



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# National Action Plan Preventing and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse

Working Together to Safeguard People



July 2019

# National Action Plan

## Preventing and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse

*Issued under Section 28 of the Children Act 2004.*

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## Chapter / Contents

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|   |    |
|---|----|
| Minister's Foreword   | 2  |
| Introduction  | 3  |
| Monitoring implementation of the Plan   | 4  |
| Objectives  | 5  |
| Arrangements for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)                     | 6  |
| Objective 1   |    |
| Objective 2   |    |
| Objective 3   |    |
| Objective 4   |    |
| Arrangements for the Protection of Children at risk of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) | 13 |
| Objective 5   |    |
| Objective 6   |    |
| Objective 7   |    |
| Arrangements for the Support of Children who are sexually abused                | 18 |
| Objective 8   |    |
| Objective 9   |    |
| Objective 10  |    |

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.  
This document is also available in Welsh.



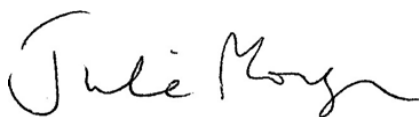
## **MINISTER'S FOREWORD**

In 2014 the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 ('the Act') established a robust and strengthened safeguarding framework for children and adults.

There has been much progress since the introduction of the Act with leadership and improvements in safeguarding driven by the Safeguarding Boards and the National Independent Safeguarding Board.

However, we are clear that there can be no complacency and that tackling abuse and harm to children and adults must remain a key priority for the Welsh Government and our partners. Our commitment to deliver this National Action Plan has been informed by the important work of the Cross Party Group on Preventing Child Sexual Abuse. Evidence from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) has also been important in informing this National Action Plan.

Sexual abuse has a devastating impact on childhoods and throughout life. We must work together to do everything we can to prevent child sexual abuse, to protect children at risk and to support children to recover from the significant harm that sexual abuse causes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Julie Morgan'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a long, sweeping underline.

**Julie Morgan, AM, Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services.**

## Introduction

The words 'child' and 'children' are used throughout this Plan to mean any person up to the age of 18.

This National Action Plan (the 'Plan') considers Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) including Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB). Looking forward this National Action Plan will assist us in assessing the implementation of forthcoming statutory guidance, *Working Together to Safeguard People- Volume 7- Safeguarding children from Child Sexual Exploitation* and the All Wales Practice Guides on CSE and HSB once issued by the Safeguarding Boards with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

Arrangements in relation to children at risk are set out in *Working Together to Safeguard People- Volume 1 – Introduction and Overview* and *Working Together to Safeguard People Volume 5 – Handling Individual Cases to Protect Children at Risk*. Section 130(4) of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act defines a “child at risk” as a child who:

- a) is experiencing or is at risk of abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm; and
- b) has needs for care and support (whether or not the Local Authority is meeting any of those needs).

In developing this Plan we have considered evidence from the Cross Party Group on Preventing Child Sexual Abuse and from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA).

We have worked with multi-agency stakeholders from the Safeguarding Boards, statutory and third sector partners to agree this Plan. We have also benefitted from the advice and support of adult survivors of CSA.

The Plan should be read in conjunction with the Welsh Government [National Strategy on Violence against Woman, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Cross Government Delivery Framework 2018-2021](#) and [An online safety action plan for children and young people in Wales \(2018\)](#)

This Plan sets out the actions the Welsh Government will take to prevent Child Sexual Abuse (CSA), to protect children from CSA and to support children who are sexually abused. We cannot do this alone and this National Action Plan also includes actions for the Safeguarding Board partners who have a lead role in the implementation of this Plan.

## Definitions

**Child sexual abuse** involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening, including: physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts; non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

### Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) -

#### Is a form of sexual abuse

that can include sex or any form of sexual activity with a child; the production of indecent images and/or any other indecent material involving children

#### Involves a child

It occurs to those up to the age of 18 years old

#### Involves some form of exchange

The exchange can include the giving or withdrawal of something; such as the withdrawal of violence or threats to abuse another person.

There may be a facilitator who receives something in addition to or instead of the child who is exploited.

Children may not recognise the exploitative nature of the relationship or exchange. Children may feel that they have given consent.

**Harmful sexual behaviours (HSB)** can be defined as: sexual behaviours expressed by children under the age of 18 years that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards themselves or others, or be abusive towards another child, young person or adult. This definition of HSB includes both contact and non-contact behaviours (grooming, exhibitionism, voyeurism and sexting or recording images of sexual acts via smart phones or social media applications).

## Monitoring the implementation of the Plan

The six Safeguarding Boards in Wales will report on progress against relevant actions included in this Plan. The Welsh Government will monitor and report on progress against the actions set for the government. There will be three reporting periods.

|          | Reporting period                        | Date to report   | Reporting arrangements  |
|----------|---|--|---|
| Period 1 | Publication date up to 31 December 2019 | Evidence to be submitted to the Welsh Government by the Safeguarding Children Boards <b>31 January 2020.</b> | <p>The Safeguarding Children Boards will provide evidence that measures have been put in place to ensure that partners are aware of the actions contained in the Plan and have agreed arrangements for evidencing implementation of the Plan in Period 2 and Period 3.</p> <p>The Welsh Government will report on progress against relevant actions set for Period 1.</p> |
| Period 2 | 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2020.     | Evidence to be submitted to the Welsh Government by the Safeguarding Children Boards <b>31 January 2021.</b> | The Safeguarding Children Boards and the Welsh Government will report against relevant actions set for Period 2.  |
| Period 3 | 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021.     | Evidence to be submitted to the Welsh Government by the Safeguarding Children Boards <b>31 January 2022.</b> | <p>The Safeguarding Children Boards and the Welsh Government will report against relevant actions set for Period 3.</p> <p>The Welsh Government will review evidence on the impact of the Plan at the end of Period 3.</p>  |

## Objectives

This Plan sets thirty three actions against ten key objectives that the Welsh Government expects to be implemented by 31 December 2021.

### Arrangements for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)

**Objective 1:** Challenge public attitudes towards CSA and support a culture where talking about CSA is not seen as a taboo subject in a way that can be exploited by perpetrators.

**Objective 2:** Increased awareness in children of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships and that abusive behaviour is always wrong.

**Objective 3:** Increased awareness of how help to keep children safe from CSA for parent/carers, practitioners and the public.

**Objective 4:** Increased awareness of how corporate safeguarding can contribute to the prevention of CSA.

### Arrangements for the Protection of children at risk of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)

**Objective 5:** Increased awareness in children of safe ways to disclose sexual abuse or risk of sexual abuse and of what should happen when they tell.

**Objective 6:** Increased awareness in non-abusing parent/carers of what should happen if a child is sexually abused, of how to support children and of how to access support for themselves.

**Objective 7:** Practitioners have access to resources and training to equip them to provide effective, timely and appropriate responses to children at risk of or abused through CSA.

### Arrangements for the Support of children who are sexually abused

**Objective 8:** Evidence on the prevalence of CSA is collected to inform the planning of services for children who have been sexually abused.

**Objective 9:** Children, who have been sexually abused, sexually abused through CSE ,HSB and online sexual abuse have access to trauma-informed services and appropriate therapeutic support based on their individual care and support needs to improve well-being and prevent repeat abuse

**Objective 10:** Children who have been sexually abused are given information about and appropriately referred into adult support services as they approach 18 years of age.

## Actions

### Arrangements for the **Prevention** of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)

The best way to respond to CSA is to stop it happening in the first place. We need to promote a better understanding of CSA for children, their families, practitioners, public bodies and the public so that they can recognise and respond to CSA risks.

**Objective 1: Challenge public attitudes towards CSA and support a culture where talking about CSA is not seen as a taboo subject in a way that can be exploited by perpetrators.**

| Action  | Owner                        | Delivery period                    |
|---|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| A1 -Develop a public awareness campaign to promote attitudes to CSA that will contribute to the prevention of abuse.          | Welsh Government             | Period 1                           |
| A2- Promote the public awareness campaign in each region across Wales.  | Safeguarding Board partners. | Period 2                           |
| <b>Evidencing the implementation of actions:</b>  |                              |                                    |
|   |                              | Reporting                          |
| A1- Public awareness campaign to promote attitudes to CSA that will contribute to the prevention of abuse had been delivered. |                              | End of Period 2                    |
| A2- Safeguarding Children Boards report evidence of campaign promotion  |                              | End of Period 2<br>End of Period 3 |

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) is a particularly contentious form of child abuse. Common understandings and representations of the nature and prevalence of CSA have changed over time. This has included historically attitudes towards CSA shaped by challenging debates where CSA has been denied, disbelieved and where victims have been blamed for their own abuse.<sup>1</sup>

Accounts provided by survivors of CSA to the IICSA [Truth Project](#) illustrate in very stark terms, how the ways in which CSA is understood and talked about has historically silenced victims even when they tried to tell people what was happening to them.

Campaign material will need to consider the ways in which attitudes towards and misconceptions about CSA are shaped by gender, ethnicity and culture, sexuality and disability.

We need to help people understand how the ways in which we talk – or don't talk about- CSA is an important part of changing attitudes and preventing abuse. In communities where people understand that CSA can and does happen, people are more likely to recognise risk and respond appropriately to prevent abuse from happening in the first place.



**Objective 2: Increased awareness in children of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships and that abusive behaviour is always wrong.**

| Action  | Owner                        | Delivery period      |
|---|------------------------------|----------------------|
| A3. Issue Relationships and Sexuality Education in Schools Guidance   | Welsh Government             | Period 2             |
| A4. Develop poster campaign on unsafe and unhealthy relationships for children and parent/carers  | Welsh Government             | Period 2             |
| A5. Promote information to children and parent/carers on healthy/unhealthy relationships.   | Safeguarding Board partners. | Period 2             |
| A6. Develop a clear referral pathway for children who display inappropriate sexualised behaviour to receive an early help assessment as recommended in NICE guidance 2016. <sup>2</sup> | Safeguarding Board partners. | Period 2<br>Period 3 |
| <b>Evidencing the implementation of actions:</b>  |                              |                      |
|   |                              | <b>Reporting</b>     |
| A3. Welsh Government evidence on implementation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in Schools.  |                              | End of Period 3      |
| A4. Welsh Government poster campaign has been launched.   |                              | End of Period 2      |
| A5. Safeguarding Children Boards report activity that has taken place to promote information to children and parent/carers on healthy/unhealthy relationships.                          |                              | End of Period 2      |
| A6. Safeguarding Children Boards report that local and/or regional referral pathways for children who display inappropriate sexualised behaviour are in place.                          |                              | End of Period 3      |

Understanding how relationships are formed, developed and maintained enables us to develop the skills and attitudes that allow us to create healthy relationships of our own. It supports children to develop the knowledge and skills needed to effectively navigate these rapidly changing influences and establish respectful, fulfilling relationships throughout their lives. These may include family relationships, friendships, professional relationships and sexual relationships. It can also help children to recognise when things are happening in their relationships with others that are not healthy or appropriate.

[SchoolBeat.Org](http://SchoolBeat.Org) is a bilingual site from the All Wales School Liaison Core Programme, providing information and resources for pupils, teachers, parents and partners to reinforce the key messages delivered by our School Community Police Officers in primary and secondary schools as well as alternative educational settings. The site also has information about the themed lessons that the All Wales School Liaison Core Programme offers including for example ‘Griff’s Story’, a Year 6 lesson designed to educate pupils about the issue of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation. ‘Risky Pics’ is a secondary school lesson about the social and emotional consequences of sexting and discover what the law says. The site includes resources on healthy relationships.

[Information on unsafe relationships for parents](#)

[Information for primary school children](#)

## Information for secondary school children

Sexually problematic behaviour in children must be considered on a continuum of behaviour ranging from normal, through harmful and in a small number of cases abusive. Our responses to children with sexually problematic behaviour must include early support to prevent harm to them and to other children. Intervening early so that children understand when why their behaviour is considered inappropriate so that any underlying issues can be identified will protect them from further harm and prevent the abuse of other children.

| <b>Objective 3: Increased awareness of how help to keep children safe from CSA for parent/carers, practitioners and the public.</b>  |                              |                        |
|--|------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Action</b>  | <b>Owner</b>                 | <b>Delivery period</b> |
| A7. Develop resources to support parents/carers from BAME communities, parent/carers with disabled children and parent/carers with LGBT+ children and practitioners to understand CSA and how they can help to keep children safe.   | Welsh Government             | Period 2               |
| A8. Promote resources to support parents/carers from BAME communities, parent/carers with disabled children and parent/carers with LGBT+ children and practitioners to understand CSA in the context of equality and diversity issues and how they can help to keep their children safe through an awareness raising campaign and learning sessions.         | Welsh Government             | Period 3               |
| A9. Develop and consult on a voluntary safeguarding code of practice for out-of-school settings and accompanying guidance for parents.   | Welsh Government             | Period 2<br>Period 3   |
| A10. Develop non-statutory practice guidance to support those working in education settings, in managing cases of peer-on-peer abuse within the education settings The guidance will provide advice on ensuring that where there are concerns around HSB children can continue to receive an education in way which is safe for them and for other learners. | Welsh Government             | Period 2               |
| A11. Develop information resources for practitioners and for parent/carers on CSE and HSB.   | Welsh Government             | Period 2               |
| A12. Promote information and resources on CSA, CSE, HSB and Online abuse to practitioners working with children and their families including information that practitioners can share with children and their families.  | Safeguarding Board partners. | Period 2<br>Period 3   |

|   |                              |                                    |
|---|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| A13. Support practitioner learning on CSA, CSE, HSB and Online Abuse including awareness of relevant guidance, procedures and practice guides. This should include promoting an understanding of CSA in the context of equality and diversity issues such as gender, ethnicity, sexuality and disability. | Safeguarding Board partners. | Period 2<br>Period 3               |
| <b>Evidencing the implementation of actions:</b>  |                              |                                    |
|   |                              | <b>Reporting</b>                   |
| A7. Resources to support parents/carers from BAME communities, parent/carers with disabled children and parent/carers with LGBT+ children and practitioners to understand CSA are available.  |                              | End of Period 2                    |
| A8. Resources to support parents/carers from BAME communities, parent/carers with disabled children and parent/carers with LGBT+ children and practitioners to understand CSA have been promoted through an awareness raising campaign and learning sessions.   |                              | End of Period 3                    |
| A9. A voluntary safeguarding code of practice for out-of-school settings and accompanying guidance for parents is issued.   |                              | End of Period 3                    |
| A10. Non-statutory practice guidance on managing peer-on-peer abuse in education settings is available and promoted.  |                              | End of Period 2                    |
| A11. Information resources for parent/carers and practitioners on CSE and HSB are available to Safeguarding Board partners.   |                              | End of Period 2                    |
| A12. Safeguarding Children Boards evidence that practitioners working with children and families are aware of information and resources on CSA, CSE, HSB and Online Abuse and are sharing this information appropriately with children and families.  |                              | End of Period 3                    |
| A13. Safeguarding Children Boards evidence opportunities and take up of practitioner learning on CSA, CSE, HSB and Online Abuse.  |                              | End of Period 2<br>End of Period 3 |

Practitioners who come into contact with children and their families should seek to routinely share information with parent/carers about available resources and the need to be aware of the ways in which they can help to keep the children in their care safe from CSA. This should include an understanding of the impact that non-contact online CSA can have on children.

Practitioner learning can be supported in a number of ways, through the dissemination of information and resources; through online learning and through direct awareness raising and training. Good practice can be promoted through the inclusion of safeguarding as a standing item at team meetings and through supervision. This can assist agencies to identify practitioner learning needs.

In 2018 the Welsh Government funded [Stop it Now! Wales](#) to develop and deliver a campaign aimed at tackling child sexual abuse by enabling the public to play a more active part in preventing the sexual abuse of children. The '*Child Sexual Abuse - What we all need to know*' campaign communicated key advice and information to the public through an awareness raising campaign involving traditional media, social media, [resources](#). Simultaneously, learning sessions for parents/carers and practitioners who work with children and families were delivered across each of the

six Safeguarding Children Board regions. Age appropriate resources are also available for the early years, for example the [NSPCC Let's Talk Pants](#) materials.

Parent/carers need to be aware of the ways in which they can check whether the adults that they allow to have contact with their children are safe or might pose a risk to their children.

The Home Office has produced information on the [Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme](#) which includes information for parents and for practitioners and communication materials to promote this information.

The NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) has produced a [Keeping Children Safe in Sports - A Parent's Charter](#) which provides advice on how parents can check that their child is attending a sporting activity which has safeguarding measures in place.

The Wales Safeguarding Procedures when published will be accompanied by a number of All Wales Practice Guides. This will include All Wales Practice Guides on CSE, HSB and Online Abuse. The Welsh Government will also be consulting on new guidance on CSE, *Working Together to safeguard People: Volume 7- Safeguarding children from Child Sexual Exploitation*. Practitioners should be familiar with this new guidance and with the All Wales Practice Guides once issued. Practitioners should also be familiar with the Stop it Now [resources](#).

There is evidence<sup>3</sup> that practitioner knowledge and understanding of CSA in relation to children from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, disabled children and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual (LGBTQ+) children where there are further barriers to identification may be more limited. The Welsh Government intends to commission resources and learning events to improve understanding for practitioners and for parent/carers.

When there is an incident of peer-on-peer abuse in a school or other education setting, or when there are concerns about a learner in relation to HSB, all those working in the education setting should be supported in managing cases effectively. Each case should be planned for and managed to ensure that all learners are safe and that the education opportunities for children with HSB and other learners are not adversely affected. The Welsh Government will develop guidance on managing peer-on-peer abuse and HSB in education settings.

The Welsh Government intends to develop and consult on a voluntary safeguarding code of practice for out-of-school settings and accompanying advice for parents. This will set out safeguarding expectations for out-of-school settings and information for parents will assist them to select activities for their children in out-of-school settings where there are safeguarding measures in place.

| <b>Objective 4: Increased awareness of how corporate safeguarding can contribute to the prevention of CSA.</b>  |                              |                        |
|---|------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Action</b>   | <b>Owner</b>                 | <b>Delivery period</b> |
| A14. Develop an exemplar corporate safeguarding policy in partnership with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) for consideration by Safeguarding Board Partners.  | Welsh Government             | Period 2               |
| A15. Consider adoption of exemplar corporate safeguarding policy.   | Safeguarding Board partners. | Period 3               |
| A16. Consider learning from the Contextual Safeguarding Network on neighbourhoods and consider a regional pilot site for the Neighbourhood Assessment toolkit.  | Safeguarding Board partners. | Period 2<br>Period 3   |
| <b>Evidencing the implementation of actions:</b>  |                              |                        |
|   |                              | <b>Reporting</b>       |
| A14. Exemplar corporate safeguarding policy is available.   |                              | End of Period 2        |
| A15. Safeguarding Children Board report that the exemplar corporate safeguarding policy has been disseminated to partners for consideration and partners have reviewed their existing corporate safeguarding policy against the exemplar policy.        |                              | End of Period 3        |
| A16. Safeguarding Children Board report that learning from the Contextual Safeguarding Network on neighbourhoods has been disseminated to partners and report whether there has been or will be a regional pilot site for the Neighbourhood Assessment. |                              | End of Period 3        |

A review of local authority corporate safeguarding arrangements undertaken by the [Wales Audit Office and published in 2015](#) made recommendations around a number of areas for improvement. Corporate safeguarding has a core role in ensuring that adequate measures are in place to keep children safe. Corporate safeguarding can also play a role in ensuring that procurement and licencing arrangements promote safeguarding. There is already some good practice in place in terms of training requirements on licensed taxi drivers for example but this is not consistent across Wales. More could also be done in terms of safeguarding due diligence checks on individuals or organisations applying to rent corporate premises for activities involving children.

Corporate safeguarding is also important in preventing institutional child sexual abuse and evidence on this is included in [Key messages from research - institutional child sexual abuse, 2018](#) published by the Centre for Expertise on CSA. Rigorous recruitment and selection processes, and the need for organisations to build an open culture where safeguarding is seen as everyone's business, ensures that children have safe spaces and positive relationships with several members of staff, and organisational processes should be in place (such as co-working, supervision and whistleblowing procedures) to minimise the opportunities for abuse to occur.

The Welsh Government will work with the WLGA to develop an exemplar Corporate Safeguarding Policy to inform improvements and consistency in local and regional arrangements.

Neighbourhoods have been identified as sites in which young people can experience and/or be safeguarded from abuse and violence. From experiences of child sexual exploitation in fast food restaurants, criminal exploitation in parks, serious youth violence on transport routes to exposure to drug use and dealing in vulnerable adult's homes. While agencies already work to keep young people safe outside of the home, such as neighbourhood safety and the police, the primary focus of this work is crime prevention as opposed to child well-being and safeguarding. Research suggests that there are a number of ways that young people can be safeguarded from harm in neighbourhood spaces – from 'designing-out' opportunities for abuse to occur and creating opportunities for community guardians. The Contextual Safeguarding Network, University of Bedfordshire offers an online [Neighborhood Assessment Toolkit](#) which will assist partners in considering relevant issues to support safer communities.

## Arrangements for the **Protection** of children at risk of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)

One of the difficulties in estimating the prevalence of CSA is that so much sexual abuse remains unidentified. Disclosure by children is rare, so professionals and other responsible adults need to be able to spot the signs of possible abuse and take appropriate action. The reasons children keep silent include fear of their abuser, not wanting their abuser to get into trouble, feeling that the abuse was ‘their fault’, and feeling responsible for what will happen to their family if they tell. Supporting a better understanding of CSA for children, non-abusing parent/carers and practitioners will support increased identification and disclosure so that children can be protected at the earliest opportunity.

**Objective 5:** Increased awareness in children of safe ways to disclose sexual abuse or risk of sexual abuse and of what should happen when they tell.

| Action  | Owner                        | Delivery period                                       |
|---|------------------------------|---|
| A17. Promote resources for schools with information for children on safe ways to speak out about abuse.   | Welsh Government             | Period 1  |
| A18. Promote resources with information for children on safe ways to speak out about abuse.   | Safeguarding Board partners. | Period 1<br>Period 2<br>Period 3                      |
| A19. Develop resources for children on what will happen if they tell an adult they are being abused.  | Welsh Government             | Period 1<br>Period 2                                  |
| A20. Promote resources for children on what will happen if they tell an adult they are being abused.  | Safeguarding Board partners. | Period 2<br>Period 3                                  |
| <b>Evidencing the implementation of actions:</b>  |                              |   |
|   |                              | <b>Reporting</b>                                      |
| A17. Welsh Government report promotion activity.  |                              | End of Period 1                                       |
| A18. Safeguarding Children Boards report evidence on promotion of resources for children on safe ways to speak out about abuse.                           |                              | End of Period 1<br>End of Period 2<br>End of Period 3 |
| A19. Resources for children on what will happen if they tell an adult they are being abused are available.  |                              | End of Period 2                                       |
| A20. Safeguarding Children Boards report evidence on promotion of resources for children on what will happen if they tell an adult they are being abused. |                              | End of Period 3                                       |

The 2015 to 2016 Crime Survey for England and Wales ran for the first time a module of questions asking adults whether they were abused as a child.<sup>4</sup> Survivors who reported childhood sexual assault by rape or penetration (including attempts) were asked whether they told anyone about what was happening to them at the time of the abuse. Just under three-quarters (74%) of survivors did not tell anyone about

the abuse at the time the abuse occurred. However, those aged less than 45 at the time of interview were significantly more likely to have told someone at the time the abuse occurred than those aged 45 to 59. This gives some indication that disclosure rates have increased over time. Only 1 in 10 (10%) of all survivors of childhood sexual assault by rape or penetration (including attempts) told someone in an official position about the abuse at the time, with 7% reporting the abuse to the police.

Much abuse in the family remains undisclosed. Children may fear their abuser, not want their abuser to get into trouble, feel that the abuse was 'their fault', and feel responsible for what will happen to their family if they tell. Disabled children, LGBT+ children and some Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) children face additional barriers. In some communities cultural beliefs around 'honour' will impact on the way in which family members and the wider community respond to a child who is sexually abused which can act to silence the child and supportive family members. Abuse by a family member may be particularly traumatic because it involves high levels of betrayal, stigma and secrecy. The Centre for Expertise on CSA has published [Key Messages from research on intra-familial child sexual abuse, 2018](#).

The term 'institutional child sexual abuse' is used to distinguish CSA in an institutional context from that occurring in the family or other settings. It can take place in a wide variety of settings where individuals are in a position of power and trust in relation to children. Institutional CSA may be perpetrated by a single individual on a single victim, but those who commit abuse in an institutional setting frequently have multiple victims. Institutional CSA can also involve several people committing abuse within the same institution, and includes abuse by peers in the context of an organisational culture of abuse. Many cases of non-recent CSA have been linked to institutions, with the abuse often not being disclosed for many years.<sup>5</sup>

A [school staff poster](#) is available to download which provides advice to those working with children who disclose abuse or neglect.

Children need to know that they will be listened to and their concerns will be taken seriously. All education settings should seek to demonstrate to children that they are able to provide them with a safe environment to talk about matters which affect them. Displaying information of national children's helplines such as [Children's Commissioner for Wales](#), [ChildLine](#), [Meic](#), [NSPCC](#) and peer support schemes, in easily accessible places, such as pupils' year planners, can encourage them to share concerns and receive help. Posters are also available to provide support to children to speak out when they have a concern: [Advice for primary school children](#) and [Advice for secondary school children](#). As effective practice, all education settings should display these posters on the premises in clear view of children.

Adult survivors have told us about the threats used against them by their abusers in order to silence them when they were children. Survivors who have talked to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) through the [Truth Project](#) have also talked about the ways in which their abusers and other adults in positions of trust silenced them.

Adult survivors have told us that there was no information available to them to help them understand what would really happen if they told someone about the abuse. Their understanding was therefore shaped by those who were abusing them in order



to silence them. The Welsh Government will develop resources for children to explain what will actually happen if they disclose that they are being sexually abused to a safe adult.

| <b>Objective 6:</b> Increased awareness in non-abusing parent/carers of what should happen if a child is sexually abused, of how to support children and of how to access support for themselves.                            |                              |                        |
|--|------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Action</b>  | <b>Owner</b>                 | <b>Delivery period</b> |
| A21. Develop resources for non-abusing parent/carers on the process related to the investigation of CSA, CSE and HSB on the best ways to support children and on sources of help and support for non-abusing parent/carers.  | Welsh Government             | Period 2               |
| A22. Promote resources for non-abusing parent/carers on the process related to the investigation of CSA, CSE and HSB, on the best ways to support children and on sources of help and support for non-abusing parent/carers. | Safeguarding Board partners. | Period 3               |
| <b>Evidencing the implementation of actions:</b>   |                              |                        |
|  |                              | <b>Reporting</b>       |
| A21. Resources for non-abusing parent/carers are available.  |                              | End of Period 2        |
| A22. Safeguarding Children Boards report evidence on appropriate promotion of resources for non-abusing parent/carers.   |                              | End of Period 3        |

There is very little research on the impact of CSA on non-abusing parents<sup>6</sup> but what evidence there is suggests that non-abusing parents/carers need access to information about the processes surrounding the investigation of CSA; advice on how to support their child(ren) and support with the emotional impact that CSA has on the child and family.

Stop it Now have produced a Welsh Government funded [resource](#) for parents, carers and other family members on preventing CSA which includes some advice on responding to and supporting children. The Welsh Government will develop further resources for parent/carers on the process related to the investigation of CSA, on the best ways to support children and on sources of help and support for non-abusing parent/carers.

Evidence from [PACE](#) sets out that parents and carers of children affected by CSE have reported 'victim family blaming' ; feeling unsupported in managing the emotional impact of parenting a child abused through CSE and of feeling that they are not listened to or taken seriously. The Welsh Government will develop resources for families and foster carers about CSE, with practical tips on what to do to managing CSE within the family and information on what is going to happen, who may be involved, and where they can access support.

The parents of children who were receiving support for harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) participated in a small-scale Welsh Government commissioned consultation in 2018.<sup>7</sup> They reported feeling judged, stigmatised and isolated by the experience of having a child who needed support because of HSB. This in turn had a negative impact on parental mental health. The Welsh Government will develop resources for families and foster carers about HSB, with practical tips on what to do to manage HSB within the family and information on what is going to happen, who may be involved, and where they can access support.

| <b>Objective 7: Practitioners have access to resources and training to equip them to provide effective, timely and appropriate responses to children at risk of or abused through CSA.</b>         |                              |                        |
|--|------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Action</b>  | <b>Owner</b>                 | <b>Delivery period</b> |
| A23. Develop training resources on handling disclosures of CSA, the investigation process and supporting families affected by CSA for practitioners.   | Welsh Government             | Period 3               |
| A24. Support practitioner learning on handling disclosures of abuse, the investigation process and supporting families affected by CSA for practitioners.  | Safeguarding Board partners. | Period 3               |
| <b>Evidencing the implementation of actions:</b>   |                              |                        |
|  |                              | <b>Reporting</b>       |
| A23. Training resources for practitioners are available.   |                              | End of Period 3        |
| A24. Safeguarding Children Boards evidence opportunities and take up of practitioner learning on handling disclosures of abuse, the investigation process and supporting families affected by CSA. |                              | End of Period 3        |

Research undertaken by the NSPCC<sup>8</sup> found that adults don't always recognise, understand or react appropriately when a child starts to tell them about experiences of abuse. The Welsh Government provided funding to the NSPCC in 2018 to support the production of [resources](#) and awareness raising sessions to support practitioners in responding to disclosure of CSA.

The investigation of allegations of child abuse is a crucial stage in protecting children. Although other agencies will be involved in aspects of the investigation process the Police and Social Services are primarily responsible for the investigation. Training can support a child-centred practice in the Joint Investigation process.

The Centre for Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse has produced a report and evidence-informed [film](#) to help practitioners from multi-agency backgrounds better understand the role and purpose of a medical examination in situations where child sexual abuse has been disclosed or suspected. It is applicable to any setting in

which children may be seen for a medical examination, and is relevant to both recent and non-recent cases of CSA.

Practitioners need knowledge of the evidenced approaches to supporting sexually abused children to support their recovery and well-being and of support for non-abusing members of family and for foster carers and residential workers supporting sexually abused children through recovery.

The Welsh Government will develop a package of training resources to support practitioners in handling disclosures, the investigation process and supporting children and their families who are affected by CSA.

## Arrangements for the Support of children who are sexually abused

CSA, CSE, HSB and Online CSA can and does impact negatively on the well-being outcomes of children well into adulthood. Our responses to children must include evidence based support likely to support recovery for the trauma associated with abuse, build resilience and secure longer term improvements in their well-being.

**Objective 8:** Evidence on the prevalence of CSA is collected to inform the planning of services for children who have been sexually abused.

| Action   | Owner                        | Delivery period      |
|--|------------------------------|----------------------|
| A25. Part-fund Centre for Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse research: <i>Exploring the scale of CSA in social care records: Wales File Study</i>   | Welsh Government             | Period 1             |
| A26. Consider the implications of the findings of the research <i>Exploring the scale of CSA in social care records: Wales File Study</i> in reviewing the likely prevalence of CSA in the region.           | Safeguarding Board partners. | Period 2<br>Period 3 |
| <b>Evidencing the implementation of actions:</b>   |                              |                      |
|  |                              | <b>Reporting</b>     |
| A25. <i>Exploring the scale of CSA in social care records: Wales File Study</i> , report and findings are published and disseminated.  |                              | End of Period 1      |
| A26. Safeguarding Children Boards report that they have considered the implications of the research in reviewing the likely prevalence of CSA in the region and any planned actions to be taken as a result. |                              | End of Period 3      |

The main source of evidence on the prevalence of CSA is currently the Child Protection Register but we know that CSA is underreported. At the same time the share of children on a protection plan for sexual abuse in Wales has decreased from 21% in 1993/4 to 4% in 2016/17 representing a reduction from 331 to 120 children. Over the same period sexual abuse accounted for between 24% and 48% of registration for multiple reasons ; in the most recent year, sexual abuse was noted in 30 (24%) of 125 'multiple' cases. The most frequently recorded combination with sexual abuse was neglect.<sup>9</sup> The Child Protection Register commonly serves as the main source of evidence in decision making for setting priorities, resource allocation and training.

A scoping [study](#) published by the Centre for Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse sets out that taking into account the variations in prevalence studies for England and Wales the data considered in the study suggests that some 15% of girls and 5% of boys experience some form of sexual abuse before the age of 16, including abuse by adults and peers. The methods used and number of questions asked affect estimates; at the higher end, international estimates reach 30% for girls and 23% for boys.

This suggests that Child Protection Register data, especially in the context of a reduction of registrations for CSA may not be the best source of evidence to inform planning to meet the needs of children. This is further complicated by the fact that many children who are sexually abused through CSE may not be included on the Child Protection Register. This is because of the extra-familial nature of some sexual abuse and the fact that looked after children are over-represented in terms of abuse through CSE.

The Welsh Government will part-fund research being led by the Centre for Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse: *Exploring the scale of CSA in social care records: Wales File Study*. The research will be carried out in two local authorities in Wales and will help to inform a better understanding of the number of children involved with Social Services where CSA and sexually abuse through CSE have been identified. The research should also assist Safeguarding Board partners in considering how best to evidence likely CSA prevalence rates in the region.

The current Social Services Performance Measurement Framework for Local Authorities was published in 2016 as a Code of Practice. The Welsh Government is working with stakeholders to develop a new Performance and Improvement Framework which will be introduced in April 2020 with the initial returns to be submitted in March 2021. This new Framework includes quantitative data that will demonstrate the volume and flow of individuals through the social care system, for the first time this will capture CSE data.

**Objective 9:** Children who have been sexually abused, sexually abused through CSE and/or have HSB have access to trauma-informed services and appropriate therapeutic support based on their individual care and support needs to improve well-being and prevent repeat abuse.

| Action  | Owner            | Delivery period                  |
|---|------------------|----------------------------------|
| A27. Support the development of a national Service Specification for Sexual Assault Referral Centre services in Wales with the NHS Wales Health Collaborative taking into consideration a range of child-centred practice models. | Welsh Government | Period 1<br>Period 2             |
| A28. Support the development and consult on a clinical pathway for children who have disclosed CSA/ children where CSA has been identified with the NHS Wales Health Collaborative.   | Welsh Government | Period 1<br>Period 2<br>Period 3 |
| A29. Support the evidence based development of the therapeutic support offer to children affected by trauma related to CSA.   | Welsh Government | Period 1<br>Period 2<br>Period 3 |

|   |                              |                      |
|---|------------------------------|----------------------|
| A30. Promote evidence and learning from the Welsh Government funded Gwella project  | Welsh Government             | Period 2<br>Period 3 |
| A31. Undertake a review of available therapeutic support for children who have experienced CSA, CSE, HSB or Online sexual abuse in the region, so that gaps in provision can be identified and addressed. | Safeguarding Board partners. | Period 2<br>Period 3 |
| <b>Evidencing the implementation of actions:</b>  |                              |                      |
|   |                              | <b>Reporting</b>     |
| A27. A national Service Specification for Sexual Assault Referral Centre services in Wales is place.  |                              | End of Period 2      |
| A28. A clinical pathway for children who have disclosed CSA/ children where CSA has been identified has been developed and consulted on.  |                              | End of Period 3      |
| A29. Report evidence on the impact of the implementation on the therapeutic support offer to children affected by trauma related to CSA.  |                              | End of Period 3      |
| A30. Report evidence on the ways in which learning from the Gwella project has been promoted.   |                              | End of Period 3      |
| A31. Safeguarding Children Boards report that a review has been completed and considered by the Board and reports any resultant regional development plans.   |                              | End of Period 3      |

Where a child discloses an incident(s) of child sexual abuse or where there is evidence to suggest that they have been sexually abused they should be referred to a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). A SARC is a dedicated facility to provide immediate and ongoing client care, including medical, practical and emotional support within the context of a partnership arrangement between police, health and the third sector. Findings from a Welsh Government review in 2013, formed the case for change for a multi-agency review of sexual assault services, including the sexual assault referral centres (SARCs) across Mid, South and West Wales, led by the NHS Wales Health Collaborative. A service model was developed and agreed in principle in 2016. In June 2018 Cardiff and Vale Health Board agreed to lead the next phase (implementation) of the new service model. A Project Board was established and includes representation from all partner agencies: Health; Gwent, South Wales and Dyfed Powys Police Forces, the Police and Crime Commissioners for these regions; New Pathways<sup>10</sup> as the third sector provider in the region; representation from the safeguarding boards in the region.

North Wales were not part of the initial service development work for multi-agency review of sexual assault services as there is a single SARC across the north Wales region but it is recognised that there are significant benefits from working across Wales and North Wales are active members of the implementation planning group and the task & finish groups of the SARC project.

The Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre North Wales (RASASC) offers specialist support and counselling to anyone aged 3 and over who lives in any of the 6 local authorities in North Wales whose lives have been affected by rape, sexual abuse or any other form of sexual violence. Its purpose is to provide confidential listening service, counselling, information and support service; to advance the education of the public in the subject of rape and sexual abuse and their effects, be they physical, medical, psychological or social. All counsellors and therapists must be members of British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) or equivalent.

Work being taken forward by NHS Wales Health Collaborative under Phase 2 of the work of the Sexual Assault Referral Centre Board includes consideration of a range of child-centred practice models that will inform incremental service development. Evidence such as the adoption of the Barnahus or Child House approach at the first UK pilot, [The Lighthouse](#) service in London and of established models of good practice such as that at [St Mary's Centre](#) SARC, Manchester.

This will inform a national Service Specification of SARC services for children in Wales.

The Welsh Government will also work with the NHS Wales Health Collaborative to establish a stakeholder group of relevant representatives to develop and consult on a national Clinical Pathway for children who have disclosed CSA/ children where CSA has been identified.

The Welsh Government is also commissioning an evidence review of trauma-informed interventions to inform the further development of evidenced therapeutic interventions and wider trauma informed services. This will support the development of services for children who have experienced trauma, including those needing support into recovery because of sexual abuse.

'Gwella' is a Welsh Government funded research and practice project operated in partnership between Barnardo's Cymru and CASCADE, Cardiff University. The aim of the Gwella project is to reduce the risk of vulnerable children experiencing CSE or demonstrating HSB, through the development of a prevention model for use in social care, in order to improve the well-being of children. The practice approach has been piloted in a number of local authorities with children aged between 5 and 11 years old with Social Services involvement in their lives where there have been historic concerns or evidence of early developmental trauma such as sexual abuse, neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse and exposure to domestic violence. Key principles of the Gwella practice approach include:

- Understanding the impact of the trauma on the child's development
- Establishing a relational and therapeutic play based response around the child
- Enhancing/deepening the relationship between child and primary carer(s) is a prime goal
- Enhancing/deepening the relationship between child and other significant adults a prime goal
- Children will receive a bespoke response that meets their unique strengths and needs.

The early evidence from Gwella is promising and the once the evaluation is complete the Welsh Government will promote learning from the project to inform practice development.

There is no clear picture of regional referral pathways or available therapeutic support for children experiencing trauma and requiring intervention as a result of CSA, CSE, HSB or Online CSA. A regional review of provision will assist Safeguarding Boards and their partners to consider and address gaps in provision to support children into recovery so that they can enjoy better well-being outcomes and are better protected from re-abuse.

|   |                              |                        |
|---|------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Objective 10:</b> Children who have been sexually abused are given information about and appropriately referred into adult support services as they approach 18 years of age.                                    |                              |                        |
| <b>Action</b>   | <b>Owner</b>                 | <b>Delivery period</b> |
| A32. Develop age appropriate resources for children coming up to the age of 18 years on accessing support as adult survivors of abuse.  | Welsh Government             | Period 2               |
| A33. Promote resources for children coming up to the age of 18 years on accessing support as adult survivors of abuse.  | Safeguarding Board partners. | Period 3               |
| <b>Evidencing the implementation of actions:</b>  |                              |                        |
|   |                              | <b>Reporting</b>       |
| A32. Age appropriate resources for children coming up to the age of 18 years on accessing support as adult survivors of abuse are available.  |                              | End of Period 2        |
| A33. Safeguarding Children Boards report evidence that resources for children coming up to the age of 18 years on accessing support as adult survivors of abuse have been promoted to practitioners and the public. |                              | End of Period 3        |

Adult survivors of CSA have told us about difficulties in accessing information about where to go to get advice and support about the impact of the experience on their well-being. Some survivors do not disclose until they are in adulthood, others are identified as victims of CSA in childhood but find that the trauma of that childhood experience impacts on them later at significant times of their life or on an on-going basis.

The [Survivors Trust Cymru](#) works to raise awareness of the issues relating to rape and sexual abuse in Wales and promotes the need for education, training for staff and appropriate services for survivors. The Welsh Government [Live Fear Free](#) website and helpline provides also provides advice for the victims of sexual violence and a number of public facing campaigns have highlighted the resource.



Where services are involved with a child who is coming up towards the age of 18 years it is important to think about making appropriate referrals into adult services but not all children will access adult services at this point. Information about sources of information of advice and support given to children who are known to have been abused through CSA will help them to know what is available as adults should they need support. The Welsh Government will develop an appropriate resource.

### **Next steps**

The Welsh Government will review progress on implementing the actions contained in this Plan on an annual basis to ensure that it reflects accurately the work that is being undertaken and planned. Following the end of Period 3 the Welsh Government will publish a review of progress on the delivery of the Plan and engage with the Safeguarding Boards and other stakeholders on any next steps.

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<sup>1</sup> Lovett,J; Coy,M and Kelly,L. (2018) *Deflection, denial and disbelief: Social and political discourses about child sexual abuse :A rapid evidence assessment*, London Metropolitan University, Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA)  
[Full Report](#) [Summary Report](#)

<sup>2</sup> *Harmful sexual behaviour among children and young people* - NICE guideline [NG55] Published date: September 2016  
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/NG55/chapter/Recommendations#early-help-assessment>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.csacentre.org.uk/research-publications/key-messages/intra-familial-csa/#the-prevalence-of-intra-familial-csa>

[https://www.csepoliceandprevention.org.uk/sites/default/files/cse\\_guidance\\_bame.pdf](https://www.csepoliceandprevention.org.uk/sites/default/files/cse_guidance_bame.pdf)

<https://www.nr-foundation.org.uk/downloads/Report-on-Sexual-Exploitation-of-LGBT-Young-People-in-the-North-East-Jul-8714.pdf>

<http://www.barnardos.org.uk/its-not-on-the-radar-report.pdf>

<http://www.barnardos.org.uk/welsh-cse-learning-and-disability-policy-briefing-paper.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Office for National Statistics (2016) *Abuse during childhood: Findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales, year ending March 2016*  
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/abuse-during-childhood/findings-from-the-year-ending-march-2016-crime-survey-for-england-and-wales#things-you-need-to-know>

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<https://www.csacentre.org.uk/index.cfm/?api/render/file/?method=inline&fileID=76F5DAC4-FD0B-4803-8DE4B5968E3088FE>

<sup>6</sup> [http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/17211/2/BSCPoster\\_%281%29.pdf](http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/17211/2/BSCPoster_%281%29.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Gwilym,C. and Thomas,M. (2018) *The experience of children and young people who display Harmful Sexual Behaviour and their families in Wales*, Report of Welsh Government commissioned consultation; NSPCC Cymru/Wales and Barnardo's Cymru

<sup>8</sup> <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2019/let-children-know-you-re-listening/>

<sup>9</sup> Reported in Kelly,L. and Karsna,K. (2018) *Measuring the scale and changing nature of child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation: Scoping report*, London Metropolitan University; Centre for Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse July 2017, updated August 2018

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<https://www.csacentre.org.uk/csa-centre-prod/assets/File/CSA%20Scale%20and%20Nature%20full%20report%202018.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> New Pathways is a registered charitable company that provides a range of specialist counselling and advocacy services for women, men, children and young people who have been affected by rape or sexual abuse.