

Protecting children and young people from sexual abuse

**National Strategy for Preventing and Responding to
Child Sexual Abuse in Wales 2025-2035**



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



A consultation for young people

Hello

The Welsh Government wants all children and young people to have healthy, happy lives. We want to keep them safe and protected from harm and abuse. This is our 10-year strategy to stop child sexual abuse and to make sure people get the right support. ➡ So, we want to know what you think.

What is child sexual abuse?

Child sexual abuse is forcing a child to take part in sexual activities.

This is a serious crime, and it is never the child's fault.

Contact abuse, when there is physical contact or touching:

- touching any part of a child's body in a sexual way, even through clothes
- using a body part or object to rape a child
- making a child touch someone else or take their clothes off.

Non-contact abuse – when there is no physical touching, but the abuse still causes harm. This can happen in person or online. It includes:

- showing children pornography — sexual pictures or making them watch people have sex
- making or sharing sexual pictures or videos of children
- making children do sexual things on social media, video, over the phone or in messages
- making children take part in sexual conversations.



Far more children are sexually abused than services identify in Wales.



People can, and do, recover from child sexual abuse.

Getting the right support makes a big difference.

Why this is important

Sexual abuse can have a big effect on someone's life — both now and in the future. It can affect:

Mental health

- feeling anxious or low
- problems with eating or sleeping
- feeling numb, angry or overwhelmed
- flashbacks, nightmares or PTSD.

Growing up and relationships

- finding it hard to trust people
- struggling with closeness, sex or touch
- feeling unsure or unsafe in relationships.

Physical health

- stomach or digestion problems
- long-term pain or tiredness
- gynaecological or sexual health problems
- heart health issues.

Confidence and life opportunities

- low self-esteem or confidence
- finding school, college or work harder
- feeling like life is harder than it should be.

Child sexual abuse can include:

- **Child sexual exploitation** – when someone takes advantage of a child or young person and gets them to do sexual things in return for attention, money, gifts, drugs or protection. This can happen in person, online or through pressure from others.
- **Harmful sexual behaviour** – when a child or young person shows sexual behaviour that's not okay, not safe or not appropriate for their age. This might hurt others or themselves.



Child sexual abuse...



It's more common than you think.

15% of girls and **5%** of boys experience sexual abuse before the age of 16.



In England and Wales each year...

It is estimated that
500,000

children and young people are sexually abused. But most don't get recorded by police or identified by child protection services.



People who abuse

People who abuse come from all walks of life. They are not easy to spot and sometimes are still children themselves. Children are most often sexually abused by someone they know and trust.



Online sexual abuse is growing fast. In 2023/24, over a third

39%

of sexual offences against children were online.



Sexual abuse thrives in secrecy and silence.

So, it's important to talk about it and break the silence.

About this strategy

Organisations, professionals and people across Wales helped us develop this strategy.



Over **150**
people
took part.

Keeping children and young people safe is everyone's business. So, this strategy is for everyone across Wales. It's about:

- **Prevention** – stopping and reducing the risk of abuse.
- **Identification** – training professionals to spot the signs of abuse.
- **Response** – giving people the support they need, including help to take legal action if they choose.
- **Collaboration** – making sure services can work together — schools, police, health and more.
- **Monitoring and evaluation** – checking this strategy is making a big difference to people's lives.

Big changes like this take time and resources so, this is a **10-year Strategy**. Big changes will be broken down so lots of important changes will happen from the start of the strategy.



Do you agree this should be a 10-year Strategy?

Yes

No

Don't know

Comment



Our vision

All children in Wales live their lives free from the harm of child sexual abuse.

Anyone affected by child sexual abuse are protected and supported across their life.



Do you agree with our vision?

Yes

No

Don't know

Comment

Goal 1: Stopping child sexual abuse

What we want to see:

Everyone feels safe and confident to talk about child sexual abuse.

Everyone is empowered to keep children safe from sexual abuse and know how to report concerns.

Communities can spot, respond to and report concerns about child sexual abuse.

Actions

We will:

- develop a communication plan to raise awareness of child sexual abuse
- check what resources are available for people and if there are gaps — create new ones
- make sure people have accurate information about child sexual abuse and healthy relationships
- encourage communities to talk about and report child sexual abuse
- increase understanding that some children are more at risk than others
- hold community events on how to keep children safe and stop abuse
- consult with children and young people on how to make places safer
- work with organisations to see if their plans will help us reach our vision
- promote using the right language about child sexual abuse, so victims don't feel judged or blamed
- make sure parents and carers know how to spot child sexual abuse
- makes sure everyone knows and understands trauma
- let parents and carers know about support resources for children who've experienced or are at risk of sexual abuse
- give support and information to young people so they don't sexually harm anyone
- educate all children about healthy relationships and how to report issues.

We also want to see:

Abusers (or people who think about sexually abusing children) stopped and dealt with in the right ways so they can't cause harm.

Actions

We will:

- make sure people who have thoughts of sexually abusing children have support to stop them harming anyone
- make sure people who've been convicted of sexual harm to children have support to stop them from harming anyone else.



Do you agree with this goal?

Yes

No

Don't know

Do you agree with the actions?

Yes

No

Don't know

Comment

Goal 2: Protecting children and young people when there's a concern of child sexual abuse

What we want to see:

All professionals have training in child sexual abuse to keep children safe.

Parents and carers get the right support at the right time.

Children and young people are confident that they'll be listened to and believed if they're being sexually abused or feel at risk.

Services working together when there are concerns of child sexual abuse.

Support and specialist advice for professionals who are helping children, families and adults who've experienced sexual abuse.

Actions

We will:

- take part in a review about the legal responsibilities professionals have to report concerns
- improve guidance for professionals on child sexual abuse
- work with the Regional Safeguarding Boards to develop a child sexual abuse pathway that has clear steps on how to support people
- check what resources are available for professionals and if there are gaps — create new ones
- explore setting up an online hub that offers professional advice
- make sure children and young people have clear information about what will happen so they feel safe to talk to someone they trust about sexual abuse
- make sure guidance for professionals about helping children who are affected by abuse is up to date and easy to understand — and that everyone knows about this guidance.



Do you agree with this goal?

Yes No Don't know

Do you agree with the actions?

Yes No Don't know
Comment

Goal 3: Supporting children and families affected by child sexual abuse

What we want to see:

All children and young people have the right support, at the right time.

Families, and others in the life of children and young people who've been affected by child sexual abuse, have support.

All services and staff can give people the right support at the right time.

Actions

We will:

- make sure everyone knows what services are available so they can get support
- make sure there are specialist counselling and support services for children and young people
- raise awareness of organisations that give counselling and support recovery
- make sure professionals have the right knowledge, confidence and skills
- make sure everyone working with children understands trauma
- involve families in planning support
- support families to spot and manage the effects of child sexual abuse
- develop guidance to help families get legal support and advice
- listen to the experiences of families and involve them in developing resources
- support families to manage the effects of sibling sexual abuse
- make sure children and families can get specialist support when a family member is arrested for child sexual abuse, including online abuse.



Do you agree with this goal?

Yes

No

Don't know

Do you agree with the actions?

Yes

No

Don't know

Comment

Goal 4: Supporting adult victim-survivors

What we want to see:

A culture of openness and understanding, where adults feel safe and confident to talk about the sexual abuse that happened to them as a child.

All young people have the right to support as they become adults.

All services and staff provide the right support to adults who were sexually abused as a child.

Actions

We will:

- encourage adults who experienced child sexual abuse to share their stories
- make sure professionals understand the long-term impact of child sexual abuse
- include the risk of sexual abuse in other policies and work
- make sure young people who've been sexually abused get the right support and are kept safe
- make sure 18–25-year-olds affected by child sexual abuse get the right support from services for issues like homelessness, substance misuse, and mental health
- raise awareness of organisations and support for adults who experienced child sexual abuse
- make sure adult social care services understands how best to support adults who have been affected by sexual abuse and develop guidance for local authorities to support staff to do this
- make sure services support young people with harmful sexual behaviour so they're safe as adults
- set up a group to develop training for professionals so adults are always asked if they've experienced child sexual abuse when they meet with support services
- improve how we support young people affected by child sexual abuse as they become adults
- explore using the Mental Capacity Assessment Support Toolkit (MCAST) to help young people get involved in decisions about their care and support.



Do you agree with this goal?

Yes

No

Don't know

Do you agree with the actions?

Yes

No


Don't know

Comment

Working together

We can't do this alone. So, over the next 10 years we'll work with:

- other departments across the Welsh Government
- community leaders and community services
- organisations and charities
- schools, colleges and other education services
- social care services
- health services
- police and probation services
- Regional Safeguarding Boards
- National Independent Safeguarding Board
- Wales Safeguarding Procedures Project Board
- other providers of support services.

 **Are there any other partners we should include?**



Making sure it works

We want this Strategy to make a difference across Wales and stop child sexual abuse.

A Strategic Implementation Group

We will bring together a group of professionals to help deliver and monitor this Strategy. They will check our work and identify areas we need to improve or research more. They will set up action groups to help us deliver this strategy.


Advisory group

We will set up an advisory group that has professionals from across Welsh Government departments. They'll help us make sure our actions link to other plans and policies. This will give us an opportunity to work together and share good practice.



**This is a 10-year Strategy,
but the first step includes a 3-year action plan.**

After the first 3 years the Strategic Implementation Group will develop and publish a progress report. It will tell us the difference this is making and if it needs any changes.

 **Do you think this will help us reach our vision and goals?**

Yes

No

Don't know

Comment

One last thing

Making it fair for everyone

We want to make sure this strategy helps everyone.
We don't want anyone treated unfairly because of who they are or what's happened in their life.

What else can we do to make this strategy fairer for everyone?

Comment

Is there anything else you want to tell us about this strategy?

Comment

The Welsh Language

How do you think this will affect the Welsh Language?

Comment



Thanks for reading this

Please send your answers to

✉ CSA.NationalStrategy2025-2035Consultation@gov.wales

Or post to:

✉ Safeguarding, Advocacy and Complaints Policy Team
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📅 By 8 October 2025