

# How was the research done?

A **rapid evidence assessment (REA)** is a way of reviewing the available research evidence on a topic and summarising the key themes.

There are **five key stages** to an REA.



## This REA looked at:

- Evidence related to the prevalence of child sexual abuse in custodial institutions;
- Socio-demographic characteristics of victims and perpetrators;
- The factors associated with failure to protect children in the care of custodial institutions;
- The nature of the safeguarding systems in place and how they have changed over the years;
- Recommendations in the literature of how these systems may be improved.

This document summarises some of the key themes from the research reviewed in the REA. It is produced by the Inquiry Research Team and does not contain any conclusions or opinions of the Inquiry Panel.

# What is the youth secure estate?

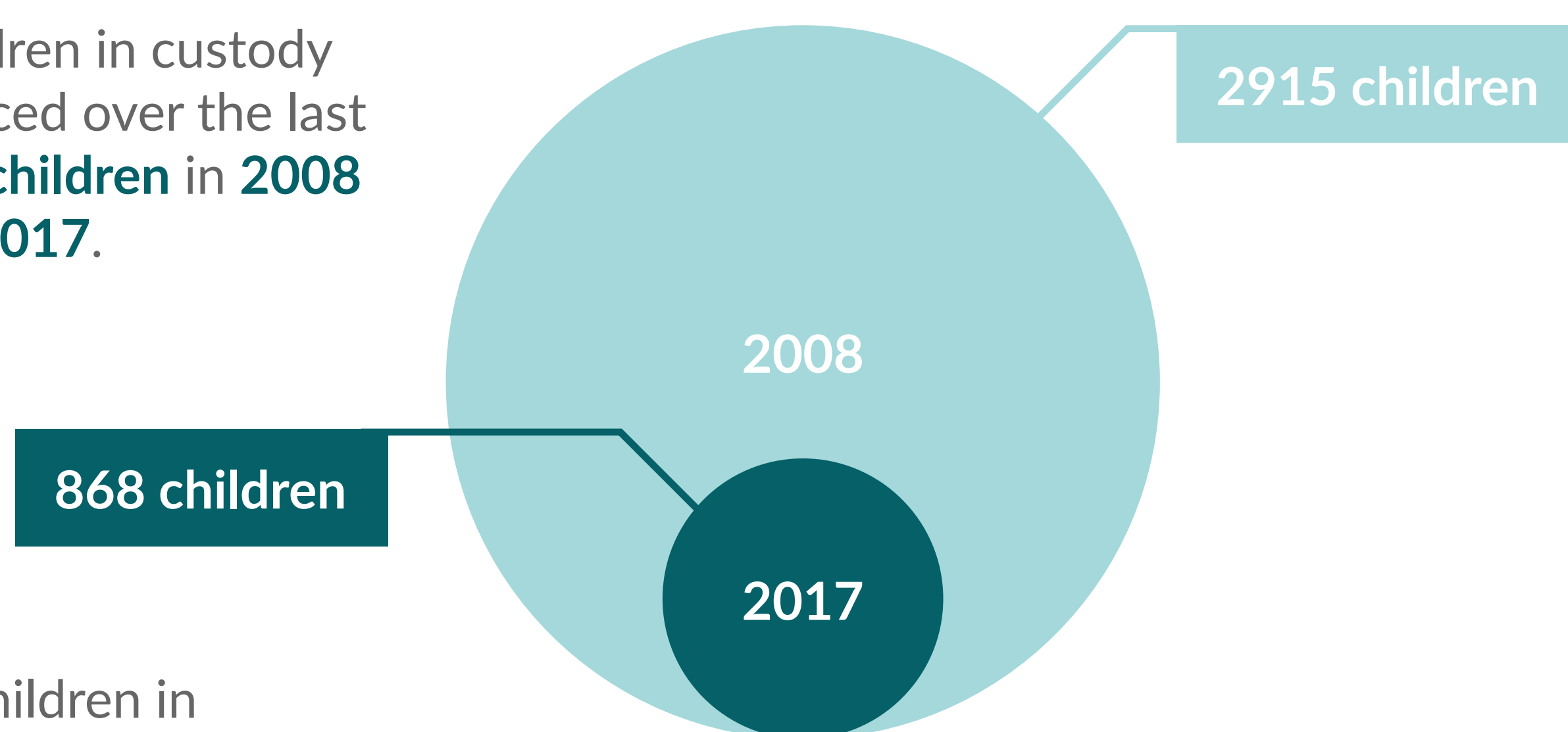
There are **three types** of secure establishment in the youth secure estate.



Source: Ministry of Justice and Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, (2017), Monthly youth custody report, [Online], GOV.UK. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-custody-data>.

# Who goes into custody?

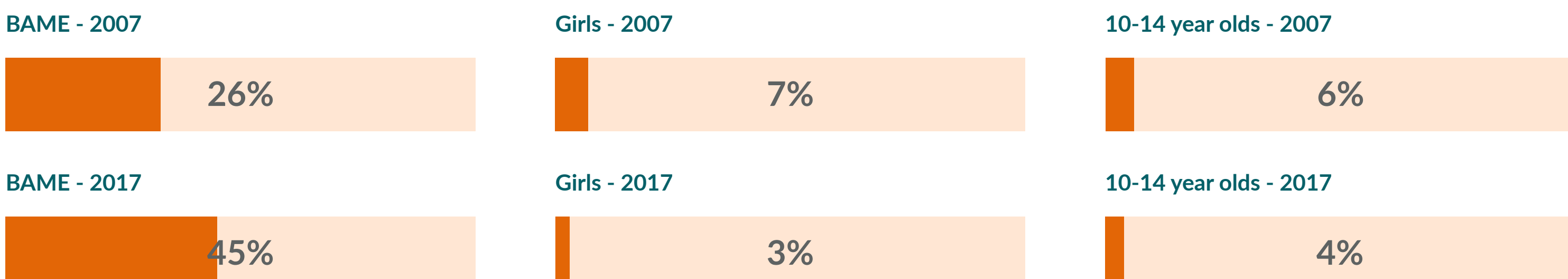
The number of children in custody has drastically reduced over the last decade from **2915 children in 2008** to **868 children in 2017**.



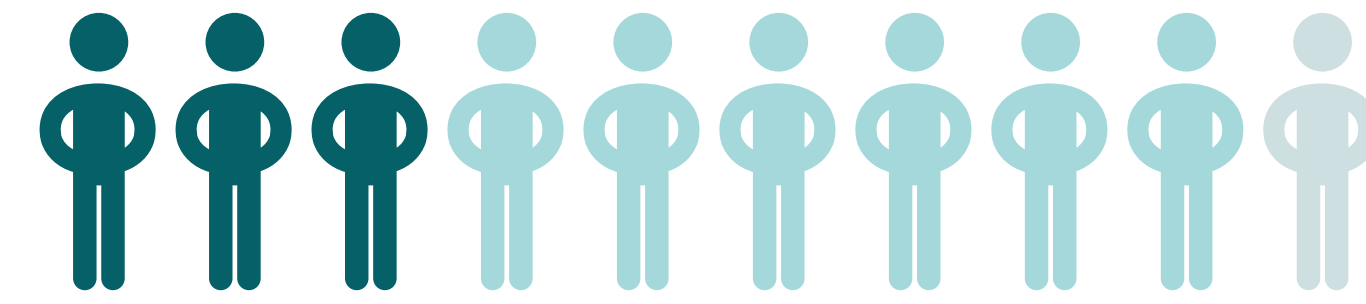
Around **4 in 10** children in custody have previously been in local authority care



As the number of children in custody has fallen, the profile of children has changed:



Research has shown that between **3 in 10** and **9 in 10** children in custody have experienced prior maltreatment or neglect

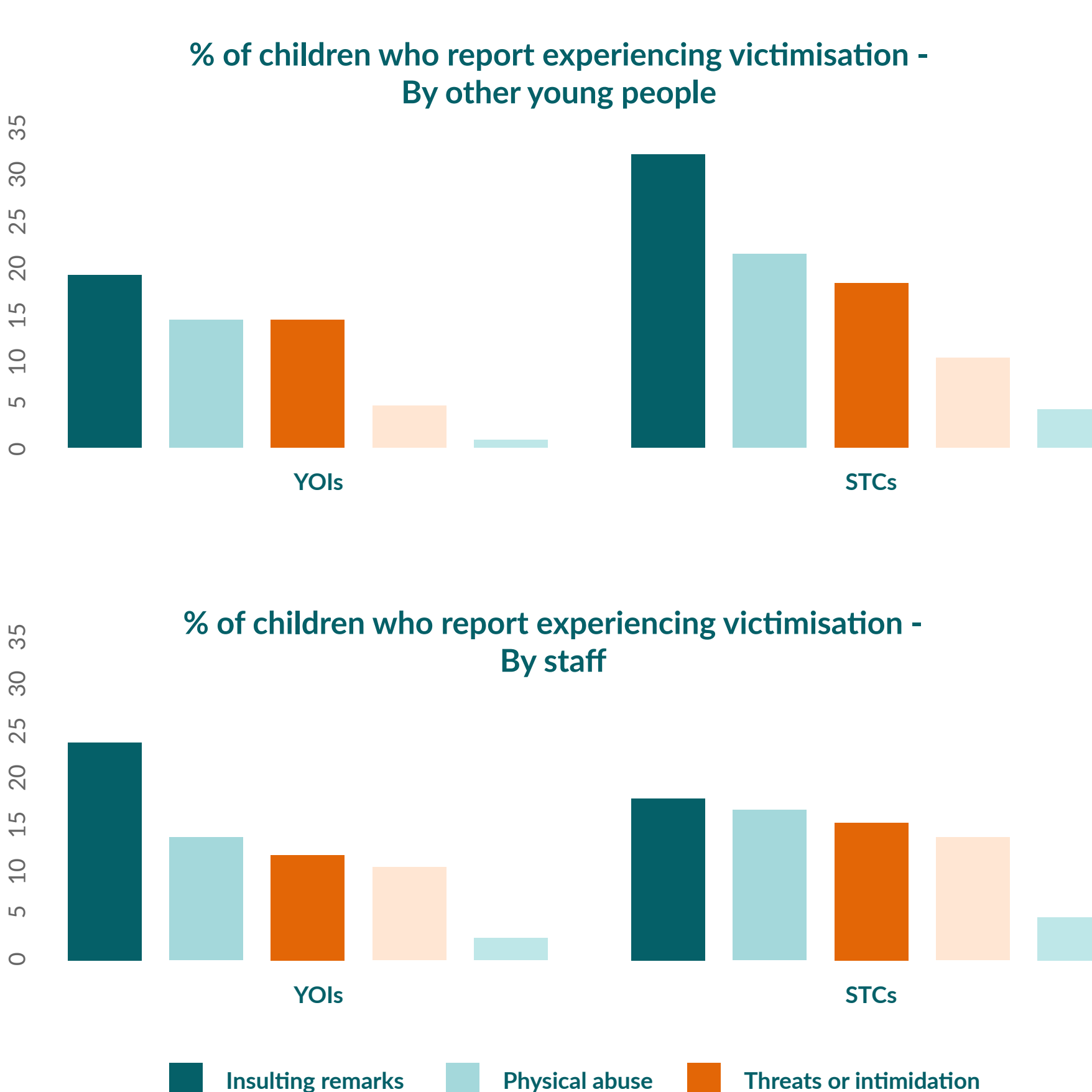


Source: Average monthly figures for year ending March 2017, Ministry of Justice and Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, (2017), Youth justice statistics 2015/16, London: Ministry of Justice.

Source: Olin, C., Hibbert, P. and Cadman, S. (2008), A literature review into children abused or neglected prior to custody, London: Youth Justice Board, Simonson, J. (2016), Children in custody 2015-2016: an analysis of 12-18 year olds' perceptions of their experience in secure training centres and young offender institutions, London: HM Inspectorate of Prisons.

# What type of abuse might children experience in custody?

## Types of abuse and bullying in custody (2015/16)



## Research indicates that:

Abuse in custody can take place **between children and by staff**.

Reported **rates of sexual abuse** of children in custody are around **1%**, this takes place against a backdrop of **bullying and abuse** and violence.

Some children may be more at risk of abuse because of their:

- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Sexual orientation
- History of sexual assault before custody
- Conviction for a sexual offence before custody

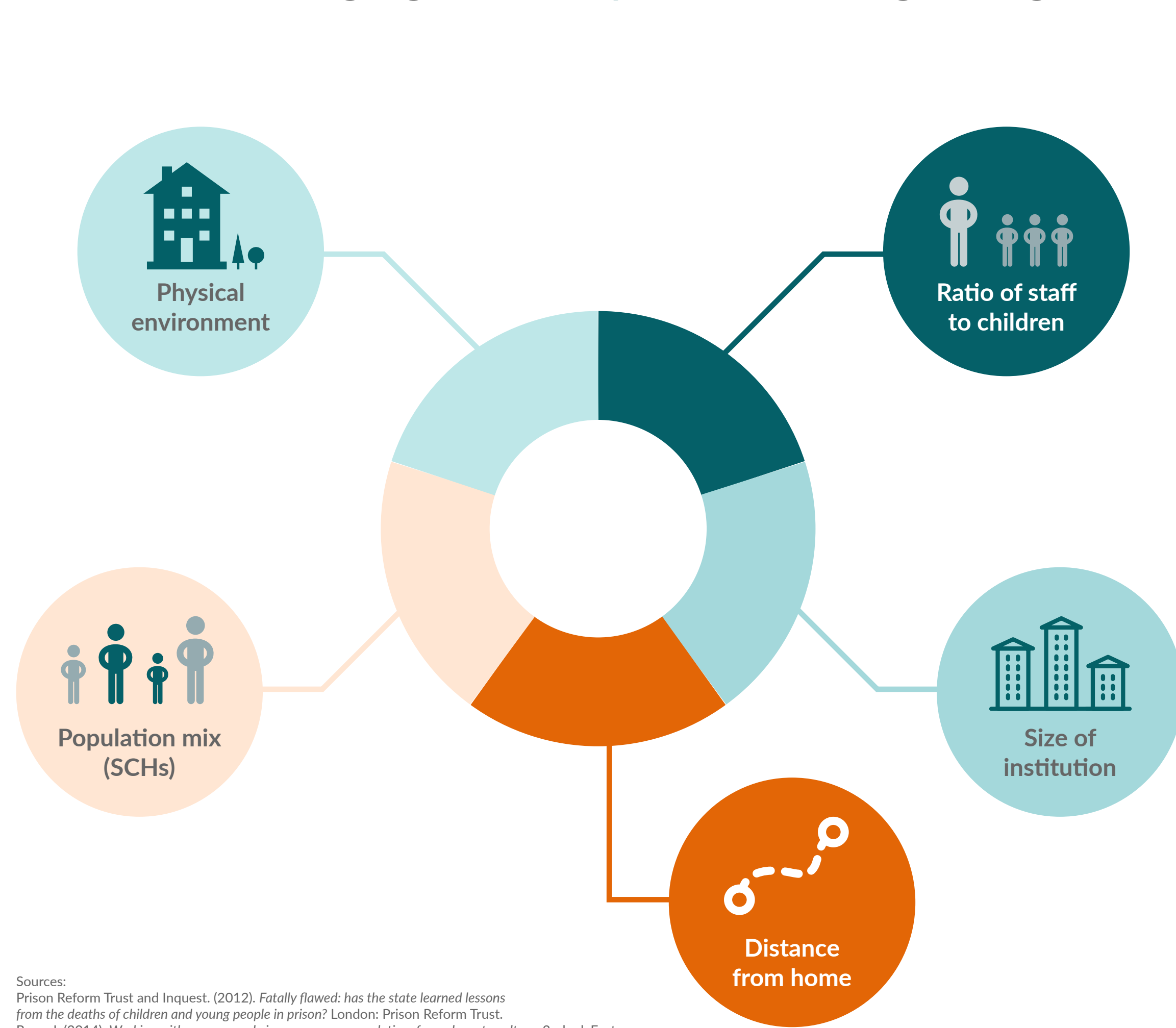
More needs to be known about the **scale and nature of child sexual abuse**.

Source: Adapted from data in Simonson, J. (2016), Children in custody 2015-2016: an analysis of 12-18 year olds' perceptions of their experience in secure training centres and young offender institutions, London: HM Inspectorate of Prisons.

Source: Benck, A.J., Carter, D., Harjo, J. and Smith, T. (2012), Sexual victimisation in juvenile facilities reported by youth, 2012, Washington, DC: Bureau of the Children's Commissioner, Simonson, J. (2016), Children in custody 2015-2016: an analysis of 12-18 year olds' perceptions of their experience in secure training centres and young offender institutions, London: HM Inspectorate of Prisons, Youth Justice Board and National Children's Bureau, (2008), A review of safeguarding in the youth secure estate, London: Youth Justice Board.

# What makes children more or less safe in custody?

The REA highlights **five key issues** for safeguarding:



## Research indicates that:

A **tension** exists between **caring for and punishing** children.

**Trust** between children and staff is important for **children's welfare**.

**Strip searching and restraint** can be **traumatic** for children in custody who have **been sexually abused**.

**CCTV** can help to make children **feel safer**.

Source: Prison Reform Trust and Inquest (2012), Fatally flawed: how the state learned lessons from the deaths of children and young people in prison? London: Prison Reform Trust; Bana, J. (2016), Working with young people in secure accommodation: from chaos to culture, 2nd ed., East Sussex: Routledge; Youth Justice Board and National Children's Bureau, (2008), A review of safeguarding in the youth secure estate, London: Youth Justice Board.

Source: Benck, A.J., Carter, D., Harjo, J. and Smith, T. (2012), Sexual victimisation in juvenile facilities reported by youth, 2012, Washington, DC: Bureau of the Children's Commissioner; Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons, (2015), Behaviour management and restraint of children in custody: a review of the early implementation of MAPPA, London: HM Inspectorate of Prisons; Holden, G., Allen, B., Gray, S. and Thomas, E. (2015), Making Improvement Based: final report of the Independent Review to the Secretary of State for Justice, London: Ministry of Justice; Review Panel on Prison Rape, Department of Justice (2015), Report on sexual victimisation in juvenile correctional facilities, Washington, DC: Department of Justice; User Voice, (2012), 'Why are they going to kill to me?' Young people's perspectives on the complaints system in the youth justice system and secure estate, London: Office of the Children's Commissioner.

# What are the needs of children in custody and how well are they being met?

- There was a lack of research on the response of the youth secure estate to children who have experienced child sexual abuse.
- Concerns have been raised about the provision of services for children at risk of sexually harmful behaviour in the secure estate and meeting their needs.
- Children in the youth secure estate are restricted in their ability to form and maintain relationships and in the ability to socialise with children of the opposite sex.
- Commentators have argued that risk assessment has focussed on the behaviour and risk management of children, not their safety or welfare needs.

Source: Almond, T. (2012), 'Asset: an assessment tool that safeguards or signals young offenders?' Probation Journal, 59(2), 138-150; Howard League for Penal Reform, Commission on Care in Prison, (2015), Healthy social development of children in prison, London: Howard League for Penal Reform; Khan, L. (2016), Reaching out, reaching in: promoting mental health and emotional well-being in secure settings, London: Centre for Mental Health.

# What is being done to keep children safe in custody?

- Inspections**  
Inspections play an **important role** in understanding child sexual abuse in custody.
- Referrals**  
Research has identified issues related to staff having an **appropriate understanding** of what constitutes a **child protection matter**.
- Staff training**  
Research has criticised the **quantity and quality of staff training** in YOIs and STCs.
- Inter-agency working**  
Several reviews identified problems in how different professionals **work together** to safeguard children.
- Complaints**  
STCs and SCHs have been described in the research literature as having more **effective and child focused complaints procedures** in place than YOIs.
- Reception**  
Research indicates that children are at their **most vulnerable** when entering custody.

Source: Association of Independent LSCB Chairs, (2014), People should be helped to feel safe: child protection and safeguarding in young offender institutions, secure training centres and secure children's homes: guidance for chairs and members of Local Safeguarding Children Boards, Association of Independent LSCB Chairs, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Corwell, A., Ferrings, J., (2016), Characteristics of bullies and victims among secondary school young offenders, Journal of Aggression Conflict and Peace Research, 8(2), 114-123; Taylor, C. (2016), Review of the youth justice system in England and Wales, London: Ministry of Justice, Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, (2011), Review of the complaints system in the secure estate for children and young people, Summary and action plan 2011, London: Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, Youth Justice Board and National Children's Bureau, (2008), A review of safeguarding in the youth secure estate, London: Youth Justice Board.