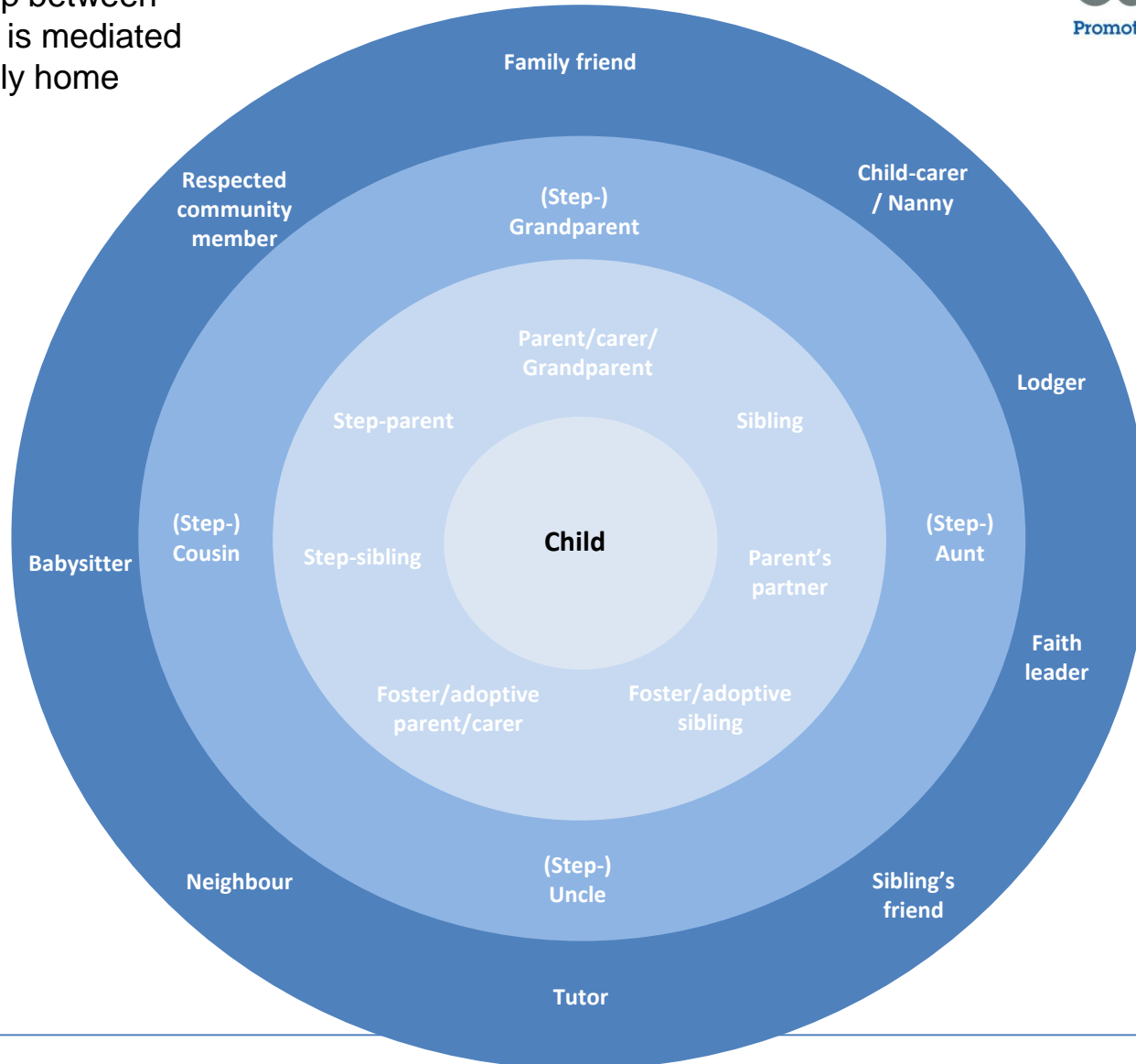


# Child Sexual Abuse in the Family Environment

- Recently published report on scale/nature of CSA in England which is currently detected and undetected by statutory agencies
- Focusing in particular on abuse within the family

## Family environment

Where relationship between victim/perpetrator is mediated by the family/family home



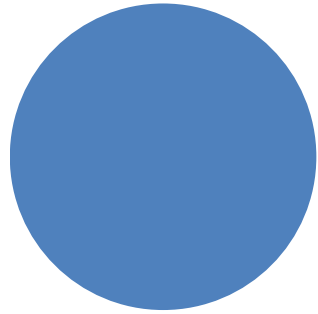
# Research

- Rapid Evidence Assessment
- Data collection (April 2012 – March 2014)
  - All police forces, all cases of CSA
  - CIN census and Looked After Children
- Call for evidence
- Site visits
- Oral evidence
- Focus groups
- Survivor Survey (756 respondents – largest ever)
- Qualitative research with children and young people (NSPCC / University of Beds)

# Prevalence of CSA

- May-Chahal and Cawson, 2005 – 10% of adults aged 18-24 had experienced contact sexual abuse (6% of boys, 11% of girls), defined as non-consensual sexual touching and/or intercourse under the age of 16
- Bebbington et al, 2010 – 8.3% of all respondents experienced contact sexual abuse (11.1% of females and 5.3% of males), defined as being touched and sexual intercourse without consent under the age of 16
- Radford et al, 2011 – 11.3% of adults aged 18-24 had experienced contact sexual abuse, using the definition from the Working Together guidance for child protection in England
- Bellis et al, 2014 – 6.3% of adults experienced contact sexual abuse (where perpetrator was at least five years older)

Model using  
'multiple  
systems  
estimation'



Estimated incidence  
c.425,000

**CSA / CSAFE**

**April 2012 - March  
2014**

Count of all  
victims from all  
data sources



In system  
49,673 CSA  
9,066 CSAFE

Police data



Reported to police  
37,844 CSA  
8,932 CSAFE



Excluding 'no crimes'  
32,352 CSA  
6,738 CSAFE



Detected  
9,921 CSA  
2,371 CSAFE



Convictions (crimes)  
6,414 crimes

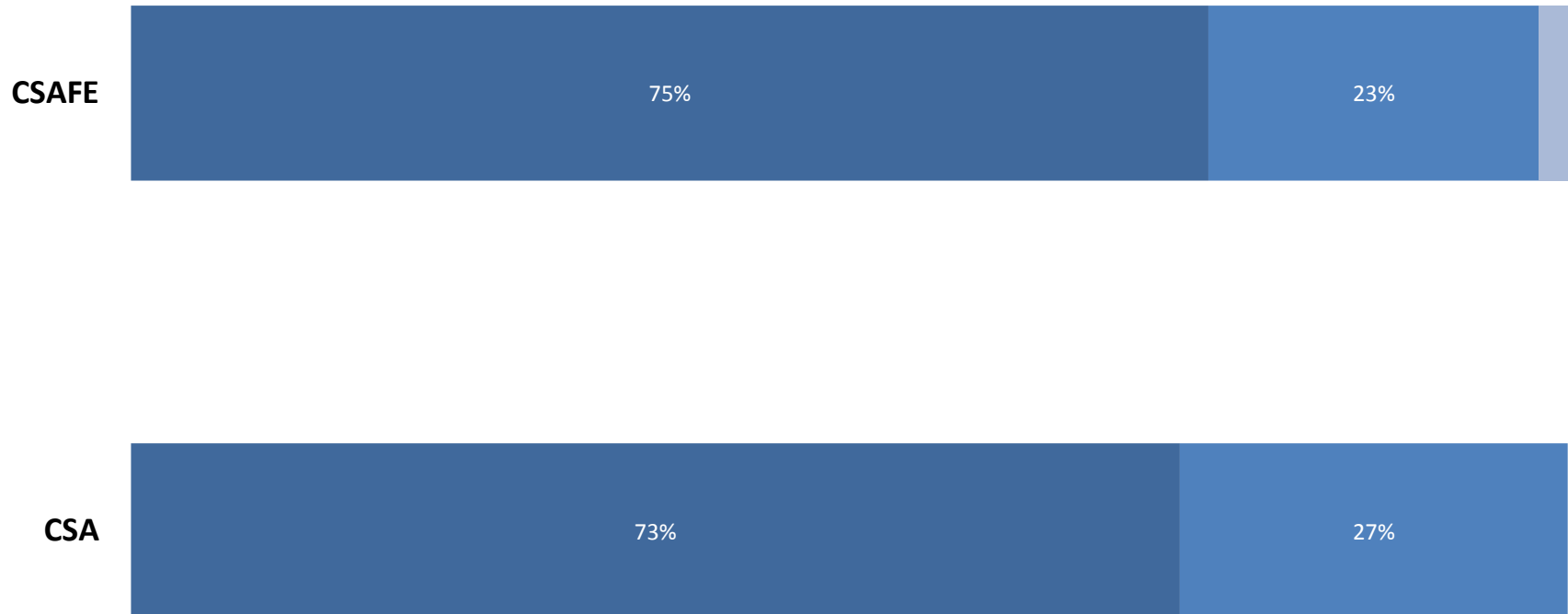
The data request was issued to police forces in October 2014 and therefore reflects the status of investigations at the time of data collation by each individual force.

This diagram refers to the number of *victims* of CSA, rather than crimes. However, the conviction data refers to the number of CSA related crimes for which perpetrators have been charged and convicted. Many of these convictions will relate to crimes which were committed before the specific period under analysis.

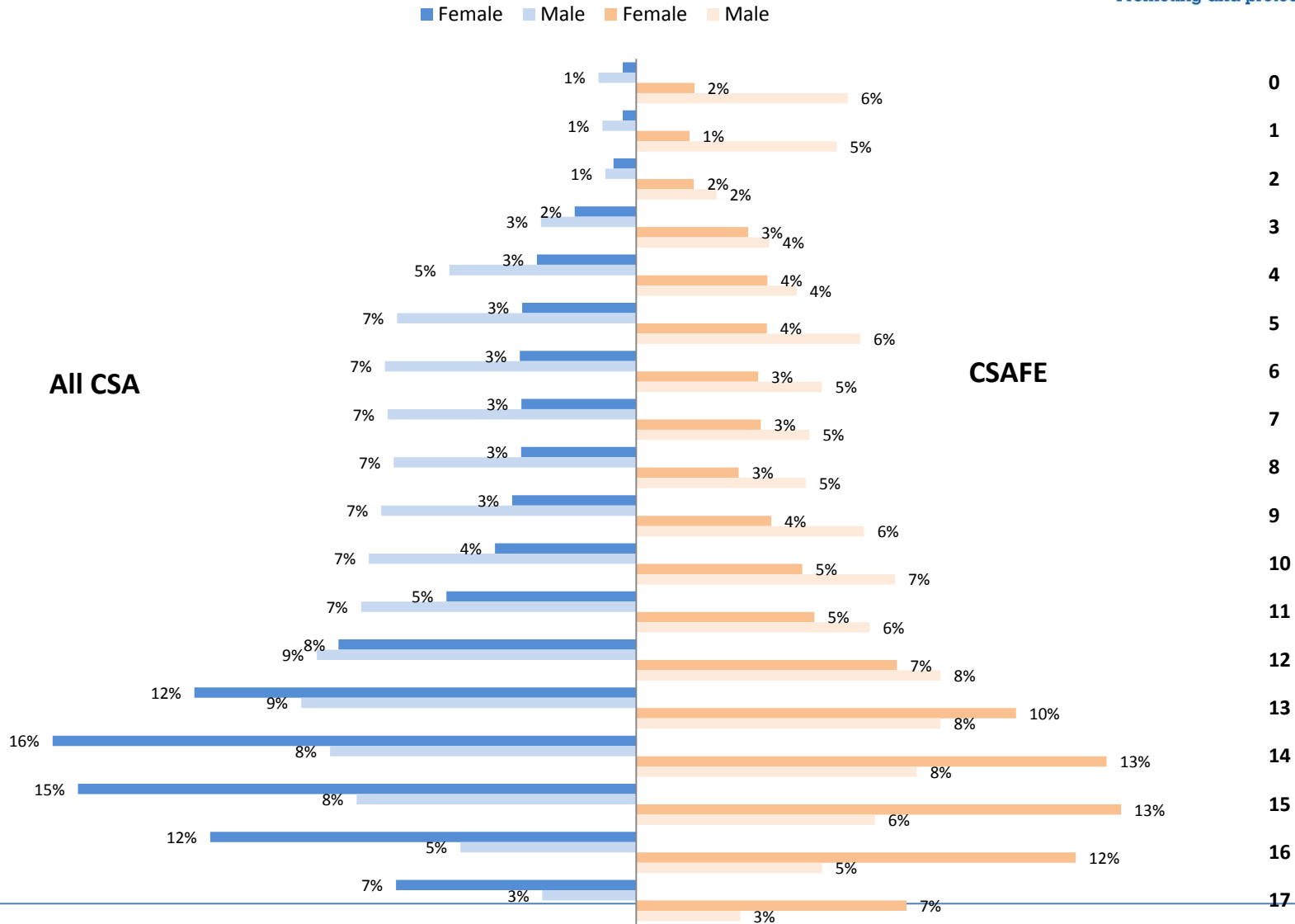
The relationship between victim and perpetrator is recorded inconsistently by police forces. Data analysed for this report enabled a specific cohort of victims of CSAFE to be identified (c. 18% of all CSA victims). Where this information is recorded rigorously, CSAFE accounts for approximately two thirds of all CSA.

## Data collection – Gender of victims

■ Female ■ Male ■ Unknown

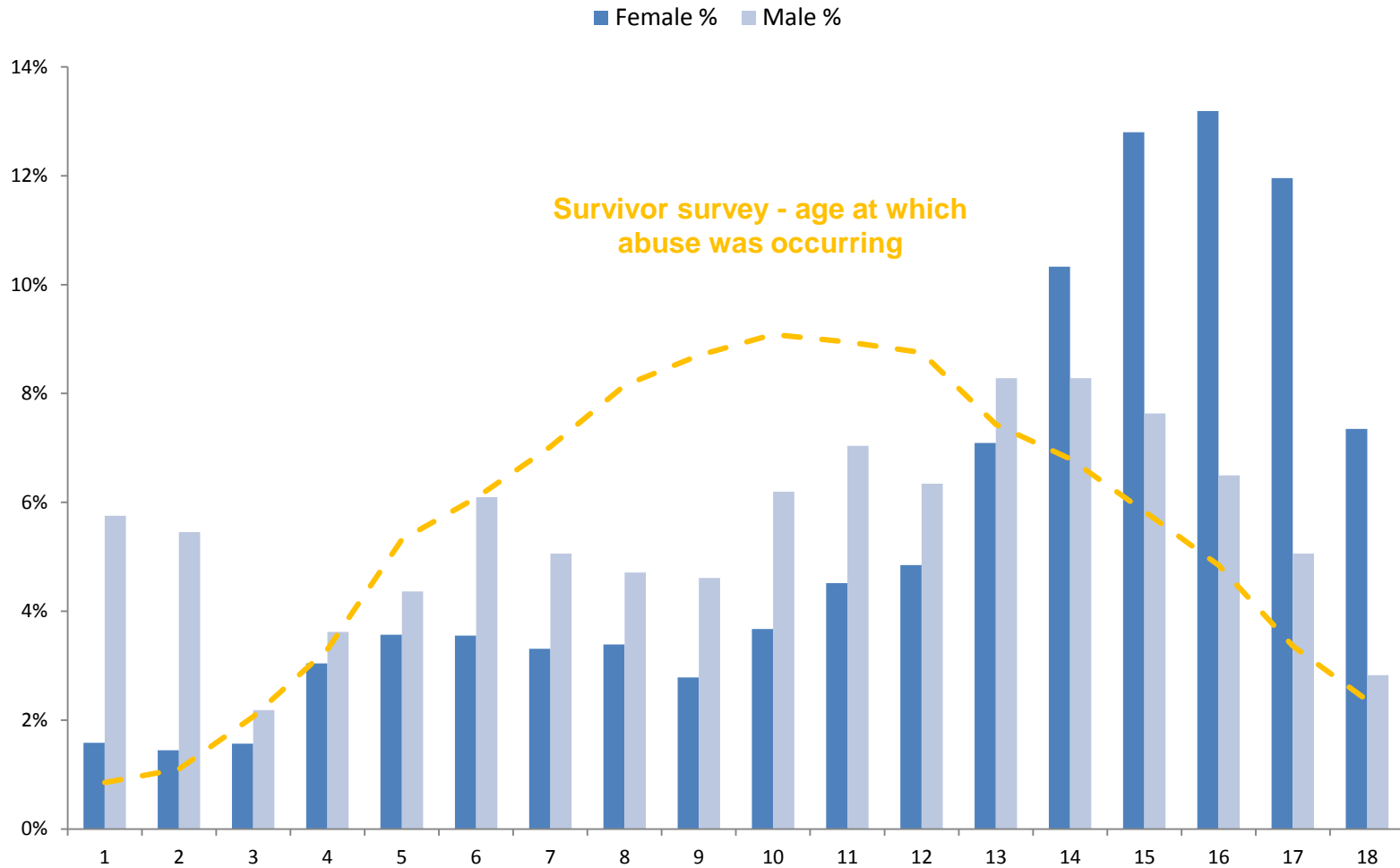


# Police data - Age at time of report/discovery and gender - CSA and CSAFE

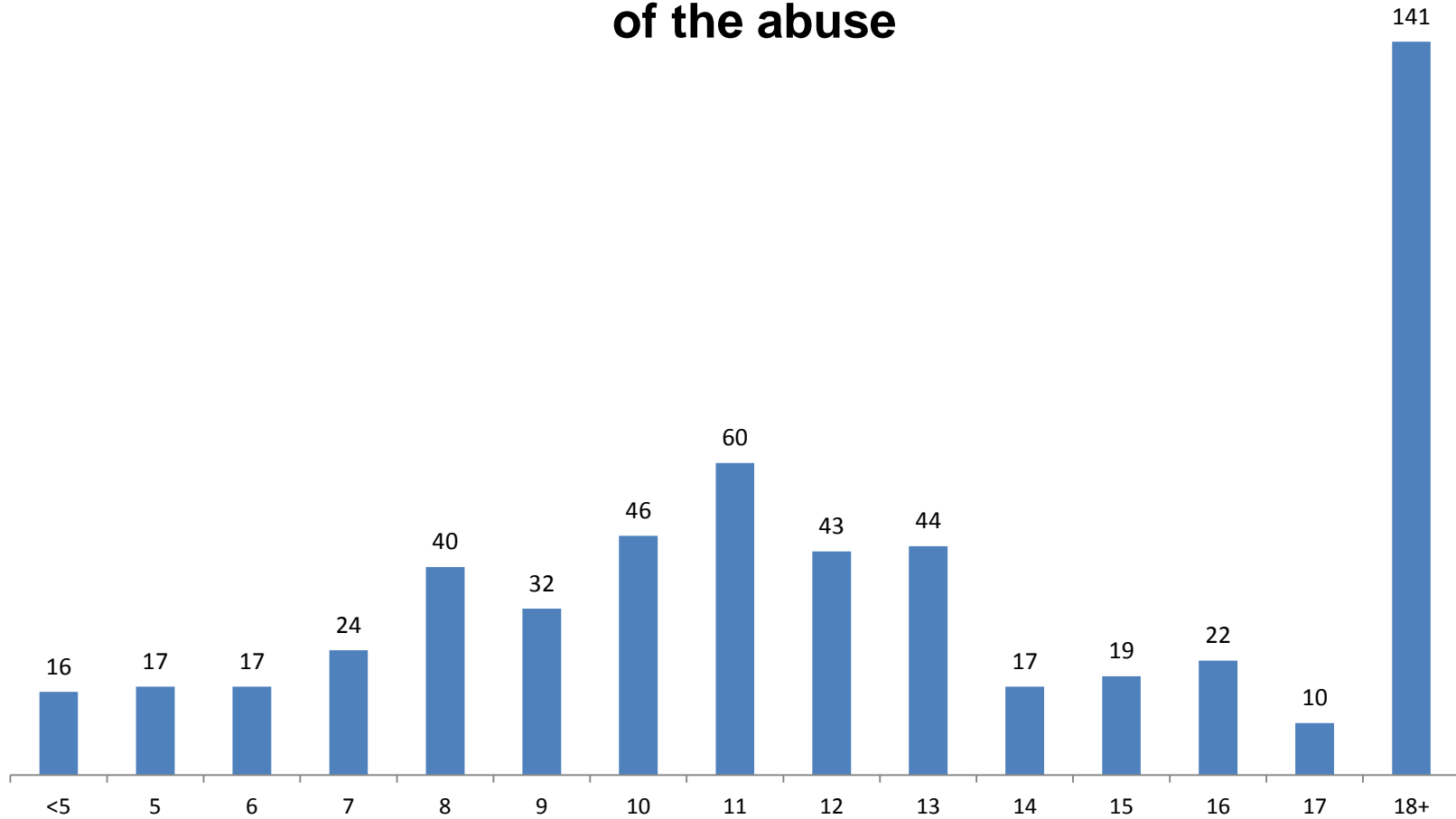




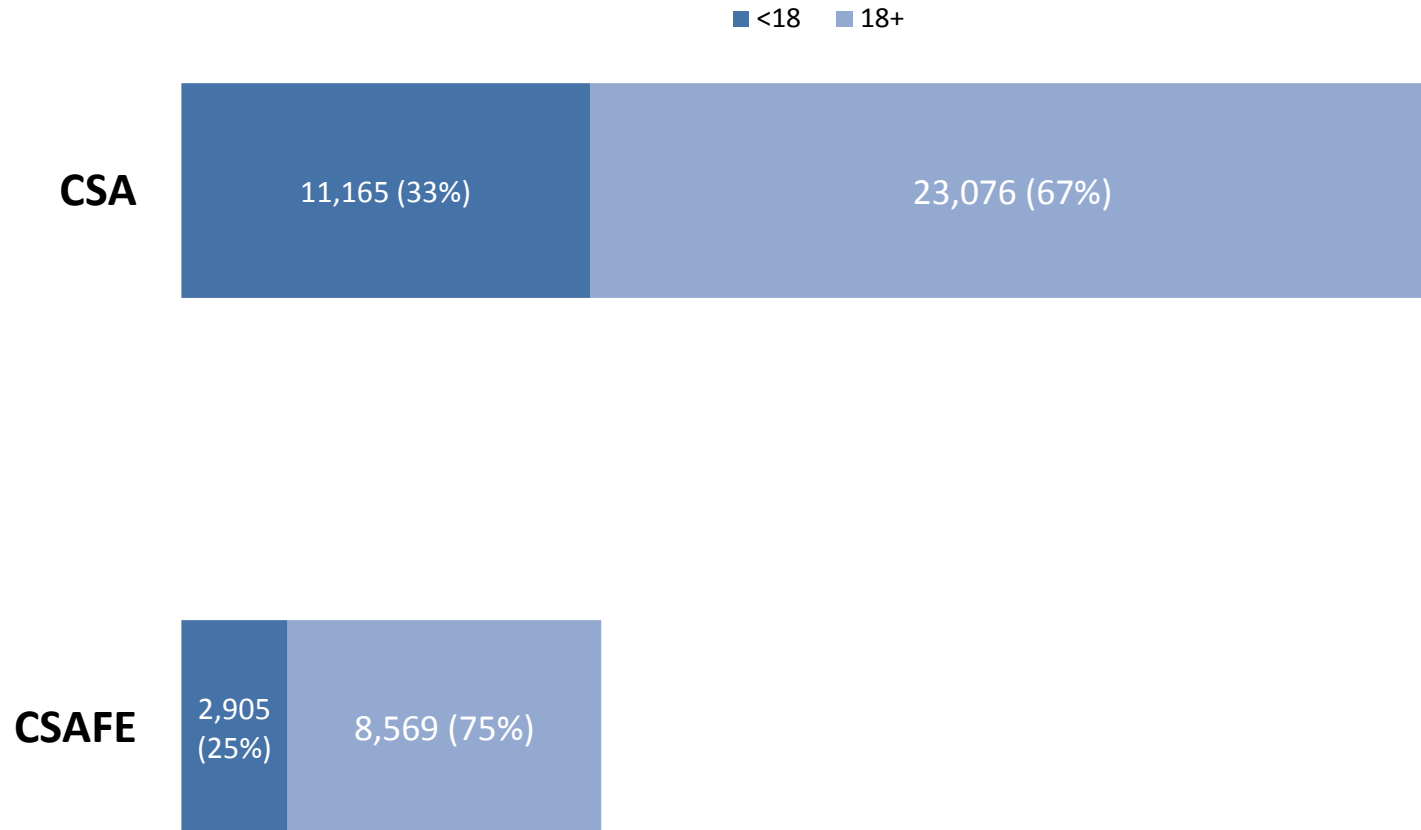
## Police data - CSAFE - age at report/discovery



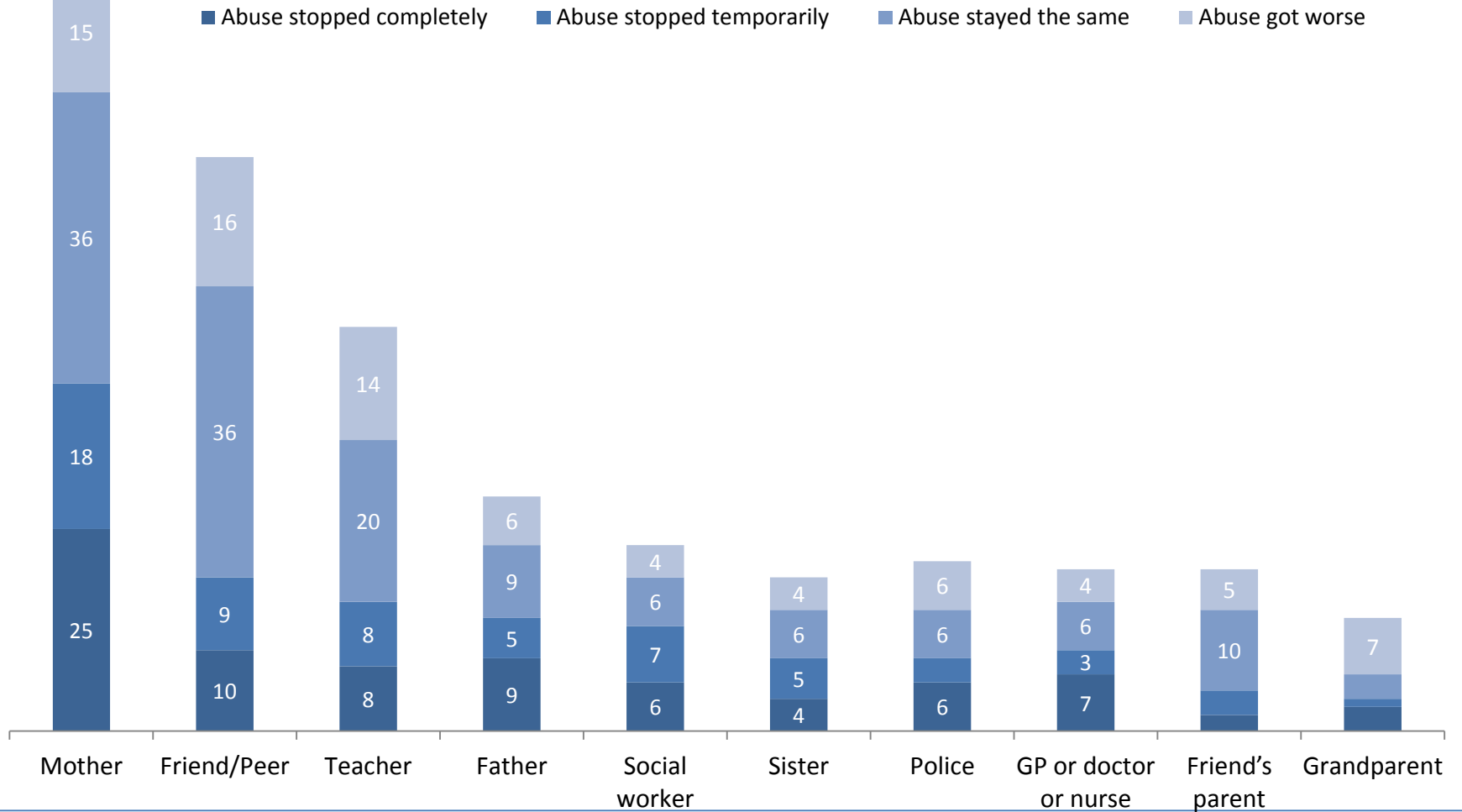
## Survivor survey - age when survivor became aware of the abuse



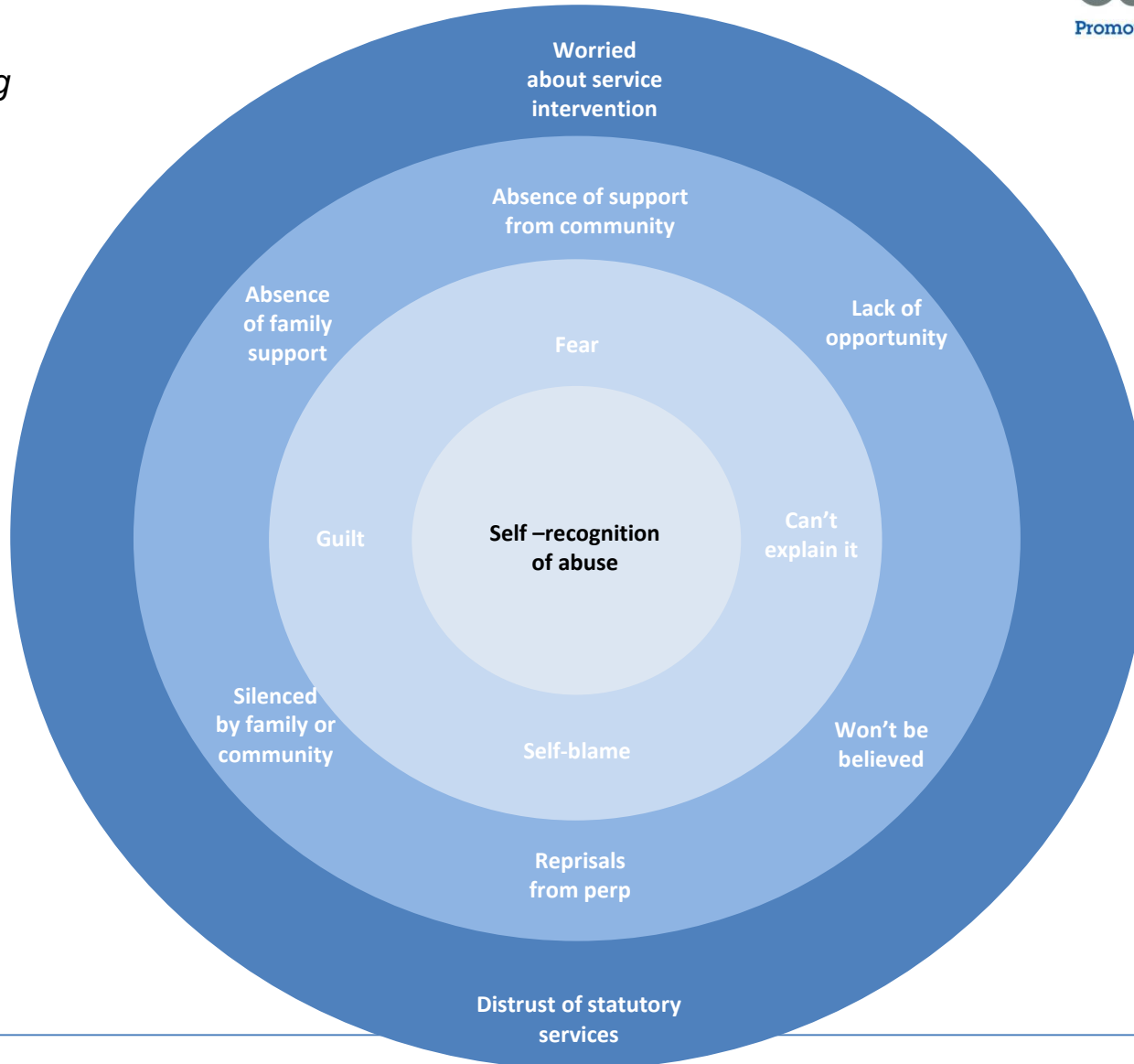
## Police data - perpetrator age



## Survivor survey - who did you tell / did the abuse stop?



*Barriers to telling*



# Findings

**Sexual abuse by a family member is in itself a barrier to telling anyone.**

*There are various inhibitors that stop them from disclosing, such as not wanting to upset their mother, who maybe did not know that they were being abused in the family environment. Then, even when they do, they will not be believed because the family will turn against them, because they do not believe that it actually is true that this charming manipulative sex offender was actually interfering with all the children. So they will probably turn against them. They will probably make attempts to disclose at various stages in their life and probably will not be believed. **Oral Evidence – Non-Statutory: Criminal Justice***

*I complained of pain in my pants. My mother asked if I had been touched. I knew my dad would take my brothers life if I told, so I said no. After that no one knew until I told them. **Survivor – Female aged between 45-54***

# Findings

**Victims often come to the attention of authorities in adolescence, though abuse is likely to be happening at a much younger age. Younger victims are less able to understand and recognise abuse, and to explain it to someone.**

*I told my mother when I was 7 that my uncle was doing things to me that hurt, and I didn't like it; she said stop being so silly and he was just being friendly. **Survivor – Female aged between 45-54***

*I remember learning something at school and telling my mother that was what my dad was doing to me. **Survivor – Female aged between 45-54***

*I remember there being programmes like Children in need and there was a campaign about sexual abuse but that's what it was called the label and name was quite over my head. Knowing what I know now the intention by my Uncle was to work on me and make sure no one found out what he was doing. **Survivor – Female aged between 35-44***

# Findings

**There is a high level of commitment to tackling this issue. However, services are largely disclosure led – professionals are waiting for children to report abuse.**

*Overall, as with any type of abuse there is an overreliance on children to come to statutory services to disclose abuse happening to them, while the focus should be on professionals being attuned to changes in behaviour of children, their emotional responses and other indicators that things may not go well in their lives and trying to respond to children appropriately to enable them to talk about their experiences. **Oral Evidence – National Charity 1: Children in Need***

*What is less common is for us to reach a point where we have hard and fast evidence where we can say, “This child is being abused and the Police can investigate it”. We then not infrequently get into the difficulty of trying to get statutory services to take over a case in terms of child protection systems when there isn't a Police role because the criminal threshold has not been met. **Oral Evidence – National Charity 1: Children in Need***



# Findings

**Victims of abuse often exhibit a secondary indicator – professionals are often skilled in identifying these – but the possibility that CSA is underlying it is often not considered.**

*One of the things that none of us are good at is locating sexual abuse within a continuum of violence that occurs, so we are often only ever dealing with presenting issues. We are not very good at probing, ourselves, other forms of violence that could be linked to the main presenting issue. Interview with BME voluntary sector organisation*

# Findings

**Children with disabilities face additional barriers to reporting abuse and being identified as a victim.**

*My concern is that they are often displaying very aggressive self-harming behaviour and it gets put down to the syndrome, the learning disability or whatever it is that is going on for them. I think we need to explore a little bit more what the roots of that are. I do not think that, within the thinking about that, anybody is thinking, "Has there been abuse?"* **Oral Evidence – National Charity 1: Disability**

# Findings

**Processes for substantiating abuse (Achieving Best Evidence interviews) are problematic.**

*As to the quality -- and I get this a lot from the judiciary but also from my own staff – it is highly variable. Quite often it is not on the good side of the variable. They tend to be very long and quite repetitive. Sometimes you get officers who feel that they have to go back into every single little detail. What that actually does is confuse the complainant and unpicks the story, which allows a chink in the armour for cross-examination because it introduces self-conflicting evidence. There is something about making them much shorter and more focused. **Oral Evidence – National Statutory Body 5***

# Findings

**Sexual abuse casts a long shadow over victims – the abuse itself, the reaction of the family, and service interventions can impact on children.**

*The impact on the entire family is enormous. There is separation and destruction of the family unit used as part of the offending modus operandi. The child is isolated emotionally, the child will often have to continue seeing the perpetrator and because the perpetrator is often a parent or parent figure, the child will want to see the perpetrator. This will be contrary to what the protective parent will want, which creates conflict in the family and further separation. **Evidence provided by helpline***

*I think there is a kind of secondary trauma then that takes place after you have disclosed -- the impact of that uncertainty and the kind of worries and imagining what it will be like. That is the second layer of difficulty. **Interview with national statutory body***

# Priorities for action

- Preventing abuse
- Identifying victims
- Helping victims disclose abuse
- Helping victims give their best evidence

# Discussion