



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Keeping children safe from Child Sexual Exploitation

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 – Part 7

**Summary of guidance for everyone
working with children and young people.**

Hello

Keeping children safe is everyone's business.

It takes everyone working together and understanding their role and responsibility.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 says everyone who thinks a child is at risk, must report it. That includes harm from Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

➔ **A child is anyone under 18**

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse.

It can be:

- sex
- sexual activity
- taking indecent photos or film of a child.

and



It involves some kind of exchange. The child may be offered:

- gifts – alcohol – money – drugs – food – clothes – accommodation
- attention – affection – a sense of belonging – or something that fills an emotional need
- to avoid punishment – harm to themselves or someone they care about.

Sometimes someone else organises the abuse so they can benefit.

CSE must stop.

The Welsh Government wants everyone working with children to:

- know how to spot the signs of CSE
- step in early and to stop CSE
- support children in the right ways.

1. New guidance

Working together to keep children safe.

We want all services to work together and keep children safe. So, we've written this guidance. It must be followed by:

- local authorities
- Safeguarding Boards and their partners including the Police
- social care, health and education services
- youth offending teams
- everyone who works with children and young people.

Some facts

All children have rights. These rights are set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Article 34: Nobody should touch children in ways that make them feel uncomfortable, unsafe or sad.

Grooming can mean some children don't realise they are being exploited. They might think they've given consent and not feel like they can ask for help.

Grooming – is when someone builds a child's trusts through a friendship or relationship. The aim is to put them in a position where they can be abused easier. It can happen online or in person.

More **girls** are abused through CSE than **boys**, but boys are abused too.

Sometimes, cultural and religious views about sex can stop children from speaking out.

Child Sexual Exploitation is never a child's fault. Children cannot consent to their own abuse.



Sex and the law

The legal age of consent is 16 in the UK.

No one under the age of 13 can legally give consent.

There is extra protection for young people who are 16 to 17 that helps keep them safe from CSE.

Who is at risk of CSE?

Any child, at any age, from any background or culture can be at risk of CSE. But evidence shows that some children are more at risk than others because of:

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- unstable care experiences
- trauma
- problems with education
- mental health issues
- alcohol or drug misuse
- criminal activity
- learning disabilities
- LGBT+



ACEs — can be verbal, mental, sexual and physical abuse. It includes being raised in a household where domestic violence, alcohol abuse, or drug abuse is present.

Who sexually exploits children?

People who abuse children come from different backgrounds, different cultures and beliefs. They operate in different ways:

- as individuals
- as groups or gangs.

Peer abuse

Sometimes exploitation happens where children abuse and exploit other children. Children involved in CSE may be victims of abuse themselves.

Family abuse

CSE can sometimes happen in families and be organised by a family member.



How do you spot CSE?

Children won't always know they are being exploited or know how to get help. They can also be too frightened to tell someone what's happening to them.

Everyone who works with children and young people should know how to spot possible signs of CSE.



Physical signs: bruising, unexplained injuries, sexually transmitted diseases.



Emotional signs: withdrawn, extreme mood changes, angry, self-harm, suicidal, or disengaged.



Material signs: new phones, clothing or footwear, using alcohol or drugs or having money.



Behavioural signs: being secretive, going missing, being in unknown cars, being out of control.



Anyone working with children must speak to their manager or their safeguarding lead about their concerns.

They should also make a child protection referral to Social Services.

If a child is at immediate risk of harm, they must phone the Police on 999.

2. Stopping Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

It can make a real difference when:

everyone knows about CSE and how to spot it

professionals raise awareness of CSE

services step in early to support families and build resilience

children stay in school and don't form patterns of being absent or missing

youth services are available and providing support

sexual health services help children understand healthy relationships and how to stay safe

children in care have stable and secure long-term placements

everyone has the right training, education and skills to support children

work is targeted at children who are need extra protection or are more at risk

schools teach about positive relationships and staying safe

health professionals know how to spot the signs of trauma, neglect and abuse

It also makes a real difference when professionals look at all the areas of the child's life. This is called **Contextual Safeguarding** and it involves looking at:

- Where they live and what challenges there are in the community?
- Where are they socialising and spending time?
- Are they out at night or missing school?
- What are they connecting to online?





Stepping in early and stopping abuse is the best way to protect children.

Safeguarding Children Boards must:

- make sure that CSE training is relevant and right for people's roles
- make sure that CSE training is available and promoted across their region.

Local authorities must:

- make sure vulnerable children and families are offered early help and support
- offer information, advice and assistance when a concern about a child is reported.

All services should make sure that staff and volunteers:

- Understand what ACEs are and why they put a child at risk
- Understand what is meant by trauma informed practice
- Are aware of the physical, emotional, material and behavioural signs of CSE
- Know when and how to report a child at risk.

Local authorities should:

- regularly review their safeguarding policy and arrangements
- work with partners to build communities that are safe for children and hostile to CSE.

All education settings, including Pupil Referral Units should:

- assume that CSE is an issue that needs to be addressed
- have measures in place to stop CSE.



3. Safeguarding procedures

Everyone must know how to report a child at risk.

Sharing the right information, in the right ways, at the right times can make a real difference. Professionals and staff must know how to work with services and share information. Fear of sharing information mustn't get in the way.



To help professionals there are:

- **All Wales Practice Guides on Safeguarding**

www.safeguarding.wales/chi/index.c6.html

- **Wales Safeguarding Procedures**

www.safeguarding.wales/chi/

Advocacy

Children should be told why their information is being shared and what's happening to keep them safe. Children at risk have a right to an advocate and should be offered one. The advocate can be anyone they trust. They must make sure the child is listened to when decisions are being made.



Local authorities **must**:

- follow the Wales Safeguarding Procedures, and the All Wales Practice Guides
- refer any children receiving care because they are at risk of CSE to adult services before they turn 18.



4 Putting the child first

There isn't just one way to support children. Professionals should:



Involve children in planning.

We call this the trauma-based approach and it's important to build relationship by:

- giving them choice
- working together
- building trust
- giving freedom and empowerment
- keeping them safe.



Identifying their needs.

Every child is different and will need different support based on:

- age
- any disability or learning disability
- gender, sexuality or gender identity
- ethnicity or immigration status
- their family circumstance and background.



Use a strengths-based approach:

- let the child sets their goals
- include the strengths and resources the child has in their assessment.
- help build links to resources in the community
- focus on hope and positivity
- realise that the child is an expert in their own life and work with them to help them make choices.



Include a trusted lead or key worker.

This lets the child develop a trusting relationship. They will have to:

- be available, consistent and accessible
- be open and honest about what they can and can't do
- be non-judgemental and have good communication skills
- be interested in the child
- communicate and explain decisions about care and why they're happening.



Include services working together.

Social services are responsible for putting a Care and Support Plan in place. Safeguarding Boards, their partners and the child should all be involved in planning the support.

The Care and Support Plan should include education, health and other services. It shouldn't just focus on risk management.



Safeguarding Boards and their partners **must**:

- make sure that professionals and staff are aware of this guidance
- be involved in the care and support planning for children.

5. Protecting and supporting children

Safeguarding Boards, the Police and the justice process

The Police work with Safeguarding Boards, local authorities and other services. This helps them share information about children who may be at risk and keep them safe.

Sharing information can help also help the Police stop abusers having contact with children at risk. It can help them disrupt the abuser's behaviour. They can put them under surveillance or use legal orders to stop them being in an area or near a particular child.

Supporting Child Victims of CSE

Children must have support throughout the justice process. There is also a Victims' Code that sets out child victims' rights.



The Victims' Code

assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974376/victims-code-2020.pdf



The Safeguarding Board and their partners **must:**

- have regular meetings to consider CSE
- work together to find the best responses to CSE
- support the sharing and recording of information
- support multi-agency learning around responding to local and regional patterns of CSE
- record, coordinate, and review responses to CSE and related safeguarding issues
- identify abusers, locations and offending patterns and disrupt their behaviour
- consider how contextual safeguarding can help develop regional plans to stop CSE.



Thanks for reading this

The full version of the guidance is here:

gov.wales/safeguarding-children-child-sexual-exploitation-0

If you want more information:

 Social Services and Integration
Health and Social Services Group
Welsh Government

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