

Parliamentary Briefing: Through the Eyes of a Child One System. One Response.

#ImplementICSARRecommendations

Protect every child. In every place. From every failure.

Introduction

This briefing is rooted in lived experience, survivor testimony, and the findings of multiple national inquiries into child sexual abuse (CSA). It calls for unapologetic, systemic reform focused on the most overlooked, under-resourced, and high-risk setting: the family environment.

It builds on the insight shared in *Through the Eyes of a Child* — available at www.survivorsofabuse.org.uk — and makes a survivor-led case for a national, joined-up response.

CSA is an intergenerational public health emergency. It happens across institutions, online spaces, and care settings — but **it begins, most often, at home.**

Every other setting is a room in the house. But the foundations lie in the family. Until we face that truth, we're sticking plasters on structural rot.

Lived Experience: Through the Eyes of a Child

My name is Chris Tuck. I'm not a care leaver. I was forced to leave home at 16 to protect myself from further harm — knowing that my siblings were still being abused. The abuse I experienced was mental, emotional, physical, sexual — and sustained across three violent households.

My father was convicted in 1981 for child sexual offences. After that, my mother was given custody, and social services closed our file. They thought the risk had passed. But the abuse didn't stop.

We ran away, but the police brought us back — no questions asked. I disclosed to social workers. They told my stepmother. I was punished. At school, I wrote about the abuse. I was told I had an "overactive imagination."

Years later, I tried to get records — from school, social care, the courts — and was told I didn't exist.

From 2016 to 2022, I fought for justice for my family. The CPS found there was enough evidence — but deemed it was not in the public interest to proceed. We went through the criminal justice system, including the Victims' Right to Review (VRR) process to its full extent. Every stage resulted in a decision of No Further Action (NFA). We then took out a pro bono civil criminal action, which made it as far as Crown Court — but was shut down by the CPS. In our final meeting with them, they could not — or would not — explain why.

This is how the system fails — quietly, repeatedly, and systematically.

Why the Family Home Must Be Central

CSA in the family is:

- The most common form of abuse
- The least likely to be disclosed.
- The hardest to prove.

- The most invisible in policy and public discourse

Yet:

- No national strategy focuses on intrafamilial CSA.
- No consistent data is collected.
- No public awareness campaign exists.
- No court reform to prevent re-traumatisation.

If the Child Protection Authority does not centre CSA in the family, it will fail the majority of victims.

Named Children, Known Failures: Serious Case Reviews (SCRs)

Child	Year	Failings
Victoria Climbié	2000	Seen by 12 agencies, no intervention; died of abuse and neglect
Baby P (Peter Connelly)	2007	Over 60 visits, severe injuries overlooked
Daniel Pelka	2012	Starved to death; school missed clear signs of abuse
Star Hobson	2020	Multiple referrals ignored; bruises unexplained; mother defended abuser
Arthur Labinjo-Hughes	2020	Social workers visit failed; father's partner inflicted fatal injuries
Finley Boden	2020	Returned to parents despite concerns; killed weeks later
Sara Sharif	2023	Known to social services; found dead; family fled after her death

Each of these children were failed not just by individuals — but by systems that didn't connect, act, or believe.

CSA Happens in Every Setting — But Starts at Home

Setting	Example of Systemic Failure
Family Home	Thousands of Truth Project accounts
Care Homes	Medomsley, Shirley Oaks
Foster Care	Multiple SCRs, vetting failures
Schools	William Vahey, UK and abroad
Youth Groups	Scoutmaster Alan Grant
Sports	Barry Bennell (football), gymnastics
Churches	Bishop Peter Ball, Catholic Church cover-ups

Health/NHS	Jimmy Savile
Entertainment	Jimmy Savile, Rolf Harris
Cadets/Military	Abuse in Army Cadet Force
Custody	Medomsley Detention Centre
Online	Abdul Elahi — over 1,000 victims
Grooming Gangs	Rotherham, Rochdale, Telford
Peer-on-Peer	School-based abuse (Ofsted, 2021)
Social Care	Lambeth abuse report

What the Inquiries Showed: A Timeline of Warnings

- **OCC Intrafamilial CSA Inquiry (2014–15):** Only 1 in 8 abused children known to authorities.
- **IICSA & Truth Project (2015–2022):** 6,000+ testimonies, 67% non-disclosure at the time, most in family context
- **2024 National Review into Intrafamilial CSA:** 193 cases; 7 suicides; 10 pregnancies; court failures and disbelief

All reports emphasised disbelief, fragmentation, and the invisibility of family-based CSA.

Safeguarding vs. Child Protection: Why Language Matters

The shift to a “safeguarding” model has diluted urgency and accountability:

- "Abuse" became "concern."
- Intervention became assessment.
- Action became avoidance.

As IICSA warned: “Child protection has been downgraded in practice — replaced by a language of safeguarding that feels safer, more procedural, and less confrontational.”

We must name abuse. Intervene early. Act decisively.

The Family Court: When the State Enables Harm

- **Contact is prioritised over safety.**
- **Protective parents are labelled as alienators.**
- **Disclosure is doubted, minimised, or ignored.**
- **No accountability exists for unsafe court decisions.**

We call for:

- Presumption of non-contact where CSA is alleged.
- Specialist training for judges, CAFCASS, and social workers
- Proper weight to children’s voices and trauma disclosures
- Independent oversight of family court outcomes

Who Gets Support? Reclaiming Protected Status

Care leavers deserve support. But so do children like me — who were not removed but left.

We were failed by thresholds, not saved by them. That absence of intervention isn’t proof of safety. It’s evidence of abandonment.

We call for a protected status that includes:

- Care leavers
- Abuse survivors who fled unsafe homes but were never formally in care.

Our Demands

1. **A statutory Child Protection Authority** with legal powers to act.
2. **A Cabinet-level Minister for Children** to drive cross-government action.
3. **A national awareness campaign** focused on CSA in the family.
4. **Full reform of family courts** — trauma-informed and accountable
5. **Protected status** for children failed by systems, whether in care or not
6. **Full implementation of all 20 IICSA recommendations**

#ImplementIICSARecommendations: Where We Stand – April 2025 Update

IICSA’s 20 recommendations were designed to reform systems that failed thousands of children. As of April 2025, progress remains incomplete, inconsistent, and in critical areas, symbolic.

Recommendation	Government Action	What's Missing	Consequence
1. Core CSA Dataset	✅ ONS pilot survey	❌ No mandatory national data system	Still don’t know how many children are being abused
2. Child Protection Authority (CPA)	✅ Panel expanded	❌ No statutory powers, lacks independence	Symbolic, can’t hold agencies accountable
3. Cabinet-level Minister for Children	❌ Still under DfE	❌ No cross-government leadership	No clear accountability
4. Public Awareness Campaign	✅ Supported 3rd-party work	❌ No national strategy or campaign	Public understanding remains low

5. Ban Pain Compliance in Custody	✔ Restricted in emergencies	✘ Not legislated	Children still at risk of state-sanctioned harm
6. Legal Parity for Looked-After Children	✔ New guidance issued	✘ No change in law	Unequal legal treatment remains
7. Staff Registration – Children’s Homes	✘ Under review	✘ No national register	No barrier to re-entry for abusers
8. Staff Registration – Youth Custody	✘ Timeline unclear	✘ No implementation	Unsafe adults remain unchecked
9. Extend DBS Barred List	✔ Proposal submitted	✘ Not enacted	Offenders can slip through
10. Improve DBS Referrals	✔ Awareness raised	✘ Still relies on voluntary compliance	Dangerous gaps remain
11. Overseas Safeguards	✔ Framework proposed	✘ No enforceable system	Offenders may work abroad unmonitored
12. CSA Tech Screening	✔ Ofcom powers scoped	✘ Not mandatory	Platforms remain unaccountable
13. Mandatory Reporting	✔ In 2025 Crime Bill	✘ No training, guidance, or enforcement plan	No certainty disclosures will lead to action
14. Victims’ Code Inspections	✔ Planned	✘ Code not legally binding	Rights remain aspirational
15. Civil Claim Time Limits Removal	✔ Bill introduced	✘ Not passed	Many survivors still time-barred
16. National Therapeutic Support	✔ CSA Centre funded	✘ No national entitlement	Help depends on where you live
17. CSA Records Retention	✔ ICO guidance in development	✘ No legal requirement	Crucial records can still vanish
18. Criminal Injuries Compensation Reform	✘ Rejected	✘ Survivors penalised for past or cohabitation	Justice remains conditional
19. National Redress Scheme	✘ Rejected	✘ No scheme or apology	Survivors left with nothing
20. Online Age Verification	✔ Ofcom study completed	✘ Still voluntary	Children left exposed online

Conclusion:

- The Child Protection Authority (CPA) as delivered lacks statutory power, enforcement capacity, and true independence. It must be re-established as a strong, legally mandated body to **lead a unified system**, track harm across all environments, and hold institutions to account.
- Survivors need more than symbolic change. They need action — urgent, bold, and enforced.

This update is a warning. We cannot fail another generation by failing to act now.

References

- OCC Inquiry (2015): <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/protecting-children-from-harm-2015/>
- IICSA Final Report: <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/reports-recommendations/publications>
- National Review (2024): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-review-intrafamilial-child-sexual-abuse-2024>
- SCRs: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/case-reviews/>