

Saving Futures: Cross Party Group on Preventing Child Sexual Abuse
Minutes of meeting 6th March 2023
Location: Virtual

Speakers

Jayne Bryant MS – Chair
Tanya Harrington – Stonewall Cymru
Fateha Ahmed – EYST
Zoe Williams – LD Wales
Elinor Puzey – NSPCC

Joanna Williams – NHS Collaborative
Alex Perry – Welsh Government
Kate Rothwell - Welsh Government
Dearbhla Sloan - NSPCC
Kelly Turner - Monmouthshire
Ross Walmsley – NSPCC
Jan Pickles

Attendees

Lucy Blackwood - Welsh Government
Catrin Simpson – SARC
Claire Sharp – Children in Wales
Damian Rees - Swansea
Fflur Emlyn – RASAC North Wales
Helen Gordon – Gwent

Helen Middleton - CAVC
Heather Heaney - Monmouthshire
Faith McCready – South Wales Police
Catherine Lewis - South Wales Police
Sarah Keefe - Tarian
Sally Howells - Cyfannol
Philip Walker - Survivors Trust

Minutes

Jayne Bryant MS welcomed attendees to the meeting and explained the aim of this session is to inform the CPGs recommendations to Welsh Government's second action plan on CSA, with a focus on the needs of marginalised children.

Key points from speakers

Tanya Harrington - Stonewall Cymru

- Risk factors for LGBTQ+ young people may be similar to other cohorts of children, but present differently
- A young person may feel they are being discriminated against because of their sexuality so may not want to tell a teacher or doctor about the abuse. This sense of isolation can be weaponised by abusers
- Increased risk of financial hardship and homelessness if difficult or no relationship with family
- LGBTQ+ young people do not have the same examples of good relationships which can lead to unsafe and abusive sexual relationships.
- Important services provide inclusive access to support and have training on how to be a safe person
- Take an intersectional lens, treating young people as individuals not part of a homogeneous LGBTQ+ group.

Fateha Ahmed – Ethnic Youth Support Team (EYST) Wales

- Fear of stigma, and loss of respect from the community if abuse is disclosed
- There is a blind spot in 'mainstream' services when it comes to understanding the stigma and cultural misunderstanding of CSA – which creates a barrier to accessing service provision
- Language barriers
- Often disrespectful to discuss sex within some cultures, which can make it harder for CYP to disclose
- Practitioners who understand cultural barriers are essential within social services
- Particular risks and barriers for asylum seeking and refugee families who fear the 'hostile environment'

Zoe Richards – Learning Disability Wales

- Parents with a learning disability feel under constant surveillance which can act as a barrier to seeking support on CSA
- Mothers with an LD are particularly vulnerable to predatory partners
- Information on CSA and online harms must be accessible for parents with an LD
- Children and young people with an LD are at increased risk when they are 'desexualised' and not taught about healthy relationships
- CYP with a disability will have more caregivers in their life, particularly those who need personal care, this creates an additional risk.

Discussion from the floor

Elinor Puzey from NSPCC Cymru led a discussion with meeting attendees. Key points and recommendations include:

Training

- Essential for specialist sexual violence services to have training on marginalised children's needs and unconscious bias
- Specialist services should be supported to have cultural competency training
- Grassroots organisations working with marginalised children should be given training on how to spot the signs of CSA, how to talk about it and what to do with a disclosure
- All training should have an intersectional lens over it. Avoiding grouping children but recognising them as individuals who may experience intersecting oppressions
- Online training for professionals is not enough, training on CSA should be delivered in person
- Training should be informed by people's lived experience

Multi agency working

- Specialist sector and grassroots organisations should be supported to work holistically with children
- Using the right interpreter is essential – ensure dialect as well as language is the same, consider if the interpreter is appropriate for the subject matter, is the survivor comfortable talking through an interpreter or have they built a relationship with a worker already who would be best placed to provide that service?

Workforce development

- Workforces should consider how they can be more culturally diverse to reduce barriers to access and improve visibility to marginalised communities
- Service standards from the Survivor's Trust can help specialist services evidence the knowledge they hold on supporting marginalised children. The process of assessment also supports the organisation to recognise gaps in knowledge

Data

- A national data set on CSA is essential to have a fuller picture of prevalence, but how this data is collected from children must be trauma informed
- The Violence Prevention Unit is creating a data collection hub for Welsh SARCs – consideration should be given to what other sources can be fed into this (schools, police, grassroots)

Jayne Bryant thanked everyone for attending, confirmed a briefing will go to Welsh Government with recommendations and closed the meeting.