

## CYPE(6)-13-22 - Paper to note 5

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Y Dirprwy Weinidog Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol  
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Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Jayne Bryant, MS  
Chair, Children, Young People and Education Committee  
Senedd Cymru  
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25 May 2022

Dear Jayne,

Thank you for your letter of 22 April regarding the Children, Young People and Education Committee's consideration of the issue of child sexual abuse, including a request from the NSPCC for the Committee to launch an inquiry into child sexual abuse in Wales.

I have already set out the Welsh Government commitment to promote a position where children in Wales feel listened to, benefit from child-centred practice and can realise their right to be safe. 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.

You have asked for information in a number of specific issues in your letter and each of these issues are addressed in this response as set out below.

### 1. **How the Welsh Government responds to the evidence from the NSPCC that "lockdowns in response to COVID-19 and subsequent isolation from support heightened the risk of CSA for some children".**

I wrote to the Children, Young People and Education Committee's in the fifth term, on 8 June 2020, in response to the Committee's Inquiry into the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on children and young people in Wales. My letter set out the arrangements we had put in place, working with partners to safeguard children during the pandemic.<sup>1</sup>

I agreed to a 6-month extension on the reporting period for the 'National Action Plan on preventing and responding to child sexual abuse'<sup>2</sup> extended from 31 December 2020 to 30 June 2021 in light of the pandemic. However, the Welsh Government and Safeguarding Boards continued to deliver actions under the Plan throughout the pandemic.

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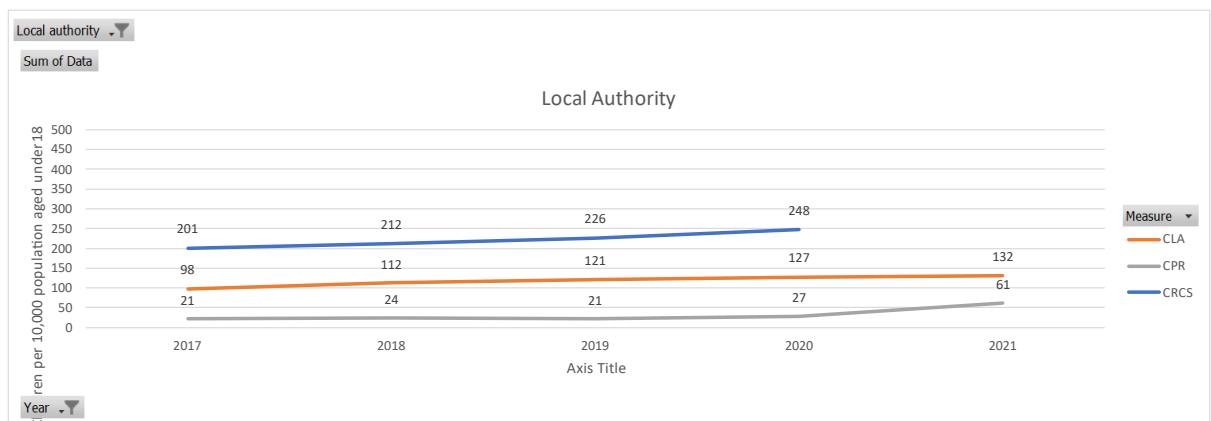
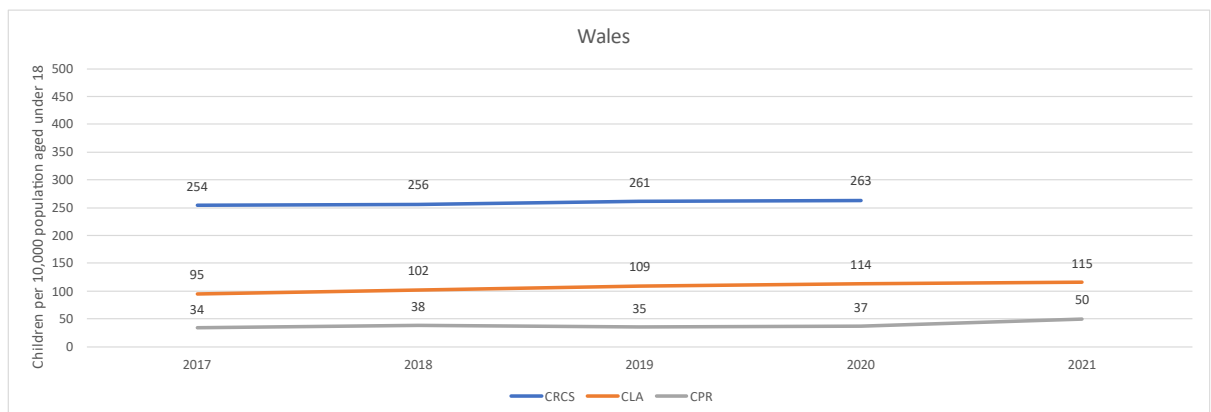
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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

**2. Any trends the Welsh Government has identified in the numbers of children on the child protection register, taken into care, and in need of care and support by the local authority during the 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22 financial years?**



**3. What steps the Welsh Government has taken - and will take - to ensure that the relevant authorities have the capacity and expertise to respond appropriately to all cases of child sexual abuse?**

A Written Statement was issued on 15 July 2019, launching the National Action Plan on preventing and responding to child sexual abuse and setting out the commitment of the Welsh Government to tackle abuse as an on-going priority.<sup>3</sup>

The National Action Plan sets out work to prevent child sexual abuse (including Child Sexual Exploitation and Harmful Sexual Behaviour), to identify and protect children at risk of child sexual abuse and to support abused children into recovery.

The National Action Plan includes clear actions for the Welsh Government and for relevant partners of the six Safeguarding Children Boards. Child sexual abuse is a particularly hidden form of abuse for complex and obvious reasons. The actions set out in the plan are focussed on breaking the silence on child sexual abuse.

This requires work to raise awareness, share information and knowledge and provide support to parents and carers and children and young people themselves.

A major public awareness campaign was commissioned from Stop in Now /The Lucy Faithfull Foundation and has been promoted by the Safeguarding Children Boards across Wales, 'It's Time we Talked about it'.<sup>4</sup>

A range of practice advice on identifying and responding to child sexual abuse has been commissioned through the Plan and widely promoted by the Safeguarding

Children Boards in Wales. The latest of these resources, for example, is a series of 12 films, commissioned from the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse.<sup>5</sup>

A range of advice for parents and carers has been developed and promoted, for example advice for parents on keeping children safe and supporting them if they are sexually abused has been commissioned from Stop it Now Cymru. This includes information for the parent/carers of LGBTQ+ children and young people, parents/carers with learning disabled children and parents with learning disabilities and Black, Asian and minority ethnic parent/carers, available in 12 languages.<sup>6</sup>

Information for children and young people reassuring them that they will be believed if they seek help and on how to get help was commissioned from the NSPCC/Childline.<sup>7</sup> An animation reassuring young people at risk of child sexual exploitation that they will get the help they need was commissioned from Cardiff University.<sup>8</sup>

The National Independent Safeguarding Board has published the Welsh Government full list of resources<sup>9</sup> developed under the Plan up to July 2021. A refreshed list will be published in July 2022.

The six Safeguarding Children Boards in Wales have promoted these resources throughout the regions. The Safeguarding Children Boards have also engaged with Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse, Stop it Now Cymru/the Lucy Faithfull Foundation and Cardiff University to provide training sessions for practitioners working across agencies.

The Welsh Government held an online event during National Safeguarding Week, November 2021 to share learning and promote the resources developed under the Plan. This involved presentations from adult survivors of child sexual abuse and exploitation and from the specialist organisations who have developed resources. Over 400 practitioners from across agencies registered for the event.

The Welsh Government awarded two Sustainable Social Services Third Sector Grants to Stop it Now/the Lucy Faithfull Foundation in 2020, these grants support two projects aimed at preventing child sexual abuse, identifying abuse and responding to it and early intervention with families where there are concerns children may be vulnerable to child sexual abuse. These two grants are now agreed to continue up to 31 March 2025.

Between the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2022, these projects have delivered child sexual abuse awareness education sessions to 1,574 parent/carers and practitioners. Multi-agency child sexual abuse training has been delivered to 463 practitioners. In addition, twelve Train the Trainer sessions have been delivered to 48 beneficiaries. One-to-one interventions have been completed with 68 families, where there are concerns about vulnerability of children to child sexual abuse.

There has been a 50 % increase in Welsh users have visiting the Stop It Now! website pages, up to 22,175. There has been an 80% increase in global traffic to the bespoke campaign webpages. There was a significant increase of 6,500, following a reminder campaign which ran from 21st February – 18th March 2022.

Since 2019, through the delivery of the National Action Plan and the Sustainable Social Services Third Sector Grants there has been a clear focus on equipping practitioners across agencies to be able to identify child sexual abuse, to handle disclosures of child sexual abuse and to understand how to respond to children and

young people at risk of or abused through child sexual abuse. At the same time public awareness raising and information for parent/carers and children and young people has been shared with the aim of breaking the silence around child sexual abuse.

**4. An update on the Welsh Government's review of evidence on the impact of its National Action Plan: Preventing and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse, scheduled to begin from 31 January 2022, and its plans to engage with Safeguarding Boards and other stakeholders on any next steps.**

The current National Action Plan on preventing and responding to child sexual abuse ends on 30 June 2022. The six Safeguarding Children Boards will provide evidence of the implementation of actions for Safeguarding Board partners on 30 June 2022. My officials met with the Business Managers of the Boards on 24 March to discuss reporting requirements.

The Welsh Government will produce a report in September 2022 reporting evidence from Safeguarding Children Boards and from Welsh Government on the delivery of actions under the Plan.

The publication date of the final report and recommendations Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse is not yet confirmed. Once this report is published, we will consider the recommendations alongside evidence of the implementation of the Welsh Government National Action Plan, preventing and responding to child sexual abuse.

The Welsh Government will then hold a series of consultation meetings with statutory safeguarding partners, the Safeguarding Children Boards and the third sector to consider areas of focus for future work. This process will also be used to identify whether it is appropriate to seek further evidence from adult survivors of child sexual abuse and children and young people.

Each of the Safeguarding Children Boards have regional arrangements in place to provide oversight of the planning and delivery of work under the National Action Plan. The Welsh Government has asked the Safeguarding Children Boards to maintain these arrangements after 30 June 2022, this will maintain a focus on the continuation of the work already in place to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse. The Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse has already visited each of the Safeguarding Children Boards to discuss further work on preventing and responding to child sexual abuse in the regions. My officials attend the Steering Group of the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse and maintain on-going engagement with the Centre.

My officials also attend and report to the Children's Commissioner for Wales Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Roundtable that meets bi-annually. As Chair, you will also be aware that my officials also regularly attend and provide updates to the Cross-Party Group on Preventing Child Sexual Abuse.

5. **The Welsh Government’s view on calls from the NSPCC for “a Welsh Government Online Safety Plan exclusively focussed on children and young people that connects all partners in a pan-Wales protection and prevention approach”.**

Our [Enhancing digital resilience in education: An action plan to protect children and young people online](#) provides a focus for our work in online safety and supports our mission to increase the digital resilience of our children and young people.

The Welsh Government is committed to taking a cross-sector, multi-disciplinary approach to enhancing digital resilience provision, policy and practice. In addition to joined up working between health, social services, education, and digital within the Welsh Government, the Digital Resilience in Education team actively engages and collaborates with a growing range of expert partners such as the NSPCC, National Crime Agency, Internet Watch Foundation, UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS), Tarian (police), Internet Matters, Childnet and a range of third sector stakeholders.

This year we will also establish a children and young people’s advisory panel for digital resilience to ensure the learner voice is represented. Panel members will give feedback about existing content, highlight any online issues currently affecting them and make recommendations to inform future content and policy direction.

6. **The Welsh Government’s views on: ▪ the findings of the Child Sexual Abuse Independent Inquiry’s work in relation to Wales to date generally including its investigation and research reports; ▪ how the findings of this UK wide inquiry feed into Welsh policy and practice. ▪ the performance of public authorities outlined in the February 2022 report into organised networks within the City and County of Swansea Council; and ▪ the UK Home Secretary’s response to that report., including the commissioning of a national inspection into police response to child sexual abuse.**

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) is a statutory inquiry for England and Wales, established in 2015 under the Inquiries Act 2005.

The Welsh Government has fully engaged in the work of the Inquiry through formal written evidence and through the formal evidence sessions of the Inquiry, attended by the Chief Social Care Officer for Wales and other senior officials where appropriate. The Inquiry takes decisions on the publication of evidence submitted by the Welsh Government and others.

The Welsh Government also engages with the inquiry through the IICSA Wales Reference Group, which is attended by the Chief Social Care Officer for Wales and other relevant officials as well as representatives of the Children’s Commissioner for Wales, local authority, health and police partners, Police and Crime Commissioners, academics and third sector.

The Welsh Government has to provide formal responses to the IICSA recommendations including into their inquiry on Child Sexual Exploitation by organised networks by July 2022. It is not appropriate to comment here in advance of the submission of this formal response to the Inquiry.

The Welsh Government has considered the emerging evidence of the Inquiry. One outcome of this for example is the publication of ‘Working Together to Safeguard People: Code of Safeguarding Practice for individuals, groups and organisations

offering activities or services to children and adults in Wales'.<sup>10</sup> My officials have also engaged directly with representatives of the IICSA Victims and Survivors Consultative Panel in the development of resources under the National Action Plan on preventing and responding to child sexual abuse.

I have already said that the Welsh Government will consider the final report and recommendations of IICSA in making decisions about future work on child sexual abuse. The statutory nature of the Inquiry will require the Welsh Government to provide a formal response to the recommendations of the Inquiry and due process will have to be followed in relation to this.

I hope that the Committee finds this response helpful. I would like to offer my assurance that the Welsh Government fully recognises the need to sustain and continue work to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse in Wales.

Yours sincerely,



**Julie Morgan AS/MS**

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol  
Deputy Minister for Social Services

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1 [Eich cyf \(senedd.wales\).](http://Eich_cyf_(senedd.wales).)

2 [Preventing and responding to child sexual abuse: national action plan | GOV.WALES](#)  
[Atal ac ymateb i gam-drin plant yn rhywiol: cynllun gweithredu cenedlaethol](#)  
[LLYW.CYMRU](#)

3 [Written Statement: Launch of National Action Plan on tackling child sexual abuse and consultation on safeguarding children from child sexual exploitation \(15 July 2019\) | GOV.WALES](#)  
[Datganiad Ysgrifenedig: Lansio'r Cynllun Gweithredu Cenedlaethol ar ymdrin â chamdrin plant yn rhywiol ac ymgynghoriad ar ddiogelu plant rhag camfanteisio rhywiol \(15 Gorffennaf 2019\) | LLYW.CYMRU](#)

4 [2020WG Poster Campaign ENG.pdf \(stopitnow.org.uk\)](#)  
[2020WG Poster Campaign CYMRU 11FEB20.pdf \(stopitnow.org.uk\)](#)

5 [Supporting practice in tackling child sexual abuse: A film series for professionals, by professionals - YouTube](#) [Cefnogi ymarfer wrth fynd i'r afael â cham-drin plant yn rhywiol: Ein cyfres ffilm 12 rhan newydd - YouTube](#)

6 [Stop It Now - Leaflets and resources to keep children safe in Wales](#)

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- 7 [you-have-the-right-to-be-safe---english---u12.pdf \(childline.org.uk\)](#)  
[you-have-the-right-to-be-safe---english---o12.pdf \(childline.org.uk\)](#)  
[you-have-the-right-to-be-safe---welsh---u12.pdf \(childline.org.uk\)](#)  
[you-have-the-right-to-be-safe---welsh---o12.pdf \(childline.org.uk\)](#)  
[Getting Help To Keep Safe \(u12\) | Childline](#)  
[Cael help i gadw'n ddiogel \(dan 12 oed\)](#)  
[Getting help to keep safe | Childline \(over 12\)](#)  
[Cael help i gadw'n ddiogel \(dros 12 oed\)](#)
- 8 [Keeping Safe? short film for young people - YouTube](#)
- 9 ['National Action Plan preventing and responding to child sexual abuse' resources - Safeguarding Board Wales](#)  
[Adnoddau'r 'Cynllun Gweithredu Cenedlaethol Atal ac Ymateb i Gam-drin Plant yn Rhywiol' - Bwrdd Ddiogelu \(bwrdddiogelu.cymru\)](#)
- 10 [Working together to safeguard people: Code of safeguarding practice | GOV.WALES](#)  
[Gweithio gyda'n gilydd i ddiogelu pobl: Cod ymarfer diogelu | LLYW.CYMRU](#)