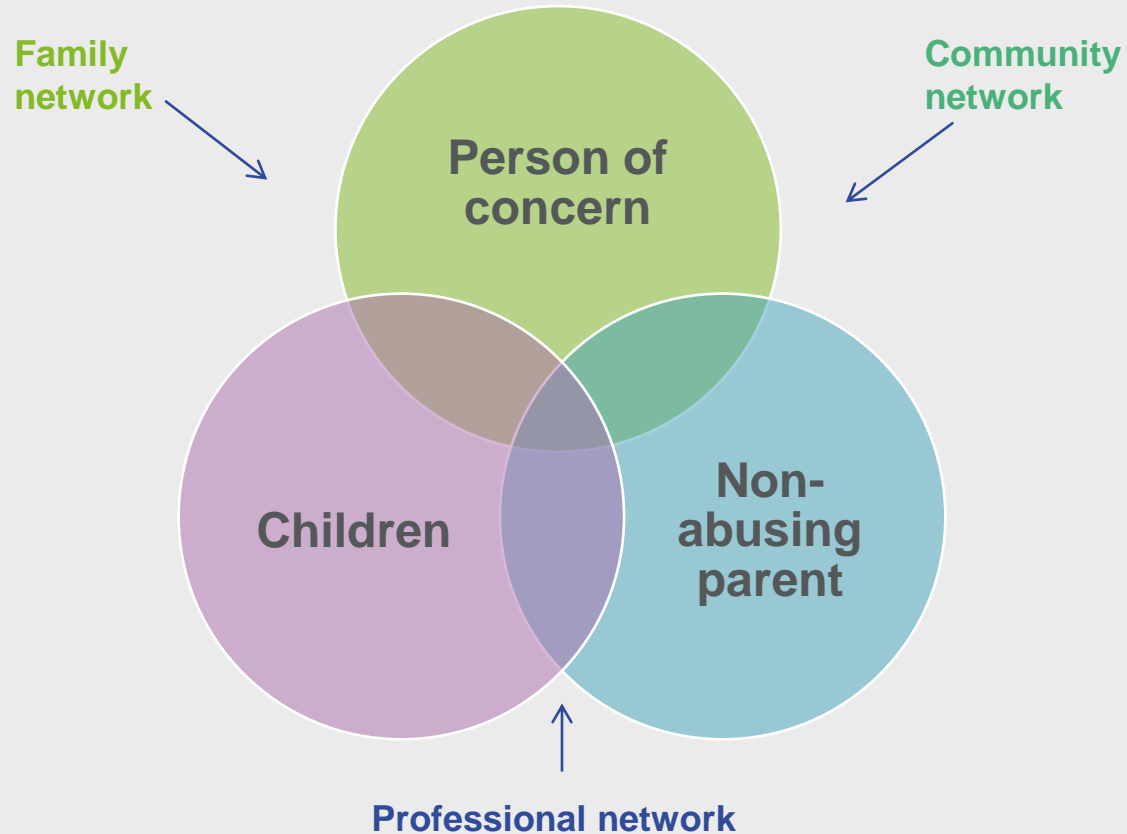
# Developing the Child Sexual Abuse Response Pathway:

it started with a conversation a long time ago... and there has been a developmental process.

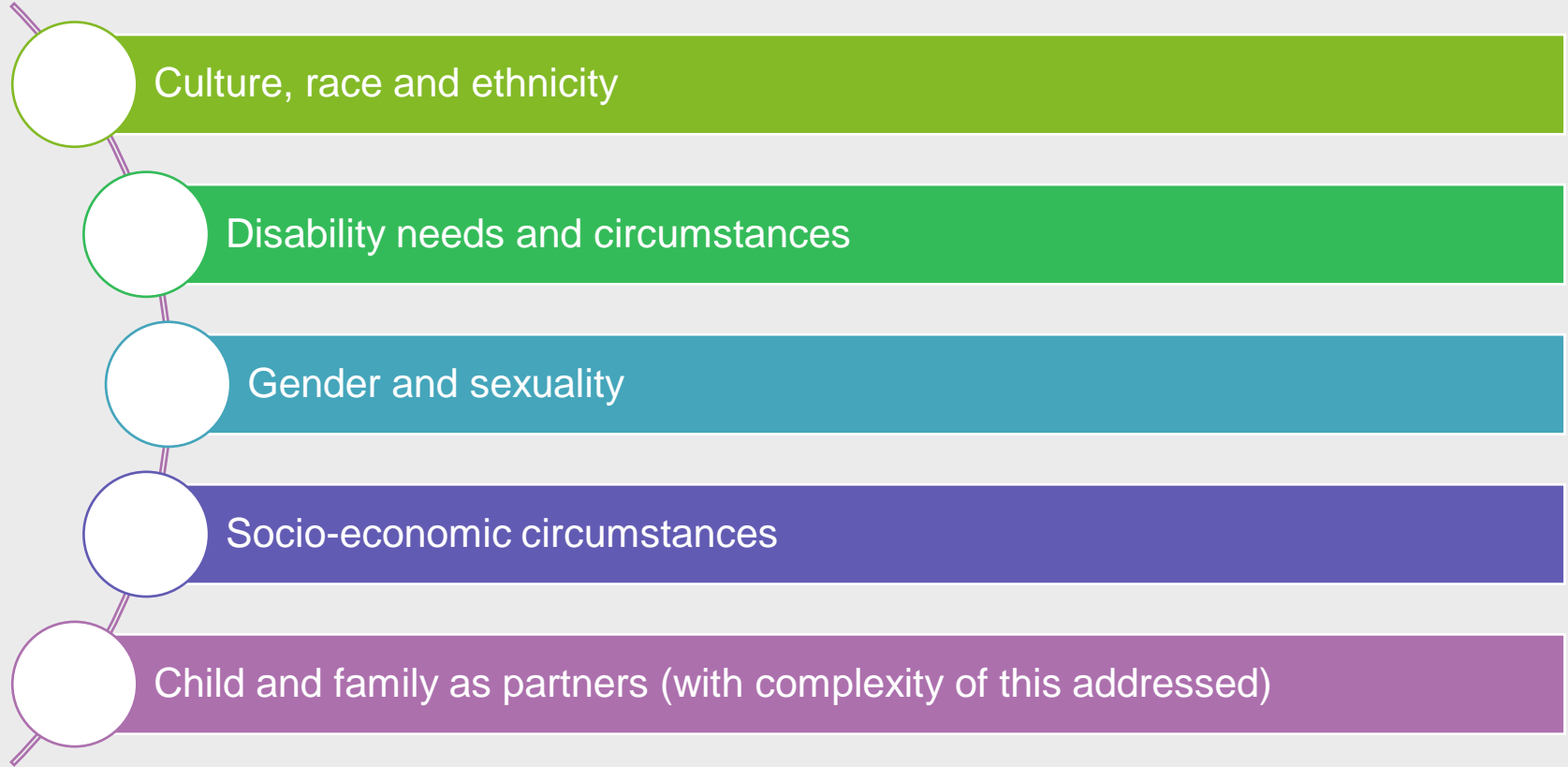


# Content of the CSA Centre's Response Pathway

# A whole family approach



# Rights, respect, recognition



# A focus on all forms of child sexual abuse

Intra-familial child  
sexual abuse

Sibling sexual abuse

Harmful sexual  
behaviours by children  
and young people

Child sexual  
exploitation

Online child sexual  
abuse

Institutional sexual  
abuse

# Partnership with three pilot sites



# Access the Response Pathway via the CSA Centre website

## Use the Response Pathway

Start using our new interactive online resource today to guide your response to concerns of child sexual abuse.

Response Pathway →



<https://www.csacentre.org.uk/child-sexual-abuse-response-pathway/>



# Putting it into practice

A Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review case study

# Putting it into practice:

## A Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review

Liam is white/British

He is aged 10

He lives with his Dad and two brothers (John aged 15 and Calvin aged 17) in the South of England

He told his head teacher that he had been raped by his oldest brother

How can the Response Pathway help professionals to support and protect Liam?

How can the Response Pathway be used to support Calvin, the child who has harmed?

How can the Response Pathway be used to support the whole family?

How can the Response Pathway be used to explain next steps and develop safety plans?

# Support for the headteacher

It had been some time since a child had spoken about sexual abuse and the headteacher was uncertain about what to say to Liam.

The section on '**When a child tells you they are being or have been sexually abused**' provides advice about:

- Your initial response to what the child tells you
- Issues to think about in a follow-up conversation with the child
- Actions you can take to protect and support the child



# Support for the headteacher

## The Headteacher made a referral to children's services

The section on **'Making a referral to children's social care and/or contacting the police'** has guidance on important information to convey in the referral, and how best to support the child and family after the referral has been made.

It also has advice on:

- Supporting the child's relationships with their family and friends
- Supporting the child's education
- Supporting the child's emotional health and wellbeing
- Supporting the child's physical health and wellbeing



# Police investigation starts



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- The school, school counsellor, Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) panel and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) were all told that they could not talk to Liam about his brother until the police investigation and any criminal proceedings were concluded.
- The Response Pathway stresses it is **important for the child to be able to talk about how they are feeling and the impact the abuse has had on them** and their family, without discussing the details of the sexual abuse.
- The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) Guidance on pre-trial therapy is referenced in **‘The child is supported through a child protection plan (reviewed at core group meetings)’** and **‘The child is supported through a child in need plan’**.
- Both these documents give advice about the need for continued support for children, their siblings and their family.

# Undertaking a Joint Social Work and Police Child Protection Enquiry



The social workers and police team carried out their own enquires/investigation with insufficient collaboration.

The section '**Children's social care lead a child protection enquiry (often as part of a joint enquiry)**' provides advice and structure around how this should happen and what a joint approach looks like.



# Child protection plan

The child protection plan for Liam was generic and did not focus on what help and support he would receive.

**‘The child is supported through a child protection plan (reviewed at core group meetings)’** gives advice about taking a whole family approach:

- Support for the child who has harmed – including a range of options from specialist support to everyday support.
- Emphasis on helping children understand the impact of the abuse in a trauma informed way.
- Support for the child who has harmed (in the case of harmful sexual behaviour/sibling sexual abuse)
- Support for the non-abusing parent
- Support for the whole family.



# Police investigation is ongoing

- **The police investigation took 18 months.**
- The document **‘An Officer in the Case is assigned to the police investigation’** gives advice to all professionals about the process of the police investigation and the importance of keeping the child and family updated.
- Both that document and **‘The child is supported through a child protection plan’** (*reviewed at core group meetings*) makes clear the importance of all professionals discussing the progress of the criminal investigation and the impact of delays, bail conditions etc on the child.





# The police investigation ended with no further action

Liam was initially confused about this.

The document ***Police decide whether to send the case to the Crown Prosecution Service for a charging decision*** makes clear the importance of:

- The child and their family being informed about no further action (NFA) in a sensitive and supportive way.
- Ensuring the child and their non-abusing parent(s) understand that the criminal investigation **can be reopened at any point** if further evidence comes to light.

**By being clear and explaining NFA outcomes to parents, the police officer and professionals could ensure that Liam's family fully understood and felt supported**

# Using the Response Pathway in practice

- We are learning through our pilot work the different ways that professionals are using the Response Pathway in practice
- Some professionals using it to understand the whole system better
- It is being used as part of consultation clinics/reflective spaces
- To inform training
- Individual preparation for a particular meeting or process
- Devising plans and enhancing assessments
- Supporting the non-abusing parent and carer

**We encourage you to use it in practice and feedback about how it went.**

**What was useful? What could be improved?**

## Use the Response Pathway today



Scan the QR code to access the Response Pathway:



<https://www.csacentre.org.uk/child-sexual-abuse-response-pathway/>

# Thank you!

For more information please contact:  
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