



## **Time for Action: Young Person and Survivor Led Cross-Party Group Event**

### **The intersection between online harms and school-based peer-on-peer sexual abuse**

**Monday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

**10.00am – 12.00pm**

**Virtual Event**

#### **Minutes**

Jayne Bryant MS opened the meeting, explaining this is a young person and expert by experience led event on the intersection between peer-on-peer sexual abuse and online harms. The overarching call to Welsh Government from the event is the importance of fore-fronting young people and the voices of experts by experience in policy development on peer-on-peer sexual harassment and online harms. The event was led by representatives from the UK Youth Parliament, with support from Children in Wales, and the Marie Collins Foundation.

#### **Key points from speakers**

#### **Rhiannon Faye McDonald Marie Collins Foundation and Swansea University Project Dragon-Shield Lived Experience Expert Group (LEEG) - Why and How to Mainstream Lived Experience Expertise in O-CSEA and launch of 'Strong at the Broken Places' Animation and Report**

- Lived experience expert groups need to be mainstreamed in policy development. MCF call on Welsh Government to set up a lived experience advocacy group alongside the planned young people advocacy group.
- Its important that the voices of survivors are heard as they have so much to teach policy makers.
- Participation work must ensure no more harm is done to survivors in the process of them supporting policy development.
- It is essential that there is a constant feedback loop from policy makers with expert by experience groups on how their experiences are being used and making an impact.
- Dragon Shield and the Lived Experience Expert Group launched an animation 'Strong at the Broken Places' and an accompany report. Contact Dragon-S directly for more information [project.dragons@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:project.dragons@swansea.ac.uk)

#### **Youth Solutions – Fore-fronting young people's experiences – UK Youth Parliament**

- 'Anyone can be a perpetrator, from strangers to the people we trust the most'
- We have to challenge the normalisation of peer-on-peer sexual abuse and challenge terms such as 'take no notice' 'boys will be boys'.
- The group called for the following solutions:
  - Consent must be taught in schools to all learners
  - Training for school staff should be provided on how to notice the harms young people are experiencing
  - The stigma of experiencing abuse must be challenged
  - Young people should be provided with better online and app support
  - It should be mandatory that apps provide support to young people who experience harms
  - There must be mandatory co-operative working across departments and sectors to create strategies to tackle the issues of online and peer-on-peer abuse.

**Jeremy Miles MS, Minister for Education and the Welsh Language**

- These issues are a cross-government priority for Welsh Government and young people's voices are needed to challenge the normalisation of peer-on-peer abuse.
- It was difficult to accept from the [Estyn report](#) what children and young people have been through.
- The Minister spoke to the importance of communication: that young people feel confident to report and that the importance of safe, equal relationships are communicated to young people in return. Pan Wales research is planned to understand how young people prefer to be communicated with. It is Welsh Government's duty to listen and act
- These harms should not be expected in online spaces and education plays a vital role here. Welsh Government appreciates the challenge presented by online harms in schools, but staff should deal with online harms as any other safeguarding concern.
- Welsh Government are developing training for school staff on online sexual harassment
- A children and young people advisory panel for digital resilience will shape and inform the direction of Welsh Government work in this area.
- Planned changes to anti-bullying guidance to reflect peer-on-peer harassment, including bullying of LGBTQ+ children and young people. This will include robust recording of peer-on-peer harassment and LGBTQ+ bullying.
- Welsh Government is working on transgender guidance for schools

## Breakout rooms

Attendees were split into four breakout rooms led by representatives from the UK Youth Parliament to develop recommendations for Welsh Government. The breakout rooms focused on parents and carers/education/the tech industry/politicians.

Emerging themes from the discussions include:

- The importance of training for all school staff and youth workers
- Young people and lived experience groups must be central to informing change and policy development.
- Parents/carers and schools should be supported to build relationships to help keep children safe
- The need for rolling support for parents and carers on emerging risks and harms
- Awareness campaigns should challenge the normalisation of peer-on-peer sexual abuse and online harms
- Young people should have clear pathways to support and reporting harm
- Practice must be developed to effectively tackle online harms
- These issues are impacting primary age children, and this must also be a priority for Welsh Government

## Actions

The CPG secretariat will develop a briefing for Welsh Government, which includes recommendations for the forthcoming action plan on peer-on-peer sexual harassment.

Jayne thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.