



Buffy Williams SM
Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay.
CF99 1SN

24 November 2025

Dear Buffy

Thank you for your letter of 15 August regarding your follow-up work and questions in relation to peer-on-peer sexual harassment and pupil absence.

This response provides further information in relation to peer-on-peer sexual harassment. I will write separately in relation to absence.

I enclose two self-explanatory annexes with this letter:

- Annex A provides a detailed response to question 1 (bullets 1 to 4) of your letter.
- Annex B addresses questions 2 and 3.

In relation to question 4, 'any other issues you think are relevant to this issue, which we should consider as part of our follow up work', I have not provided a separate response. I believe the detailed information contained within Annexes A and B provide a comprehensive update on this matter.

I remain committed to advancing this important area of work and will continue to take forward the actions outlined. The steps detailed here are intended to deliver progress and meaningful impact.

Best wishes,

Lynne Neagle AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education

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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.

Annex A – peer-on-peer sexual harassment

Q1 Please can you set out: your updated perspective on the following:

- **peer-on-peer sexual harassment in schools**

The 2023 Student Health and Well-being Survey part of the School Health Research Network (SHRN) included questions on peer-on-peer sexual harassment. The survey is a cross-sectional, school-based survey administered biennially to 11–16-year-olds. In 2023, 129,761 students from 201 schools participated in the survey.

The relevant questions were:

- In the last year, how often have you been called sexually offensive names at school [by boys / girls]?
- How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: My teachers take action when they hear pupils calling [boys / girls] sexually offensive names at this school.
- In the last year, how often have you been unwantedly touched or kissed in school [by boys / girls]?

The findings from the work of SHRN are useful in considering the experiences children and young people have, and what we can do both address harms and ensure they feel safe and supported. However, there are constraints to the survey questions which mean that we are unable to fully rely on this data alone and we cannot share detailed findings. For example, the phrase ‘unwanted touching’ may not be perceived by all children and young people as meeting touching which is sexual in nature. Higher reported incidences of unwanted touching or kissing may reflect higher rates of non-sexual unwanted touching (e.g. pushing and shoving in school corridors). A recent consultation on this survey question with the DECIPHer Research Centre’s (which administers SHRN) young persons’ advisory group, supported this viewpoint.

In addition, the survey does not reflect the types of sexually offensive names young people might be describing. Nor does it capture whether name-calling incidents were intended as ‘jokes’ or perceived to be hurtful. Additionally, the survey does not currently capture sexually offensive name calling by those who respond with ‘neither word describes me’ to the gender identity question.

Notwithstanding these limitations, this data does provide useful indicators, and shows that this is an area where we need more robust data to support our work. To this end I have asked my officials to work with the SHRN team to refine the survey questions for the 2025 SHRN data collection exercise. I am keen that we capture more explicit information about peer-on-peer sexual harassment, including both physical and online behaviours, as well as whether the young person reported this experience to a teacher or other adult. Findings will be available from this survey in 2026.

Depending on the findings, it may be necessary to undertake more qualitative research to examine why certain groups of young people are reporting higher experience of sexually offensive name calling and unwanted touching or kissing. In addition, further research to examine how schools address peer-on-peer sexual harassment in their policies and practice, and what is effective would also be insightful.

I have already made a start in this area. Worryingly, research is increasingly demonstrating that sexual harassment is not confined to older teens but happening in the everyday lives of pre-teen children.

It is important not to frame sexual harassment and sexual violence in terms of isolated incidents, but rather to understand the ways in which society, school and youth cultures reinforce gender discrimination and how this relates to sexual harassment and violence. A key barrier to addressing the issue is that sexual bullying, sexism and harassment are normalised, everyday occurrences. Unhelpfully, they are seen as part and parcel of growing up. This normalising of this type of behaviour, alongside children and young people feeling unable to disclose is likely to lead to an under-estimation of the scale of the issue.

This is why the peer-on-peer sexual harassment action plan highlighted that we will consider what research is needed to understand instances of peer-on-peer sexual harassment among primary school-aged children' (action 7.1).

I believe this is an important piece of work and also relevant to several other areas, including, the Curriculum for Wales and the relationships and sexuality education (RSE) code of practice. This sets developmentally appropriate learning that aims to tackle issues such as bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination. Other related activity includes our plans to enhance online safety, now articulated in the digital resilience in education action plan for children and young people; and the violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) strategy.

To support this I have agreed that we commission research to explore pre-adolescent children's understanding and experiences of safe and healthy peer relationships, with a particular focus on peer-on-peer sexual harassment. The insights gathered from the perspective of pre-adolescent children will be used to inform policy decisions and future iterations of the peer-on-peer action plan. This is particularly true in relation to promoting safe and healthy peer relationships, preventing and reducing peer-on-peer sexual harassment and strengthening support for victims and perpetrators.

I will ensure the Committee is kept informed of this work as it progresses.

- **bullying in schools.**

In November 2024 I made an Oral Statement to the Senedd as part of anti-bullying week. In it I highlighted that bullying continues to be a problem and that it has a very real impact, particularly on children's emotional wellbeing. I also said that tackling bullying and its impact is a key priority for me. I want to send the message that bullying is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. I also want to be clear that we will support the victim, and work with the perpetrator to recognise the harm they have done, helping them find a positive way forward.

Once again, the SHRN data provides us with valuable intelligence on the scale and nature of bullying. It highlighted that almost 38% of young people said that they had been bullied in the previous couple of months, up from 32% in 2021. Results are higher than ever previously reported in the survey with more than 40% of girls being bullied compared to over 30% of boys.

Of those responding to the survey, 21% stated they were cyberbullied at least once or twice in the past couple of months. Cyberbullying victimisation was markedly higher among young people who identified as neither a boy nor a girl (44%), relative to boys (17%) and girls (24%).

Bullying victimisation showed some evidence of a social gradient, with learners from less affluent families reporting slightly higher rates of being bullied than those from medium or high affluence families.

In addition, during 2023/24, Childline delivered just under 7,000 counselling sessions about bullying (excluding online). This was a small decrease (-1%) when compared to 2022/23. Among the counselling sessions about bullying in which gender was known, 69% were with girls, 26% were with boys and 5% were with young people identifying as trans or non-binary. In the same period Childline also delivered 932 counselling sessions to children and young people about online bullying, a similar figure to the previous year.

I am concerned about the link between stigma and discrimination over poor mental health as a cause of bullying: though equally, bullying can also contribute to the development of poor mental health and well-being. Tackling the root cause of bullying can be the precursor to improving the child or young person's mental wellbeing.

I want both support for anti-bullying and wellbeing of all children and young people to go hand in hand. Earlier this year we consulted on revised antibullying guidance – 'Rights, Respect, Equality'. This highlighted the need to ensure that all children and young people have positive experiences in school and that they thrive in the nurturing and supportive environment school provides. The consultation attracted over 240 responses, which are currently being analysed, with the revised document expected to be published in the new year.

- **inappropriate behaviour by pupils towards school staff (sexual or otherwise); and**
- **any other issues that relate directly or indirectly to the behaviour of pupils towards each other or towards staff.**

I will take these two points together as they are closely related.

I am not aware of any data on sexually inappropriate behaviour by learners towards school staff. However, we do know that poor behaviour in general is on the rise and is a serious concern and do have some limited data and intelligence on the impact of behaviour of our school staff.

In November 2024 Education Support, the charity dedicated to supporting the wellbeing of school staff, published its eighth annual Teacher Wellbeing Index research report. This highlighted that disturbingly high rates of stress, anxiety, and burnout continue to affect education staff in Wales. This is exacerbated by pupil and parent behaviour, and a lack of support outside school for children and young people. Whilst not a detailed survey, Education Support use YouGov rather than a targeted sample, it does give a flavour of how teachers are feeling. It showed that 58% of staff in Wales (who responded to the original survey) say that they have experienced more incidents of challenging behaviour when compared to last year. Of this group, 80% of staff say this negatively affects their mental health and wellbeing. Also 70% of staff say that challenging behaviours from parents and guardians have increased which has also negatively impacted their mental health and wellbeing.

I have been clear that any form of violence or abuse against staff or learners in our schools is completely unacceptable. However, it is important to recognise that poor behaviour in children often stems from underlying factors. I am committed to shifting away from a system that focuses on punishment, towards one that seeks to understand and address the root causes of such behaviour. This could include issues with mental health and wellbeing, unmet additional learning needs, the availability of specific learning support services, or the impacts of the ever-rising cost of living. Sometimes it is about the attitudes of parents and learners towards school more generally. Some children take longer to learn how to regulate their behaviour, meaning they need additional support to manage their emotions appropriately.

It is important we take time to understand the causes of poor behaviour. We advocate the use of trauma informed and restorative practices in schools. Poor behaviour should be addressed through the consistent implementation of appropriate behavioural policies and in taking steps to understand the root causes.

Our Behaviour Summit was held in May where I heard from schools and colleges and other partners about the wider issues they face beyond violence. Just as we were able to at the earlier roundtable on safety and violence, the Summit helped to establish actions for the Welsh Government and other parties to address poor behaviour in the round. The Roundtable and Behaviour Summit marked the beginning of a partnership-based approach to addressing behaviour challenges in our schools and colleges.

As part of this work we undertook a survey of education providers and support staff and published the results earlier in the year. They complement the findings by Education Support, with nearly all respondents reporting an increase in the variety, range, magnitude, and frequency of challenging or disruptive behaviours since the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This suggests that the pandemic may have impacted learner behaviour or may have exacerbated pre-existing trends which has in-turn led to more frequent and varied disruptions in school settings.

The most prevalent concerns among respondents included low-level disruptions, which, while not as severe as physical aggression, still pose a significant challenge to maintaining a conducive learning environment. Over half of respondents working in secondary schools reported concerns regarding learners bringing weapons to school. Although just one in five classified these concerns as 'serious' this raises important questions regarding safety and security for both learners and staff. This is an issue which has been further highlighted following the knife related incident at Ysgol Dyffryn Amman last year.

Physical assaults on teachers were described as a serious concern for almost half of those working in primary schools, further highlighting the need for effective measures to protect teachers and ensure their wellbeing.

Almost nine in ten respondents working within secondary schools reported violence between learners as concerning, however, for most this was considered a minor rather than a serious concern.

Respondents reported feeling poorly supported in dealing with challenging and disruptive behaviour from learners, both from their Local Authority and from parents. Nearly three quarters of respondents reported an increase in the proportions of negative interactions with parents and over 70% reported an increase in the intensity of these interactions.

These themes were built on during the Behaviour Summit and I have committed to listening and finding solutions in partnership. The Five Immediate Actions to tackle behaviour announced after the Summit clearly set out my commitment to ongoing, open dialogue with practitioners, parents, and children and young people. I recognise that sustainable change relies on listening to those with direct experience of our education system.

This is why I am taking forward a wider programme of engagement, with a particular focus on amplifying the voices of practitioners, learners, and parents.

I will make further announcements as this work progresses.

Annex B

Q2 How work is progressing in implementing the accepted recommendations from Estyn's June 2023 report into peer-on-peer sexual harassment among 16 to 18 year old learners in further education (FE) colleges, and its 2021 report on the issue in secondary schools.

Recommendation 6:

Make clear which aspects of Welsh Government education guidance relating to sexual harassment apply to further education colleges and clarify any differences between requirements in schools and further education colleges.

And

Recommendation 7:

Provide appropriate guidance to colleges to help them adopt a co-ordinated and consistent approach to recording and categorising instances of sexual harassment

Welsh Government update October 2025:

Medr is continuing to work collaboratively with colleges, in particular through the Colegau Cymru Learner Experience Group, to identify current and emerging areas of focus to support colleges to tackle sexual violence, harassment and abuse.

Following the colleges autumn meeting, we will work towards funding the next phase of the project, taking account of the Estyn peer on peer abuse review findings and recommendations and the more recent Estyn Learner Behaviour review published today. [Learner Behaviour in Further Education Colleges - Estyn](#).

Q3 the Welsh Government's progress in implementing the following accepted, accepted in principle or partially accepted recommendations from our July 2022 report (including any significant achievements or challenges faced in implementing them, or where the recommendations have been superseded by events, policy changes or otherwise):

Recommendation 1:

The Welsh Government and Estyn must adopt/continue to use the definition of sexual harassment used by Estyn in its 2021 report 'We Don't Tell our Teachers', including the specific examples of peer on peer sexual harassment Estyn used in its work with pupils.

Accept. Welsh Government update October 2025:

Complete. The multi-agency action plan adopts this definition and it will be the definition utilised when commissioning any further research or reviews in this space.

Recommendation 2:

The Welsh Government must create a Young People's Advisory Board, made up of a representative sample of young people across Wales, to co-design the Welsh Government's response to peer on peer sexual harassment.

Accept. Welsh Government update October 2025:

Putting children at the heart of policy making, including involving them directly in policy development, is important to the Welsh Government. It gives them a voice in shaping policies that affect them; and we also have a commitment to involve them under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Ensuring they have the opportunity to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have those views taken seriously.

To achieve this requirement, we will and do reach out to children and young people in a variety of ways. In the context of the issues raised within this report, it is important that we engage a broad number of children and young people, and that we continue to innovate in the ways in which we engage. This will enable us to capture not just the views of as many children and young people as possible, but also to ensure that those voices and experiences represent the diversity of the young people of Wales.

Some examples of current engagement include co-operation with Children in Wales, to incorporate the views of the children and young people who are members of the National Young People's Stakeholder Group to help develop our response to this recommendation. We will also seek to engage other Young Voice participants and identify suitable organisations which have expert knowledge and work with children and young people to co-produce the response.

The Keeping Safe Online (KSO) Youth Group is continuing in 2025–26 and the newly appointed members will come together for their first meeting in November. The facilitated sessions provide an opportunity for members to share their online experiences, discuss emerging trends and raise concerns. These insights help inform the most effective ways to support learners, their schools, and their families with a range of online safety issues.

Recommendation 3:

The Welsh Government must carry out an awareness-raising campaign, co-designed with the Young People's Advisory Board (see Recommendation 2), targeted at learners across Wales, to improve understanding of what constitutes sexual harassment.

Welsh Government response: Accept. Last updated July 2025.

WG have commissioned an Our Streets Now project, which is working with schools, staff, and young people to raise awareness about the sources of support available. The project concluded in July 2025, and the findings are being considered with a view to adopting a standardised approach across all Local Authorities.

Recommendation 4:

The Welsh Government must commission a review into peer on peer sexual harassment among primary school-aged children, drawing on the expertise and guidance of children's charities, academics and the Children's Commissioner for Wales as appropriate.

Accept. Welsh Government update October 2025:

We are in the process of commissioning a research project which will explore how pre-teen children understand gender and sexual power dynamics in their peer cultures, both in school and online. Using participatory methods, the study will address gaps in knowledge about children's experiences of gender-based bullying and harassment, focusing on equality, diversity, and children's voices. We envisage the project will involve approximately 100 children aged 9-11 from a diverse mix of primary schools across Wales. Outputs will include research report, executive summary, and a co-produced resource to help schools address peer-to-peer sexual harassment. More information is in Annex A.

Recommendation 5:

The Welsh Government must update its statutory guidance to ensure that local authorities collect data from schools on sexual harassment specifically on a monthly basis, analyse that data to identify trends and patterns, and report on their findings at least annually. The data should: be collected on the basis of the definition of sexual harassment adopted by Estyn in its 2021 report; and be broken down by the nine protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010.

Accept. Welsh Government update October 2025:

This was addressed in the recent consultation on the draft Rights, Respect, Equality Anti-bullying Guidance which ran from 19 May 2025 to 31 July 2025. We are now analysing the responses to the consultation, and plan to publish the final updated guidance in January 2026. The update will address peer-on-peer sexual harassment issues highlighted in Estyn's December 2021 report and emphasise the importance of data collection and a number of policy teams are in discussion to review data collection in schools.

Recommendation 6:

Estyn must include within its inspection framework for routine school inspections, no later than January 2023, consideration of schools' approaches to keeping records of incidents of peer on peer sexual harassment specifically, how schools interrogate that data to identify trends and patterns, and the extent to which that data informs the development of school-based interventions.

And

Recommendation 12:

Estyn must include within its inspection framework for routine school inspections specific consideration of how schools and colleges respond to and support learners who have reported and/or experienced sexual harassment, and to address the behaviour of individuals who have perpetrated it.

Accept. Welsh Government update October 2025:

Complete.

Whilst these two recommendations are for Estyn to take forward they have informed us of the following.

Safeguarding is a key strand of Estyn's work. Estyn evaluates the culture of safeguarding during all school and PRU inspections. As part of this, they consider the providers' approaches to dealing with bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment. In evaluating safeguarding culture, inspectors will also take account of how well leaders and governors hold themselves accountable for promoting equity and tackling harassment, and whether learner voice informs strategic decision-making.

During the inspection of local government education services, inspectors must consider, and report on, how well leaders and managers promote equity in the education system. Inspectors must assess how well leaders and managers promote equality and prevent and tackle discrimination, harassment and bullying, including in relation to protected characteristics.

Increasingly, schools are conducting their own surveys and/or using the national SHRN (School Health Research Network) survey findings to identify issues around matters such as peer-on-peer sexual harassment in their own settings, and, in the best cases, adapting their PSE provision accordingly. Inspectors will also consider how well providers use learner voice systematically, including through surveys, focus groups and school councils and how they demonstrate to pupils that feedback leads to tangible improvements in provision and culture. There are also examples of how schools and PRUs record detailed information about aspects of bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment, to support pupils and respond proactively to unacceptable behaviour. However, providers could benefit from further guidance about what is expected in relation to record keeping. This would help to ensure that there is greater consistency in the records held by schools and local authorities about the types of bullying experienced by young people.

Last academic year (2024-25) Estyn completed two thematic reviews, focussing on behaviour in secondary schools and FE colleges. The behaviour in secondary schools thematic review includes resources for schools which focus on promoting positive behaviours and relationships. Findings and resources from this thematic review were shared with providers in the summer 2025 peer inspector training (there is a peer inspector in nearly all secondary schools in Wales). This academic year, Estyn is conducting a thematic review of healthy relationships, which will follow up on the thematic review on the same topic conducted in 2017.

Estyn will ensure that findings from thematic reviews highlight examples of effective practice in prevention, record keeping, and response and that resources are disseminated to providers to support improvement. We will also explore whether providers evaluate the long-term impact of their interventions, including reductions in incidents and improvements in learner wellbeing.

Recommendation 7:

The Welsh Government must ensure that any reviews into peer on peer sexual harassment in Further Education and primary schools consider how effectively schools and colleges collect, categorise and analyse sexual harassment data to identify trends and develop school-/college-based interventions.

Accept. Welsh Government update October 2025:

Officials are in discussions with Local Authority Leads to identify ways to improve the reporting and analysis of bullying and harassment in schools.

The Peer on Peer Abuse (POPA) project, led by Cardiff and Vale College, has just finished its second year and will be funded by Medr for a third year.

Medr is continuing to work collaboratively with colleges, in particular through the Colegau Cymru Learner Experience Group, to identify current and emerging areas of focus to support colleges to tackle sexual violence, harassment and abuse.

Following the colleges autumn meeting, we will work towards funding the next phase of the project, taking account of the Estyn peer on peer abuse review findings and recommendations and the more recent Estyn Learner Behaviour review published today. [Learner Behaviour in Further Education Colleges - Estyn.](#)

Recommendation 8:

The Welsh Government must ensure that pupils are taught about the underlying causes of peer on peer sexual harassment – such as unhealthy depictions of sexual relationships and behaviours across society amplified by pornography, social media, online gaming platforms and others – as part of current Personal and Social Education and future Relationships and Sexuality Education curricula.

Accept. Welsh Government update October 2025:

Within the Curriculum for Wales, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a mandatory cross cutting theme for all learners ensuring they have access to this crucial learning. The RSE Code sets out core developmentally appropriate learning which aims to tackle serious issues such as bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination. Online safety is a particular key feature within the RSE Code and educating young people on how to safely engage with social media is a cross-curricular issue.

RSE is currently implemented in all primary schools and in years 7, 8, 9 and 10 in secondary schools in Wales and will be fully rolled out across all schools and settings by September 2026. To further support schools on RSE, we recently announced a grant of £4.2 million to Stori Wales over three years to ensure nationally consistent professional learning, expertise and advice on RSE for all schools. This will ensure schools have clear, unambiguous support to ensure they follow their legal requirements and give children appropriate support.

We provide dedicated advice for children and young people on the Keeping Safe Online area of Hwb, addressing online sexual harassment alongside related peer pressures such as group chat dynamics, body image, online influences and sharing nudes. These resources aim to develop young people's understanding of these issues and empower them to seek help if they are in an unsafe or upsetting situation.

In April 2025 the Cabinet Secretary for Education met with ten members of the Keeping Safe Online Youth Group (13-16 year olds) to discuss topics arising from the Netflix series 'Adolescence'. Discussions highlighted that influential online personalities can play a significant role in shaping young people's attitudes and behaviours (including misogynistic attitudes and harmful gender stereotypes). We are currently in dialogue with Adnodd regarding the development of a resource to support teaching and learning around healthy relationships and the tackling of harmful gender stereotypes.

Recommendation 10:

The Welsh Government must, alongside the Young People's Advisory Board (see Recommendation 2), carry out a review into the support provided to young people who have experienced peer on peer sexual harassment, with a view to making recommendations to schools, local authorities and others as required to improve the quality and timeliness of that support.

Accept. Welsh Government update October 2025:

Welsh Government, in co-operation with Children in Wales, will continue to incorporate the views of the children and young people who are members of the National Young People's Stakeholder Group to help develop this response. We will also seek to engage other Young Voice participants, and identify suitable organisations which have expert knowledge and work with children and young people to co-produce the response.

We have commissioned an Our Streets Now project, which working with schools, staff, and young people to raise awareness about the sources of support available. The project concluded in July 2025, and the findings are being considered for adopting a standardised approach across all Local Authorities.

Recommendation 11:

The Welsh Government must ensure that schools and colleges create a culture in which sexual harassment is unacceptable, reports of sexual harassment are taken seriously and responded to promptly and consistently.

And

Recommendation 13:

The Welsh Government must make ring-fenced funding available to schools for all school staff to undertake training on identifying, responding to, and reporting peer on peer sexual harassment. That funding should include provision for schools to provide cover for teachers who are taken out of class, if necessary.

Accept. Welsh Government update October 2025:

Developing healthy relationships forms part of the mandatory RSE Code. To further support schools on RSE, as part of the Curriculum for Wales grant support programme, a grant of £4.2 million has been awarded to Stori Wales over three years to ensure nationally consistent professional learning, expertise and advice on RSE for all schools. This will ensure schools have clear, unambiguous support to embed healthy relationships across teaching and learning and be able to respond to issues that arise.

Our statutory guidance the “Framework on embedding a whole school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing” supports schools, and education settings in reviewing the well-being of learners from primary through to age 18 (where they study in schools), teachers, school staff and the whole school community. Following a school’s assessment, it should implement a pro-active culture, policies and practices to embed the principles of their Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing. This should support healthy relationships between learners and include actions to support individuals learners experiencing peer to peer harassment, or other forms of behaviour or discrimination detrimental to the wellbeing and mental health of learners.

We recognise that social media plays an increasingly important role in children and young people’s lives and has potential for abuse to occur. To ensure that all staff within schools are aware of the existing resources and guidance available to support them in understanding, preventing and confidently responding to incidents of online sexual harassment, Welsh Government funded the development of a comprehensive training package during 2022-23. The contract was awarded to online safety experts Childnet and we worked closely with local authorities to ensure a strong strategic drive and consistent provision across Wales.

The training package included:

1. **Practical training for Designated Safeguarding Persons (DSPs)**, incorporating scenario-based activities. This training was offered to all 22 local authorities between December and March 2023 (274 education practitioners completed the training).
2. **An online training module**, published on Hwb in March 2023, aimed at all education practitioners. The module has received over 3,000 views.

Building on this foundation and in response to Estyn's findings on peer-on-peer sexual harassment in FE colleges, two additional training sessions were delivered in February 2024. These sessions were designed for both schools and colleges in Wales, helping staff to better understand, prevent, and respond to incidents of online sexual harassment within their settings. Approximately 175 practitioners attended the sessions.

Recommendation 14:

The Welsh Government must work alongside Estyn, relevant academics, and the Young People's Advisory Board (see Recommendation 2) to gather and collate examples of sex and relationships education that learners consider to be effective in addressing peer on peer sexual harassment, with a view to creating a bank of resources for schools and colleges.

Accept. Welsh Government update October 2025:

We continue to fund the Spectrum project to provide preventative, educational sessions regarding relationships and sexuality education in schools, for girls and boys, staff and parents. In 2023-24, over 30,000 pupils and 2,000 school staff members engaged with the project. There is also extensive guidance available to support education settings on preventing and responding to child sexual harassment and abuse, including our statutory guidance Keeping Learners Safe and the All Wales Practice Guides.

To further support schools on RSE, as part of the Curriculum support grant programme, the Welsh Government announced in June 2025 a grant of £4.2 million to Stori Wales over three years for the Cwtch Education project to ensure nationally consistent professional learning, expertise and advice on RSE for all schools. This includes a regional co-ordinator for each local authority area.

Recommendation 15:

The Welsh Government must write to local authorities and/or schools to ensure that schools have clear policies on acceptable mobile phone use by learners throughout the school day, those policies are well-communicated to learners, staff and parents, and are consistently enforced by school staff.

Accept. Welsh Government update October 2025:

Schools are responsible for setting their own behaviour policies; however, support is available on the Keeping safe online area of Hwb. Designed to support online safety in education, the Keeping safe online area on Hwb is full of useful resources for teaching staff to use in the classroom and provides a source of support and guidance for both learners and parents and carers.

Following the National Behaviour Summit hosted by the Welsh Government in May 2025, to deliver on immediate actions to tackle behaviour in schools and accelerate the involvement of key partners, experts and practitioners, a new forum on mobile phone use in schools launched in July.

Forum members include a broad range of stakeholders - practitioners, headteachers, third sector representatives, local authorities, youth parliament and researchers to ensure a broad range of views inform future policy developments.

The forum has been tasked with developing national level guidance on the use and management of mobile phones in schools, supporting positive learning environments, student wellbeing, and safeguarding.

The forum is meeting monthly from September to December to deliver this work at pace. New guidance and initial support for schools on mobiles will launch in early Spring.

These developments are also underpinned by a home nations mobiles group to share research and best practice in relation to this shared issue. This group meets on a quarterly basis.

Recommendation 17:

The Welsh Government must work with local authorities to create and maintain databases of third sector organisations that provide support services for schools and colleges that could assist them in their response to peer on peer sexual harassment.

Accept. Welsh Government update October 2025:

Complete. The Dewis Cymru platform was identified to host these resources by the Safeguarding in Education Group. SEG members identified relevant organisations to provide the resources which are reviewed every six months by all local authorities. This process is now established, and it is the responsibility of the local authorities to ensure ongoing reviews and updates.

Recommendation 18:

As part of its wider work on raising awareness of peer on peer sexual harassment in schools, the Welsh Government, alongside the Young People's Advisory Board (see Recommendation 2), must carry out an awareness raising campaign targeted at parents and families.

Accept. Welsh Government update October 2025:

Raising awareness of these concerns is important. To do so effectively, it is crucial that information is designed and tailored for different audiences including learners, parents and carers, and teachers.

Equally when dealing with a sensitive issue such as peer-on-peer sexual assault we need to consider the risk of unintended consequences, or of triggering a response in children which may lead to anxiety, trauma or other negative emotions. Furthermore awareness alone often does not lead to action; messages can be misunderstood and complex information is difficult to simplify without losing crucial details.

Therefore any messaging needs to be seen in context of a wider piece of work to support change. Some examples of this include:

Parenting. Give it time is one of four campaigns under the WG's parenting and family umbrella campaign, Teulu Cymru - <https://www.gov.wales/teulu-cymru>, launched in April 24 and promoted across social media channels, Facebook and Instagram. Parenting. Give it time's website continues to signpost to organisations with information links to support families experiencing incidents of peer-to-peer sexual harassment, including families of LGBTQ+ young people. We have worked closely with colleagues from the LGBTQ+ team to review and add relevant links to the website.

As part of their National Neurodivergence Police Network Group, the National Neurodivergence Team are developing specific resources to support both families and professionals in supporting neurodivergent victims and witnesses of sexual harassment. A Community of Practice on this topic has been scheduled for 2025 to raise awareness and support the development of these importance resources. Date to be confirmed.

Mandatory Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) aims to support learners to build healthy relationships, challenge harmful behaviours, and stay safe online. To strengthen support for schools and settings, we have invested £4.2 million in Stori Cymru's Cwtch Education Project, providing dedicated RSE advisors to support each local authority. This ensures schools (and parents and carers and governors) receive consistent, high-quality support and resources, playing a vital role in delivering effective RSE across Wales.

Recommendation 19:

The Welsh Government must publish its statutory national trans guidance for schools and local authorities no later than January 2023.

Welsh Government response: Accept in principle. update October 2025:

The consultation has been delayed to ensure the draft guidance is fully informed by emerging evidence and is taken forward in a way that is sensitive to the needs of children and young people and also reflects the voices of parents. Work is underway to engage with a wide range of parents to ensure their priorities are fully considered in the draft guidance. We are committed to taking forward a consultation at an appropriate time when the guidance is ready. Officials are also exploring how to support schools in the interim to share inclusive practice to ensure that all children and young people feel valued, safe and able to learn.

Recommendation 20:

The Welsh Government must amend its Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence strategy to acknowledge the impact of peer on peer sexual harassment on the safety and wellbeing of female learners.

Welsh Government response: Accept in principle update October 2025

A review of the VAWDASV education toolkit has taken place during 2025. Reflecting the out-of-date content and resources, a new, streamlined toolkit is being developed with policy leads from across Welsh Government, which will be taken to the VAWDASV Blueprint's Children and Young People's Workstream for review in the autumn before being made live.

Following a one year extension, the Welsh Government's violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) team continued to fund the Live Fear Free helpline during 2025/26. Our Live Fear Free helpline is a free, 24/7 service for all victims and survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence and those close to them, including family, friends and colleagues.

To support schools to engage with their families and communities to help identify and tackle issues, as they arise we have published overarching CFS guidance and supplementary guidance on family engagement and community engagement. Officials are engaged directly with Welsh Women's Aid and are facilitating information on specific training that can be accessed to support professionals dealing with VAWDASV.

Recommendation 21:

The Welsh Government must publish the LGBTQ+ action plan no later than autumn 2022. The action plan must acknowledge the scale and impact of sexual harassment on LGBTQ+ learners.

Accept. Welsh Government update October 2025:

Complete. The final version of the LGBTQ+ Action Plan was published in February 2023.

Recommendation 22:

The Welsh Government must proceed with pace on its work to publish a multi-agency action plan to tackle the problem of peer on peer sexual harassment.

Accept. Welsh Government update October 2025:

Complete. We published our peer-on-peer sexual harassment in education settings: action plan on 24 January 2024.

Recommendation 23:

The Welsh Government must provide the Committee with an update in September 2022, and then at 6 month intervals thereafter, on the numbers and proportions of local authorities and schools with RSE leads in place.

Accept. Welsh Government update October 2025:

The Welsh Government continues to work with local authorities, who play a key role in supporting schools and settings by delivering and co-ordinating support, advice and guidance within their authority areas. The Welsh Government highlighted the critical importance of continuing professional support for all aspects of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in the Curriculum for Wales annual report for the academic year 2022/23.

To further support schools on RSE, as part of the Curriculum support grant programme, the Welsh Government announced in June 2025 a grant of £4.2 million to Stori Wales over three years for the Cwtch Education project to ensure nationally consistent professional learning, expertise and advice on RSE for all schools. This includes a co-ordinator for each local authority area.

Recommendation 24:

The UK Government and the Welsh Government should ensure that there is sufficient time given to the Senedd for scrutiny of any future Legislative Consent Memoranda relating to the Online Safety Bill.

Welsh Government response: Accept in principle update October 2025

The Welsh Government laid a Legislative Consent Memorandum (LCM) – Memorandum 1 – on the Bill before the Senedd on 30 March 2022. In total, five LCMs have been laid as there are elements of the Bill which touch upon devolved matters and therefore require the consent of the Senedd. This process also involves the tabling of a motion seeking the Senedd's agreement to what is included in the UK Bill within devolved areas.

The motion for the Bill was agreed by Members votes on the 27th June 2023 with the Deputy Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism making opening and closing remarks.

Since the Online Safety Act received Royal Assent on 26 October 2023 Ofcom became the regulator for online safety. In this role, and to help establish the new regulations, Ofcom have undertaken several consultations since the Act has passed.

Welsh Government have responded to all consultation and we will continue to work with Ofcom on further improvements to the Codes.