

The logo for the Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse features a background of overlapping triangles in shades of blue, purple, and green. The text is white and positioned in the lower-left corner of the logo area.

Centre of
expertise
on child
sexual abuse

Managing risk and trauma after online sexual offending. A new practice resource

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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.



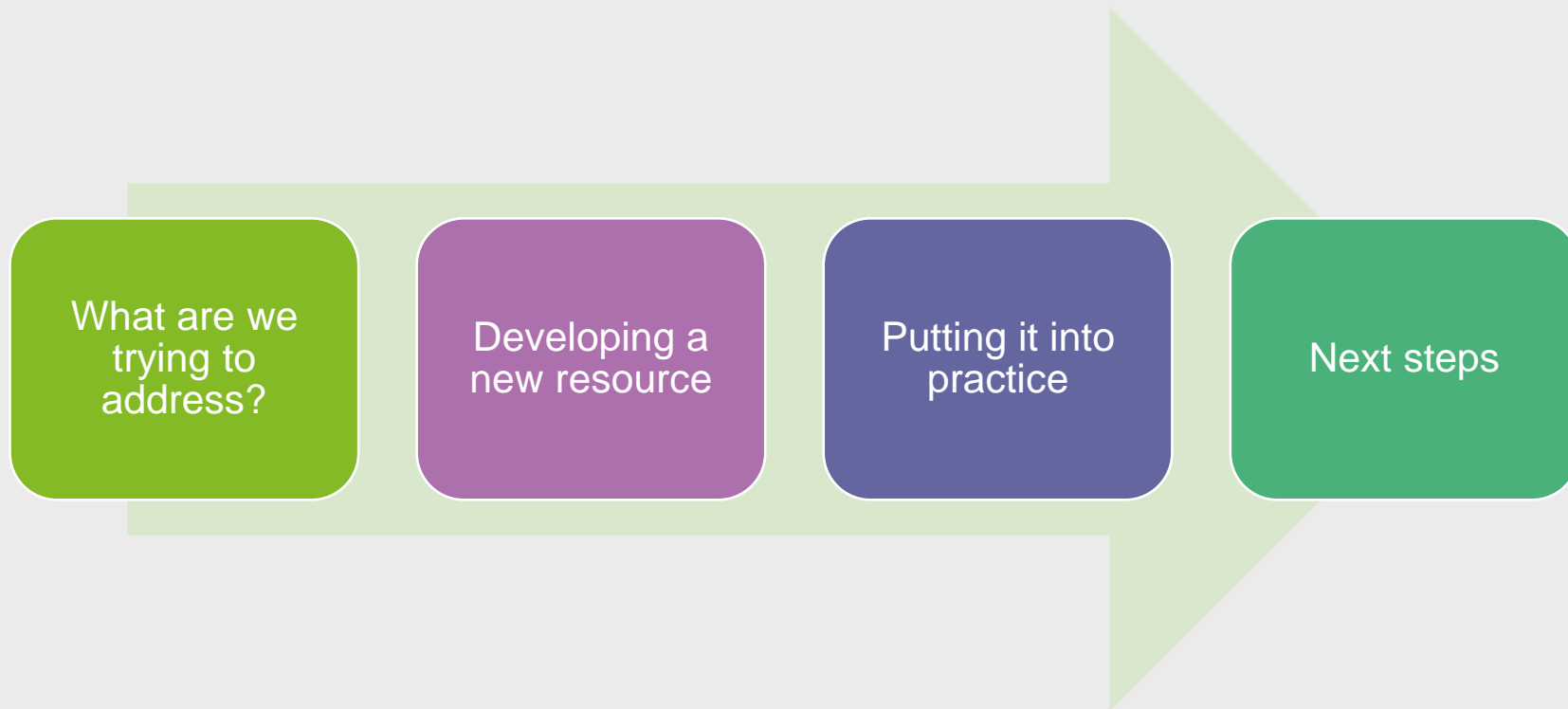
Looking after yourself

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

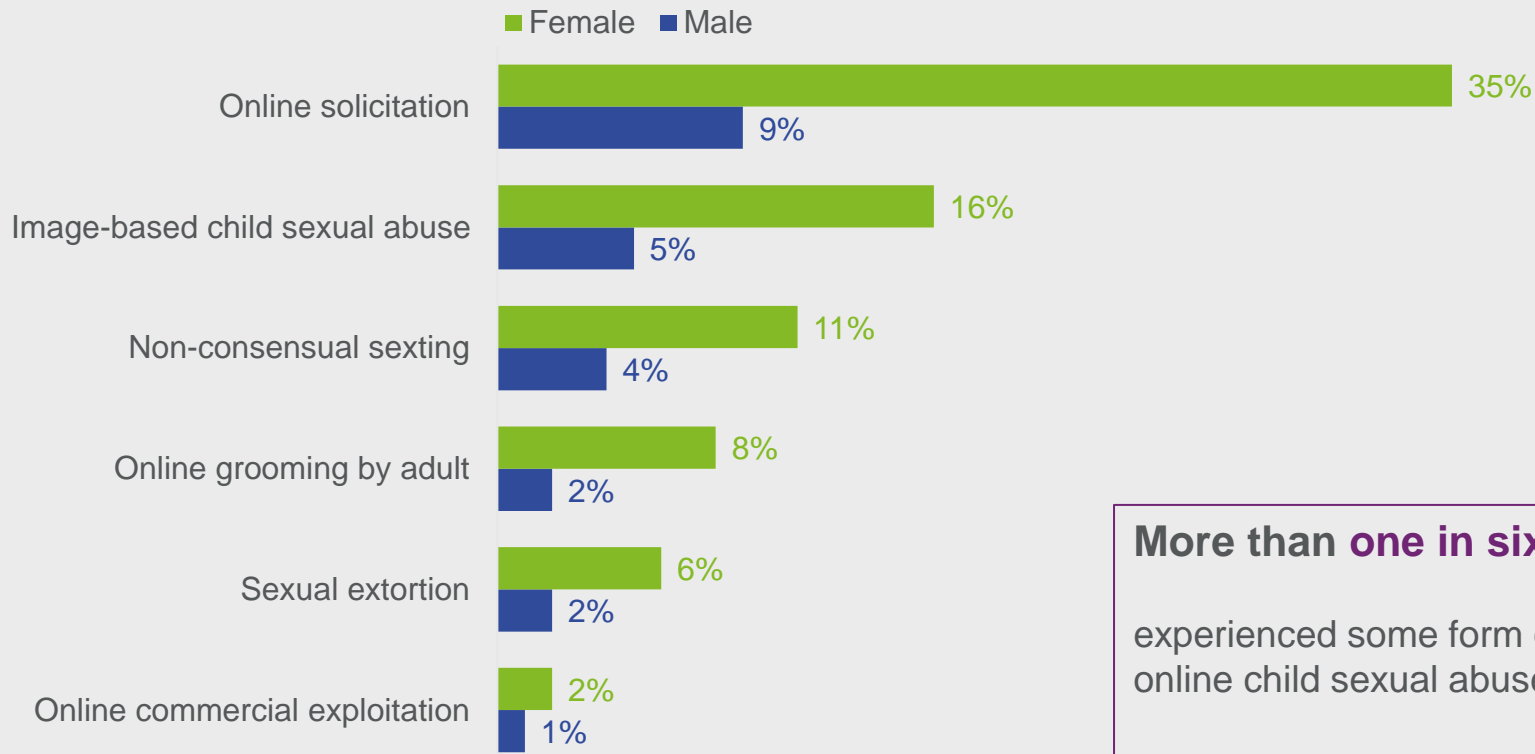
What we'll cover in this session



“Child sexual exploitation and abuse online is one of the most urgent and defining issues of our generation”

(WeProtect Global Alliance, 2021)

Scale of online child sexual abuse

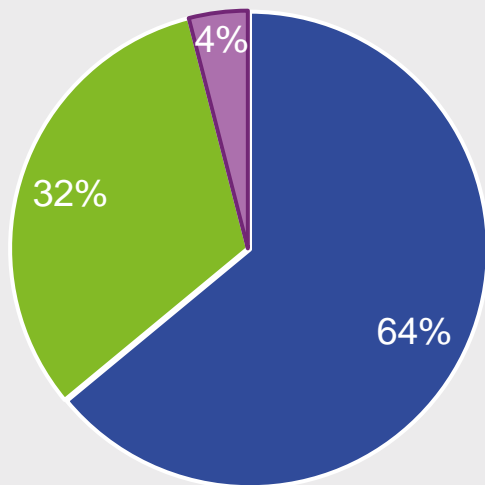


More than one in six

experienced some form of
online child sexual abuse

Contact between the child and the person abusing them

Did the child live with the person abusing them?



■ Yes ■ No ■ Yes (part time)

*“He was my father.
He always had
access to me”*

International Survivors' Survey for now-adult survivors whose child sexual abuse was recorded and/or distributed online

- 58% of respondents reported having had **more than one person** abusing them
- 82% of the primary offenders involved in multiple offender scenarios were **parents or extended family members** of the child
- 56% of the survivors indicated that the abuse began before the age of **four**, and 87% were **11 years of age or younger**. 42% were abused for **more than 10 years**
- 67% of the survivors were **threatened with physical harm** including being told they would die or be killed

C3P (2017)

What challenges do you face in this area of work?

Why and how

Professionals must consider the whole family

“Compared with those convicted of other forms of sexual offending, individuals who access child sexual abuse material are more likely to be married and to have children.”

(Armitage et al, 2023)

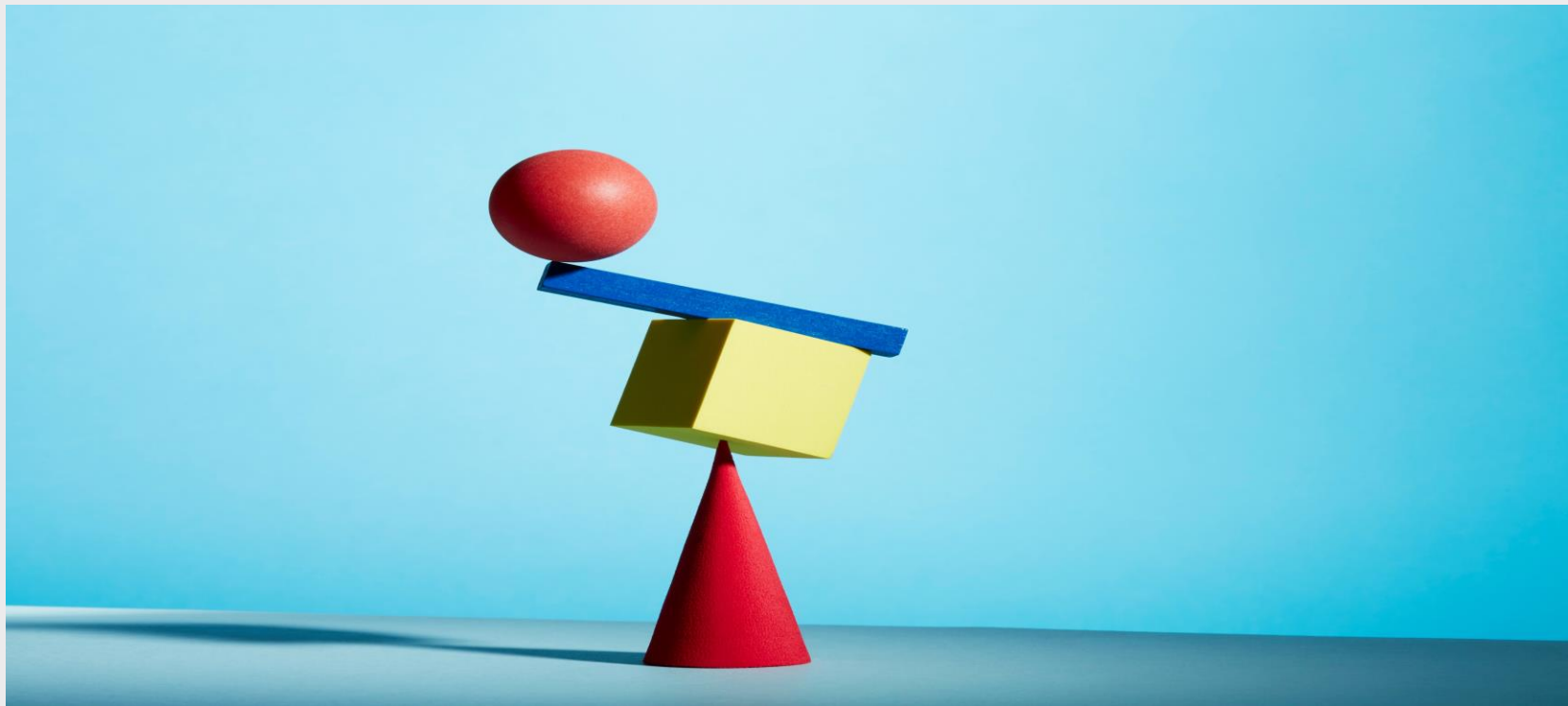


Inconsistencies in practice



Managing risk and trauma

Holding it all in mind



Centre of expertise
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Carefully developed

The idea and guidance was developed, tested and reviewed through a series of roundtable events including:

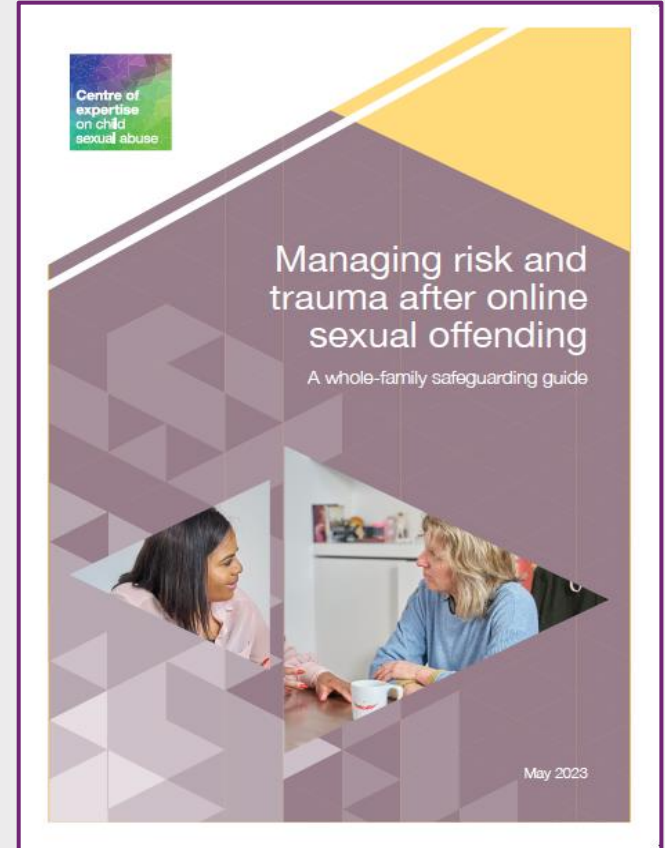
- Experts in UK organisations
- Experts by experience
- Frontline professionals working in the field of child sexual abuse



Managing risk and trauma after online sexual offending

A whole-family safeguarding guide

This guide was created with The Lucy Faithfull Foundation to offer helpful, research and practice-led information so professionals can confidently safeguard and support families at what can be a time of great emotional distress.



Putting it into practice

At a glance

Part A describes the **impacts on the whole family** when a parent or carer in the family home is under investigation for accessing child sexual abuse material.

Part B sets out what is known about the **risks posed** by people who access, possess, or share child sexual abuse material, including areas for consideration in your assessment.

Part C contains advice on providing **effective support** for the whole family.

Part D describes how you can **look after your own wellbeing** when working with families affected by child sexual abuse, and lists useful resources for you and for the family.

Understanding the impact on the whole family

Part A

The impact on the child(ren)

**Parental mental
health difficulties**

**Parental separation
or divorce**

Stigmatisation

**Disruptions in family
bonding
opportunities**

**Parental
imprisonment**

**Knowledge of their
parent's offending**

*“It's an indescribable feeling of **despair**, and it comes with a lot of emotions: **shame; grief; embarrassment; association; worry;** your **reputation's** on the line, you worry about your home being a **target**. There's a hell of a lot to process, and then on top of it, you've got to go to work and carry on as normal, and then you're told you're **not allowed to speak to anyone**”*

(A partner of a male arrested for accessing images of child sexual abuse. Quoted in Armitage et al, 2023)

Understanding the impact on the non-offending parent

The strongest emotions following 'The Knock' appear to relate to:

1. The shock of the discovery
2. The turmoil arising from their difficulties involved in making sense of the revelation

Trying to make sense of what has happened can lead to making excuses, denial and minimisation

Understanding the reactions of the non-offending parent



*For many, the picture emerging of their partner is far removed from what they know (or think they know) of the person they love and trust – so much so that their initial reactions are likely to include “**It can’t possibly be true,**” or “**You must have the wrong person.**”*

Increased risk of suicide

There is a recognised increase in the risk of suicide amongst men who have been arrested for accessing child sexual abuse images with risk for suicide estimated to be **100 times higher** than that reported in the general population.

(Key et al., 2021)

Several complex, interlinking factors have been identified as associated with risk, including:

- Shame
- Absence of prior criminal contact
- Impact of a criminal investigation

Identifying and understanding risk and protective factors

Part B

Do those who sexually abuse online, also commit offline child sexual abuse?



Cross-over offending and child sexual abuse images

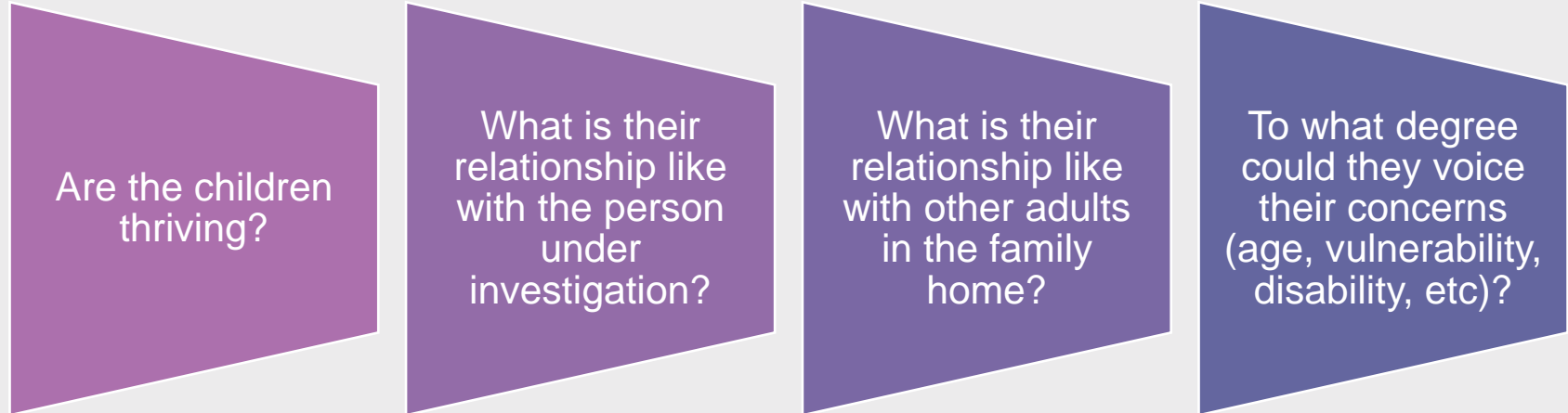
Research suggests adults who have accessed child sexual abuse images present a **relatively low risk of re-offending** through committing an offline offence

In fact, the risk of 'cross-over' (moving from online offending to offline offending or vice versa) is more likely to be **from offline offending to viewing child sexual abuse images** than the other way around.

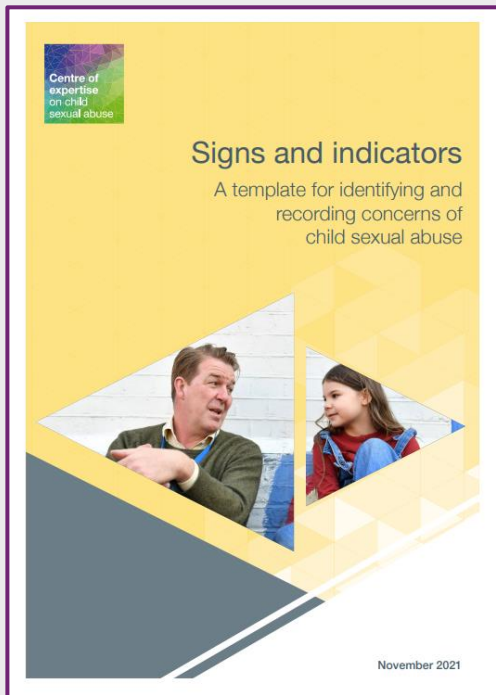
It is important professionals look for signs that the children in the family home may already have been sexually abused.

Making initial decisions about risk and safety

Knowing that the risk of 'cross-over' is more likely to be from **offline offending** to **viewing child sexual abuse images**, professionals need to look out for signs that children in the home have been sexually abused.. For example:



Noticing the signs and indicators



You can use the **Signs and Indicators Template** to help you think about:

- Any physical, emotional or behavioural signs of sexual abuse the child has shown
- Any behaviours displayed by the offending adult which might suggest they pose a risk to their own child(ren)
- Any factors within the family or environment which may increase opportunities for abuse to occur

<http://www.csacentre.org.uk/knowledge-in-practice/practice-improvement/signs-indicators-template/>

Providing supportive responses to the whole family

Part C

Key elements of a supportive response

Listen and avoid making assumptions

Be credible

Be direct and honest

Be reassuring and humane

Be accessible

Be responsive

Be informative

Share a message of hope

Let the family know where to go for additional support and information

Support for the child

- ✓ Mitigate the impact
- ✓ Remain calm
- ✓ Offer reassurance
- ✓ Be honest
- ✓ Separate the person from the behaviour
- ✓ Plan interventions in a way that reflects best practice
- ✓ Be consistent

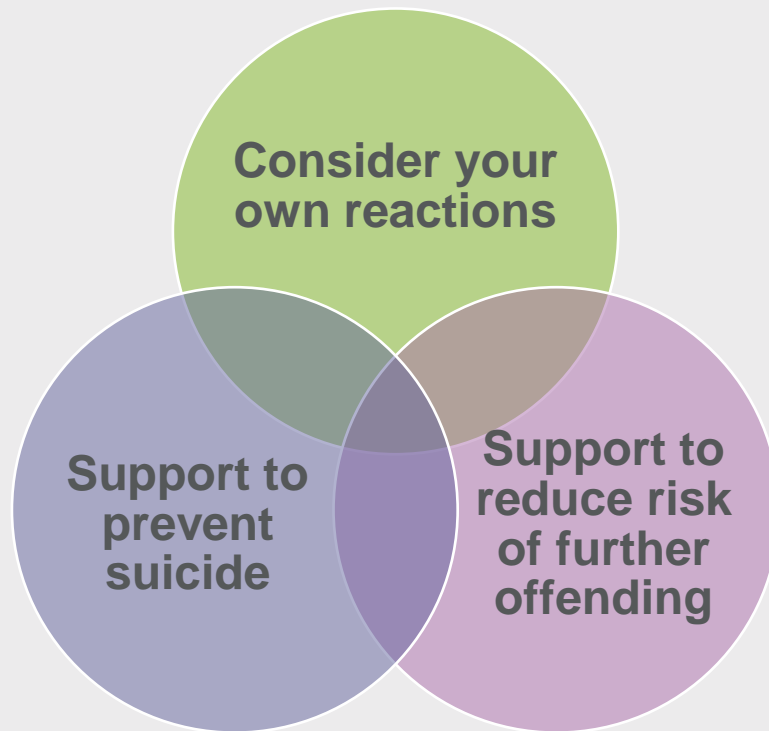


Support for the non-offending parent



- ✓ Share information honestly and check they have understood it
- ✓ Help them process what has happened
- ✓ Help them manage family life during the police investigation
- ✓ Help them consider what to tell their child(ren)

Support for the offending parent



Taking care of yourself



How might you use the resource in your work?



Any questions?



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!

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