



## Legacy Report from Saving Futures: Cross Party Group on Preventing Child Sexual Abuse in response to the Welsh Government's Action Plan on Preventing and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse

The first action plan from Welsh Government played an important role in highlighting the risk of child sexual abuse in Wales and opening up the conversation on this particularly hidden form of child abuse. We have seen some positive progress coming from the action plan in terms of awareness and an increase in referrals. However, evidence suggests the gap between incidence and response remains: in April 2022 the Centre of Expertise on child sexual abuse report on trends in official data<sup>1</sup> found:

- 2,600 children are on child protection plans for sexual abuse in England and Wales,
- While 89,000 child sexual abuse offences are reported to the police each year in England and Wales.

However, the Centre of Expertise on child sexual abuse estimates 500,000<sup>2</sup> children experience child sexual abuse each year (based on estimates using anonymous self-report surveys of representative samples of the population). This clearly indicates a need for continued focus on this area. We are pleased Welsh Government, in [its final report on delivery of actions against the first action plan](#) will consider the best way to monitor the impact of new practice tools designed to improve identification of child sexual abuse.

As our findings in this report show, there is more work to do to continue to safeguard children from sexual abuse and to ensure that they receive a timely and appropriate response. The Cross-Party Group has called for a second action plan to ensure this work is realised. We are pleased **Welsh Government intends to publish a second action plan** in Autumn 2023.

A second action plan should include the following objectives:

- **Training should be built into pre-qualifying courses** – Welsh Government acknowledges CSA is still an area of practice where services and practitioners are building confidence. We are pleased it will work with safeguarding boards to consider learning in this area. We are clear, that any professional who will encounter children once qualified should learn about child sexual abuse as part of their pre-qualifying training. We note the recently published National Training Safeguarding Standards includes a reference to child sexual exploitation (CSE) as part of refresher training and states it does *'not identify all roles and responsibilities across the sector. It is incumbent, therefore, on organisations to identify within their own workforce which roles fit into the specific groups'*. While CSE is a form of CSA, we are disappointed there is not an explicit reference to CSA here, which ensures CSA is embedded across all stages of professional learning. This will improve confidence and understanding of how child sexual abuse can present itself, leading to improved safeguarding practice.
- **Data collection and evaluation should be improved and holistic** – As evidenced in the introduction, the data on incidence does not reflect estimates of prevalence. In addition, the final report from the [Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse \(IICSA\)](#) recommends a single core data set. Data collection by Welsh Government must be wider and not solely based on protection plans where child sexual abuse has been verbally disclosed. Data should be gathered from services working with children where CSA is identified or suspected, police and crime statistics as well as healthcare providers. This will give a clearer picture of incidences of abuse across Wales.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.csacentre.org.uk/documents/child-sexual-abuse-in-2020-21-trends-in-official-data/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.csacentre.org.uk/our-research/the-scale-and-nature-of-csa/trends-in-official-data/>



- **CSA policy work should intersect with other violence prevention and equalities work** – the next action plan from Welsh Government must speak to the broader VAWDASV work, anti-racism and LGBTQ+ action plans and emerging work on peer-on-peer harassment, digital resilience and the trauma informed Wales framework. This would ensure that the intersection between children’s different experiences is taken into account and is central to an improved service response.
- **Online harms must be recognised as a significant and dynamic risk** – work to tackle CSA by Welsh Government has to consider the ongoing risk online harms can present. The next action plan must adapt to this ever-changing risk and speak directly to the digital resilience and online abuse workstreams.
- **Peer on Peer sexual abuse must be tackled as a priority.** Recent reports have shown that peer abuse happens so regularly it has become normalised –but contextual safeguarding and a whole school approach can work together to build schools and communities’ capacity to be protective. The next action plan from Welsh Government must work in tandem with the new peer-on-peer sexual harassment action plan. In particular it should ensure that everyone who supports children and young people feels confident in responding to disclosures and that contextual safeguarding and ‘context weighting’ is embedded in practice.
- **Prevention work must be central** – early intervention work to challenge abusive attitudes and behaviours should be included in the next action plan. Currently, it focuses too much on the response from law enforcement. Interventions need to come earlier in the perpetrators journey. This should include work with young people in the context of peer-on-peer sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour. Additionally, there should be clear programmes of work where people who have convictions without a sentence or those being investigated can access support.
- **Funding of response and support services must be sustainable** – funding to meet the three pillars of prevention, protection and support across Wales is the bedrock of a successful action plan. IICSA’s final report has highlighted the importance of therapeutic support for child victims. This is particularly crucial as awareness has led to increased referrals and specialist voluntary sector services need to be fully resourced to provide safe practice and enable them to respond to the unprecedented demand for counselling and support. For example, despite adult referrals to the Rape and Sexual Assault Centre (RASASC) North Wales being three times higher than referrals for children, waiting times for children’s counsellors are double that of the waiting list for its adult services. This highlights the need for additional CYP counsellors within the organisation. Services must also be fully resourced to work innovatively in the wake of Covid, such as offering online support where appropriate and preferred by young people.

## Introduction and history

This report from Saving Futures: Cross-Party Group (CPG) on Preventing Child Sexual Abuse considers the impact and legacy of Wales’ first national action plan on preventing and responding to child sexual abuse<sup>3</sup>. The CPG played a pivotal role in calling for an action plan: in our inception report in 2016, we noted the welcomed increased activity to tackle child sexual abuse, but that this was often focused on abuse in institutions or child sexual exploitation. These approaches, in our view, tend to not recognise the hidden nature of CSA, particularly when it occurs within family settings and other settings where children and young people have frequent contact with adults known to them.

The CPG were clear that Wales needed a comprehensive national strategy to prevent CSA, based on a public health approach. At its heart, we argued, should be an approach where every child, parent/carer, teacher, social worker and

<sup>3</sup> <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-07/national-action-plan-preventing-and-responding-to-child-sexual-abuse.pdf>



healthcare professional who works with children and families understand what child sexual abuse is and know how they can be a part of preventing it.

The CPG secretariat was delighted that following calls and activity from our first year, Welsh Government published its Action Plan on Preventing Child Sexual Abuse.

### **Legacy of the first action plan**

This was the first action plan of its kind in the UK and the CPG is pleased to have had the opportunity to regularly engage with it. The aim of the plan was to break the silence around CSA and bring it out of the shadows. We feel progress has been made in raising the issue of CSA and Welsh Government's commitment to amplifying CSA prevention, but more action is needed.

Since the action plan launched in 2019, the CPG has used its meetings to monitor progress and consider where gaps may still exist. In addition, in May 2022, the CPG secretariat met with experts in the field of CSA in Wales to consider the same. This report is informed by both and makes the following observations:

### ***Awareness of CSA has increased since the Action Plan was launched***

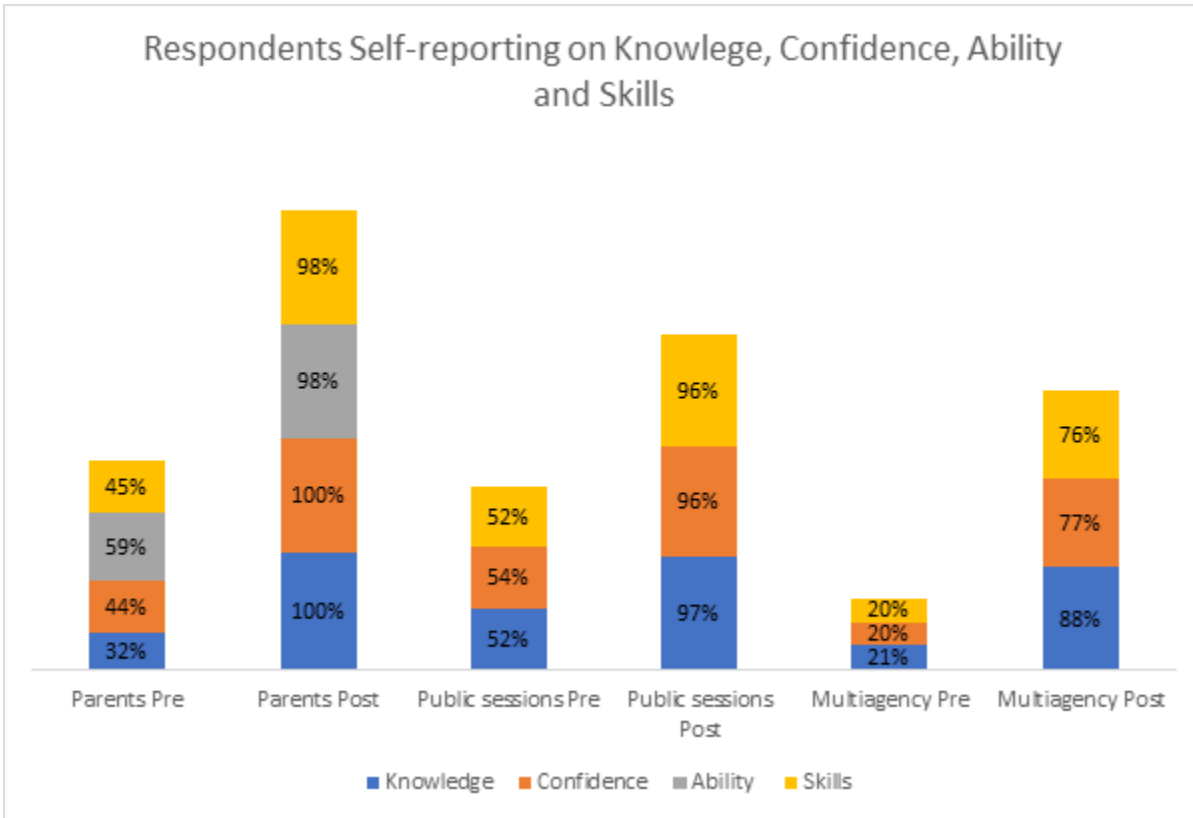
#### **What we found**

Commissioning by Welsh Government has led to a number of resources aimed at improving the public's understanding of CSA. Stop It Now! Wales has produced resources for [professionals and protective adults](#) which have been downloaded a total of [6,086](#) across Wales since 2020.

In addition, Stop It Now! has recorded responses from participants at its public education sessions, which demonstrates an increase in knowledge and confidence in responding to CSA.



Graph 1 – Respondents Self-reporting their knowledge, confidence, ability and skills as ‘High’ or ‘Very High’. \*Please note it only measures ‘ability’ for parents’ sessions\*



Research from Stop it Now! Wales indicates that the training sessions are making an overall impact, which is further evidenced by 97% noting three actions that they would undertake to help keep children safe from sexual abuse now and in the future. These include improvements to the family safety plan, open communication with children about healthy relationships, sharing what they have learnt with family members and implementing safeguarding measures around the internet.

A greater awareness of CSA has led to increased demand for training sessions and an increase in referrals. RASASC North Wales has launched a number of new projects<sup>4</sup>, which will be necessary to raise awareness of CSA. This is likely to lead to an increase in referrals and to have a significant organisational impact.

<sup>4</sup> 1. The Ruthe Project – RASASC NW mobile therapy unit, delivering therapeutic intervention across North Wales increasing access to those unable to reach centres. The Ruthe Project also attends events to raise awareness of SV and RASASC NW, with trained support workers present at events and crisis drop in.

2. RASASC North Wales #Don'tStealMyFuture# Campaign and Pledge – a training programme to raise awareness of SV targeting young people.

3. RASASC North Wales media campaign – new resources developed to raise awareness of RASASC NW and SV with posters and resources strategically placed across North Wales.



RASASC North Wales has seen its children and young people’s waiting lists double in the last financial year (2021/22) in comparison to the previous year, and data for the latest quarter at the time of writing (Q2 2022/23) suggests that further increases are expected for this financial year. RASASC NW note a concerning growth in the number of referrals for primary age children. It feels this is as a direct consequence of Covid (more detail under ‘Covid’s Legacy’ below) and an increase in awareness of sexual violence by the VAWDASV/CSA sector.

RASASC NW has also identified more children presenting with complex needs requiring additional support and longer-term therapy, which has a significant impact on RASASC NW and current staff.

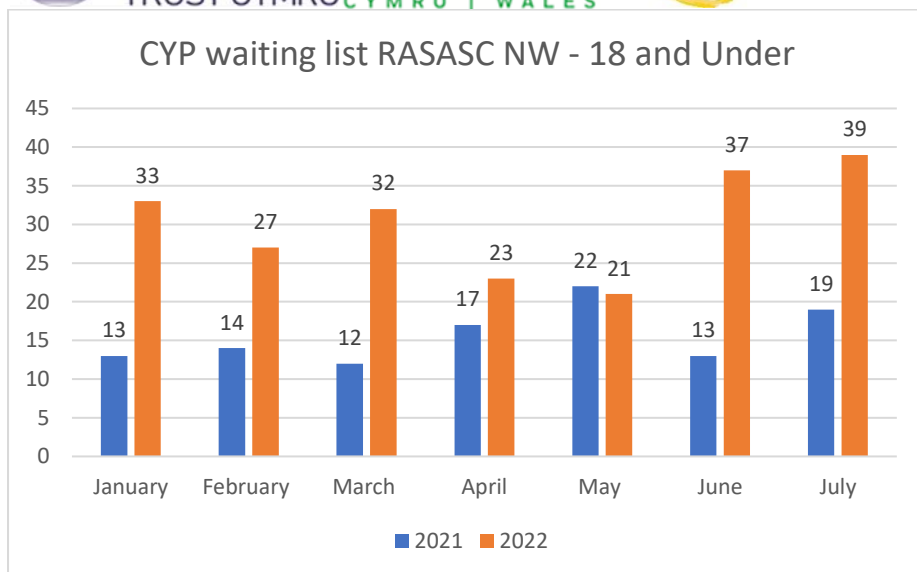
The increased pressure felt by CSA services is not happening in isolation. Feedback gathered from the Survivor’s Trust Regional Members’ Meetings and forums for services working with CYP suggests services to support children and young people across the board are feeling the pressure. Professionals have noted that children who need specialist mental health support separately from the CSA sector are finding themselves on too long waiting lists to access CAMHs.

**Action needed**

An increase in awareness is welcome, but evaluation is needed on how information has changed behaviours and knowledge around CSA. In turn, this must be backed up with sustainable funding for the specialist CSA sector, who have, overall, experienced an increase in referrals since the action plan was launched, despite a dip during the lockdown, as evidenced below, referrals significantly increased as lockdown eased:

**RASASC North Wales CYP Referrals**

Year	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Primary age	3	14	9	16	17	34
Secondary/College age	46	64	90	118	85	156
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>190</b>



Objective nine in the first action plan is concerned with access to support for children who have been abused or who display harmful behaviours. We note in Welsh Government’s delivery report that therapeutic support is being considered as part of on-going work to tackle CSA. But we need to see a stronger commitment to resourcing support for children. Funding is imperative to ensure safe practice as referrals continue to increase and to prevent children being harmed by too long waiting times to access essential services: the above bar-chart, for example, shows the number of children and young people on a waiting list for just one agency.

Stepping Stones North Wales, who work with adult survivors of CSA has seen a varied picture since the plan was launched. Again, they recorded a noticeable dip in referrals in 2020/21 leading to a significant jump as we emerged from the lockdowns.

Year	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Referral	408	375	297	424
Re-referral	139	153	102	97

Awareness raising must also consider perpetrators and young people using harmful behaviours. Future work on CSA should include ensuring those who perpetrate CSA understand the impact of sexual violence on people, this is especially true for young people displaying harmful behaviours. We are pleased Welsh Government has acknowledged the need for a national approach to referral pathways for children who display harmful behaviours in its review of the first action plan.

IICSA’s final report reflects these findings, recommending regular campaigns are commissioned to increase awareness of child sexual abuse and that these campaigns are evaluated to measure impact. Building on the work of the first action plan, the Secretariat would like to see more awareness campaigns which speak to different cohorts of children and families, particularly cohorts who face additional barriers to support such as an insecure immigration status or Roma Gypsy/Irish Traveller, while continuing to produce resources for Black and minority ethnic, LGBTQ+ and children with learning disabilities.



Finally, it is vital that prevention and awareness raising work continues in the next action plan to ensure professionals and parents continue to have access to prevention knowledge and materials (we speak to this in more detail under sections on peer-on-peer and online abuse).

### ***Knowledge of the impact of CSA on some cohorts of children is patchy***

#### **What we found**

The action plan considers equalities under objective three and has commissioned resources for parents and carers of [minoritised children](#). While these are welcome, we still need a better understanding of how CSA impacts LGBTQ+, traveller and Black and minoritised children in order to enable effective targeted support from the sexual violence sector. In a CPG meeting in February 2021, we considered objective three of the first Welsh Government action plan on preventing and responding to CSA and looked at the additional barriers children from black and minoritised communities can face when disclosing abuse. Jahnine Davies, from Listen Up Research pointed out that our understanding of how children from specific communities disclose abuse is limited. Her research '**Where are the Black girls in CSA research**' found '*One of the main themes the women talked about was how perceptions of Black women and girls impact on the identification and disclosure of abuse*'<sup>2</sup>. When Black girls are identified, she notes, they tend to find themselves referred into gang-related child sexual exploitation services<sup>3</sup>. This assumption about gang-related activity amongst young Black people is compounded by the 'adultfication'<sup>4</sup> of Black girlhood. Research from the United States found that, compared to white girls of the same age, Black girls were perceived to need less protection, be more independent and know more about sex<sup>5</sup>.

#### **Action needed**

The first action plan specifically names and acknowledges the additional barriers some children may face in disclosing abuse. We welcome this, however its focus is on barriers, such as honour, within communities without mention of the external biases which can act as a deterrent to seeking help. We urge Welsh Government, in its next steps on preventing CSA to acknowledge and demonstrate an understanding of all barriers faced by marginalised children.

Child sexual abuse is more likely to be identified by those working in the universal children's workforce, particularly those who are the first point of contact for children. These agencies need support to improve their awareness of CSA to enable them to identify and respond to concerns appropriately and know local referral routes. This is particularly important for those agencies supporting marginalised children. Likewise, the way CSA services deliver support must be inclusive of marginalised children, to ensure this cohort feel heard and understood.

We agree with the importance of a core data set reflecting IICSA's recommendation, but are clear this must also capture protected characteristics, to ensure marginalised children have equitable access to support.

We urge Welsh Government to maintain its commitment to tackling and responding to child sexual abuse of marginalised children and in future planning, we ask that the onus is placed on CSA services to ensure all practitioners receive unconscious bias training to ensure they better understand the needs of marginalised children using the service.

### ***Training on CSA should be mandatory***

#### **What we found**

[Evidence suggests](#) that practitioners are more confident in responding to CSE than CSA, which suggests awareness raising and training on CSE is improving outcomes. We need to see the same for CSA.



Welsh Government has produced guidance on reporting [safeguarding concerns](#). However, there is still a sense of inconsistency within the children's workforce around identification of CSA and what services are available across Wales. Stop It Now! Wales notes from its public education sessions with professionals that they are not always clear about what services they can signpost to.

### **Action needed**

Mandatory training for social workers, probation, police, health workers, school staff and family support workers on CSA is needed to address the gaps in knowledge, skills and confidence in preventing, disrupting, identifying and responding to child sexual abuse. This training must be delivered at all stages, both pre-qualifying and qualified and be a central part of professional development to improve confidence in identifying and responding to CSA.

The national training framework on 'Ask and Act' is an effective tool supporting practitioners to inquire about abuse. We suggest a mandatory, focused session on CSA. Linked to this, we want to see increased support for bystander initiatives, to support people to challenge attitudes which can legitimise sexual violence against children.

Training should include the following:

- An understanding of the scale and nature of child sexual abuse
- recognise that it is as common as other forms of harm
- understand that there are many barriers to children 'telling' and being heard
- understand signs and indicators of harm
- confidence in talking to children about concerns of sexual abuse
- knowledge of steps they can take in their role to safeguard children

### ***A comprehensive picture of CSA prevalence is needed***

#### **What we found**

The Centre of Expertise on child sexual abuse has highlighted that current levels of data collection on CSA, both prevalence and on service response is limited. While some agencies hold data in relation to CSA, this needs to be coordinated across different agencies in Wales.

Additionally, there is lack of outcome evaluation in the first action plan and therefore a gap in knowledge about whether awareness raising is making a difference.

Despite the evidence telling us most children don't verbalise abuse but are more likely to exhibit signs that something is wrong, the Centre of Expertise on child sexual abuse notes professionals continue to rely heavily on children to disclose sexual abuse verbally. Therefore, the number of cases of CSA, recorded in

official data, is far below estimates<sup>5</sup>. This is impacting on accuracy of data within protection plans, which in turn gives us an inaccurate picture of the incidence of CSA in Wales.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.csacentre.org.uk/documents/child-sexual-abuse-in-2020-21-trends-in-official-data/> page 10





THE SURVIVORS TRUST CYMRU

NSPCC CYMRU | WALES



Welsh Government's final delivery report notes that five of the six safeguarding boards are progressing work on systems and approaches to capturing evidence on the prevalence of CSA. We are pleased safeguarding boards will be using the [signs and indicators template](#) from the Centre of Expertise on child sexual abuse to improve identification.

### Action needed

The inaccuracy within protection plans is creating a disconnect between knowledge of incidence amongst senior leadership within safeguarding boards and those delivering services to children. There is also a broader issue at play, touched on in this report, where recorded cases do not align with estimates of prevalence. It is promising then, that Welsh Government is considering the best way to monitor impact of the signs and indicators toolkit mentioned above. A true picture of prevalence across Wales is needed to ensure a response to CSA is prioritised. **We suggest a prevalence study of CSA is undertaken**, with the findings from that study used to inform a more holistic approach to data collection. This should include helpline contacts and support provided by third sector agencies – regardless of whether it reaches the threshold for protection plans.

### Covid's legacy

The pandemic could not have been foreseen when the action plan launched, and the CPG welcomed action taken by Welsh Government to safeguard children during the lockdowns. In particular, we welcomed resources on enabling children to speak out and the development of guidance on what will happen if they tell. We also acknowledge Welsh Government's clear commitment to ensure social services continued to work with children at risk of abuse.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic brought into sharp focus the extent of the human and child rights violation that is violence and abuse in the home. CSA has always happened but the lockdown and isolation from support heightened the risk for some, while creating 'newly vulnerable' children. As children can take a long time to disclose sexual abuse, we continue to see a 'slow burn' of disclosures and help seeking in the wake of the pandemic. Services have told us complex mental health and safeguarding concerns have increased since the lockdowns.

In July 2020, the CPG met to consider the impact of the first UK wide lockdown, we found:

- **During May 2020, the number of contacts to Childline across the UK about sexual abuse increased by 11%**
- **The Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre North Wales (RASASC) raised more safeguarding concerns since lockdown.**
- **RASASC NW also found client need was more complex and heightened, with clients in all the support group cohorts (children, young people and adults) requiring more sessions to address their needs than before the pandemic.**
- **In the first 10 weeks of lockdown the Stop It Now! helpline in Wales saw a 153% increase in calls, compared to the 10 weeks prior to lockdown starting. Additionally, there was a 98%**

**increase compared to the same period in 2019 year. Most of the calls were made by offenders.**

The pandemic did give services the opportunity to find new ways of working. Multi-agency working improved under covid, RASAC NW for example saw an increase in both professional referrals and an increase in safeguarding concerns during this time. In addition, the pandemic gave services an opportunity to provide virtual support to young people, which many benefited from, with practitioners able to support more young people as they did not have to travel and were able to reach wider geographical areas.

### Action needed



Despite coming out of lockdown and ‘returning to normal’, we cannot underestimate the impact of those months on children isolated from support. The next action plan must ensure ongoing support is available for the specialist CSA sector as it continues to respond to the ‘slow burn’ we discuss above.

### ***Peer on peer sexual abuse must be tackled as a priority***

#### **What we found**

In December 2021 Estyn’s report ‘[We Don’t Tell Our Teachers](#)’ highlighted the worrying number of high school age children who were experiencing peer-on-peer sexual abuse in and around their schools and online. In the report, young people told us the harm they experience is interchangeable between the online and offline world.

In February 2022, the CPG met to discuss the implications of the report, we found that:

- There has been a normalisation of sexual harassment in schools. Some young people feel it is normalised or trivialised by teachers and other young people.
- There is a disconnect between where harm is experienced and where social work is focused, traditionally this has been the assessment of the family, rather than the contexts.
- Targeting the individual child/family and moving them on can create ‘victim vacuums’ where the context causing the harm isn’t challenged.
- It is everyone’s responsibility to work collectively to safeguard children, not just to refer into safeguarding
- School staff want more training and resource to deliver the new RSE curriculum.

Anecdotal evidence also suggests an increase in young people being referred through formal assessment routes, the Stop it Now! helpline and young person’s Inform programme.

#### **Action needed**

The CPG and NSPCC’s [Speak out Stay Safe](#) programme both found that primary aged children are experiencing harassment and need support to come forward. The evaluation of NSPCC’s programme found there was a ‘sizeable minority of children... who lacked knowledge about how to discern harmful from non-harmful behaviour and about whether or not to tell’<sup>2</sup>. Clearly, we need to tackle emerging need earlier. The Senedd Children, Young People and Education Committee inquiry into peer-on-peer harassment made a recommendation to Welsh Government that they must commission a review into sexual harassment in primary schools, we welcome this recommendation and are pleased Welsh Government have accepted it.

The inquiry also talked to the considerable challenges facing school staff as much of the harassment takes place outside of school hours. Welsh Government should embed contextual safeguarding as a vital tool for tackling peer sexual abuse.

- Context weighting can help identify where the most significant risk of harm lies within the places and spaces young people access, particularly school and the surrounding areas
- Contextual safeguarding and a whole school approach can work together to build a school’s capacity to be protective – for example assessing a peer group to identify the dynamics of the group and the support they may require.

In September 2022 the CPG held a survivor and young person led event on the intersection of online harms and peer-on-peer sexual abuse in response to Estyn’s report and to present solutions and recommendations to Welsh Government. Our overarching call to Welsh Government is that the voice of survivors of child sexual abuse and young



people themselves must be at the core of designing the response to peer-on-peer sexual harassment. Key recommendations to come from the event include:

- There must be mandatory co-operative working across Government departments and the public sector, in collaboration with specialist services to create local strategies to tackle the issues of online and peer-on-peer sexual abuse. This work could be overseen by the children and young people subgroup as part of the new national VAWDASV blueprint strategy. These strategies must speak to, and complement, the work of the Regional Safeguarding Boards and must be co-developed with young people and experts by experience.
- Welsh Government should commit to hearing the voices of lived experience groups when developing its action plan on peer-on-peer sexual abuse and its work on online CSA. This must be done in a trauma informed way, which does not cause further harm and is accessible and inclusive of all needs. Mechanisms must also be in place to ensure there is constant feedback from policy makers to lived experience groups and there is fair remuneration for the time and work.
- All school staff should have training on the intersection between peer-on-peer sexual abuse and online harms. This should include sessions, designed by young people, about the impact of social media on their peer group. We were pleased Welsh Government accepted recommendation 14 in the CYPE committee report that government should work with experts and the young people advisory board to *'gather and collate examples of sex and relationships education that learners consider to be effective in addressing peer on peer sexual harassment'*. However, we want to see this go further and include the design of sessions by young people, as mentioned above.
- Schools play a key role in their local communities and are a source of support to their families. They should be supported to provide practical strategies for concerned families to help them address peer-on-peer sexual abuse and online harms. These strategies should be co-developed with young people.
- Online harms should be treated as seriously as any other type of harm and children should enjoy parity of protection in their online and offline spaces. Both schools and the tech companies must ensure the voices of young people and lived experience groups are heard and acted on. It is vital we see the Online Harms Bill pass through the UK Parliament as soon as possible, but it must ensure the safety of children remains front and centre of the legislation. Welsh Government should support our call to ensure a robust Act which works for children.
- Data from the School Health Research Network (SHRN) should be used to track the impact of online harms on young people in Wales. Young people should support with drafting questions to be included in the SHRN which in turn will be fed into schools. Done on a regular basis, and disaggregated to Wales, this will provide a clear picture of the impact of harm on young people. We are pleased Welsh Government has accepted the CYPE Committee recommendation five that data is collected on sexual harassment in schools. However, this should be expanded to incorporate online harms as well.

### ***Online harms must be recognised as a significant and dynamic risk***

#### **What we found**

As outlined in the section above, much of the peer-on-peer abuse experienced has an online dimension, but online abuse also poses a wider threat, with children being groomed online by adults.

The pandemic also increased the risk of online harms as children spent more time online during the lockdowns leading to an increase in self-generated imagery and opportunities for perpetrators to harm children. More younger children were identified during the pandemic than had been previously.

#### **Action Needed**

Our survivor and young person event included a focused breakout session on online harms and the role of the tech industry in better protecting young people. The breakout session recommendations include:

- Online harms are dynamic and ever changing, it is essential parents/carers feel empowered to access information about online risks and know how to support their child if they have concerns. A misinformed or dismissive response could mean that the child does not ask or disclose again. We echo [IICSA's recommendation](#) from its final report that Welsh Government commission regular awareness campaigns and suggest parents/carers should be informed about the National Online Safety parent training portal via a national awareness campaign.
- Linked to the above recommendation, there should be a rolling programme of support for families which addresses peer-on-peer sexual abuse and online harms. This programme should be publicised via a national campaign, with support at a local level to implement. We are pleased Welsh Government is considering how best to routinely share information with non-abusing parents. We feel these should be co-produced by young people and available online and in physical spaces and include:
  - Links to websites to help keep parents/carers informed of types of abuse
  - Signs to look out for that their child may be experiencing abuse, including advice on how to support and where to turn to for help
  - Particular support should be provided to the parents/carers of young people using harmful behaviours.

### Signposting, support, and online moderation

- There should be clear pathways to support for online harms as well as effective systems for children and young people to report harm. This should include mandatory support from apps when young people experience online harms.
- Harm caused in the online space should be treated equally to harm experienced in offline spaces with online safeguarding responses treated with the same seriousness as any other safeguarding concern.
- Welsh Government's digital resilience plan should ensure practice is developed in response to online harms and that inconsistencies in school responses to online abuse is addressed.
- Children in year six of primary school should have support in safe mobile phone use as they transition to year seven, recognising that many 11-year-olds are given their first phone as they start secondary school. The Minister has committed to a review of mobile phone use in the 'Behaviour management

in the classroom' guidance from 2012. This is an opportunity to include support for younger children as they enter secondary education.