



## **Welsh Government update on Child Sexual Exploitation Policy** **January 2020**

### **Consultation on statutory guidance on safeguarding children from child sexual exploitation**

The consultation closed on 7 October 2019 and a summary of responses is due for publication in mid February 2020. The draft guidance was positively received overall, there were some key themes in responses in terms of requests for changes in the draft which we intend to accept:

- Editing the information so that the guidance is shorter while retaining links to the evidence base.
- The need for Chapter 3 to be consistent with the All Wales Practice Guide (see below). The content for both is already the same but the consultation was issued before the All Wales Practice Guide. The content of Chapter 3 will be largely replaced with a live link to the practice guide to ensure content remains up to date
- The need to set out more explicit direction to safeguarding partners in the guidance.

There are other more specific comments on particular content and many of these have also been accepted. A new draft will be finalised and will need to be cleared by the Home Office and Ministry of Justice before publication. We hope this can be completed by May 2020.

### **All Wales Practice Guide- safeguarding children from child sexual exploitation**

This was published in November 2019, with the main Wales Safeguarding Procedures by Cardiff and the Vale Safeguarding Board Project Board on behalf of the Safeguarding Boards in Wales. The practice guide sets out the need for child centred practice rather than an issue based response. There are a number of related All Wales Practice Guides and these are cross-referenced. Many children will need to have a number of interrelated safeguarding issues considered as part of their care and support plan or their care and support protection plan. The All Wales Practice Guides are to be used in conjunction with the main Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

[http://www.myguideapps.com/projects/wales\\_safeguarding\\_procedures/default/chi/c6/c6.p10.html?nocache=0.2398837434165682](http://www.myguideapps.com/projects/wales_safeguarding_procedures/default/chi/c6/c6.p10.html?nocache=0.2398837434165682)

## Risk Assessment

Evidence gathered through the review of existing arrangements carried out by Cardiff University and published in late 2017 suggested that reliance on SERAF and other risk assessment tools has been driving a process driven approach to risk management which does not secure longer term safeguarding and well-being outcomes for children and young people. The Centre for Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse have also published evidence that an over-reliance on separate risk assessment tools does not always support child-centred practice.

The SERAF was referenced in the All Wales Protocol on CSE issued with the All Wales Child Protection Procedures, both now replaced by the Wales Safeguarding Procedures and All Wales Practice Guide. The SERAF was also referenced in the 2011 statutory guidance on CSE.

The Advisory Group that developed the new statutory guidance and the All Wales Practice Guide on CSE decided, based on current evidence, that the Practitioners Prompt would be included instead of a risk assessment. The Practitioners Prompt is included in the All Wales Practice Guide.

There was a decision to retain reference to the health NHS CSERQ on the basis limited contact time in health appointments means that an aid in deciding to make a referral is useful - however this would be in relation to a decision to report – rather than to risk assess in terms of thresholds in the safeguarding process.

All this said, as with other forms of abuse there is nothing to prohibit local authorities or regions adopting a risk assessment. However, this should only inform a wider assessment of care and support needs. The process should not result in meetings where the focus is on the risk assessment and reducing a risk score without considering wider care and support planning to sustain change and support well-being in a child centred way.

<https://www.csacentre.org.uk/resources/blog/risk-tools-risk-talk-and-relationships/>  
<https://www.csacentre.org.uk/our-research/responding-to-csa/risk-tools/>

## Contextual Safeguarding

Research has informed the concept of Contextual Safeguarding. In order to understand abuse through the exploitation of children and young people it is useful to consider their situation in the context of the child's individual factors, home, peers, schools and neighbourhood. [contextualsafeguarding.org.uk](http://contextualsafeguarding.org.uk)

The draft statutory guidance on safeguarding children from child sexual exploitation includes information about contextual safeguarding, as does the National Action Plan: preventing and responding to child sexual abuse. The National Action Plan includes an action for the development of an exemplar Corporate Safeguarding Policy, which can usefully include information on the ways in which contextual safeguarding can inform actions to prevent abuse and abuse through exploitation.

However CSE is a form of child sexual abuse and should be considered following the procedures relevant to the report of risk related to a child (up to the age of 18 years) and in line with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures and relevant All Wales Practice Guides. This will be clearly set out in the final draft of statutory guidance on safeguarding children from child sexual abuse.

The review of policy and practice in relation to CSE carried out by Cardiff University and published end of 2017 has informed forthcoming statutory guidance. One of the findings of the review was that children at risk of CSE were being dealt with separately with strategy meetings which focussed on SERAF scores and managing risk. This did not secure child centred care and support plans that looked at the issues behind the risk in a way that secured longer term safeguarding outcomes. There was a focus on process and on managing short-term risk.

In the development of a child-centred care and support protection plan for individual children and young people it will be useful to consider contextual safeguarding issues as part of individual planning for the child. However, the Welsh Government is clear that children and young people at risk of intra-familial abuse and children and young people at risk of extra-familial abuse should not be subject to separate procedures or systems.

We recognise that contextual safeguarding is a useful tool to assist the police and other safeguarding partners in understanding the local and regional threat and putting in place strategic responses to risk management. Information sharing via strategic local or regional forums will be important in supporting this.

## **Training on adolescent safeguarding**

The Welsh Government is commissioning Dr Sophie Hallett, Cardiff University to develop a pilot training module on responding to children and young people who are 'absent' or missing. The module will utilise the research findings and practice resources developed for the 'Keeping Safe' research and the 'All Wales Practice Guide: safeguarding children missing from home or care'. <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/research/explore/find-a-project/view/1513282-keeping-safe>

The training module will be piloted in two local authorities, one rural and one urban. Subject to the outcomes of the pilot module the Welsh Government will consider commissioning the development of a wider programme of modules on adolescent safeguarding, including CSE. This will also provide practice learning to support the implementation of statutory guidance on safeguarding children from child sexual exploitation.