



Walsall Safeguarding Children Partnership Strategy
Multi-Agency Response to Child Sexual Abuse
2020-2023

1. Introduction

There has been increasing awareness of child sexual abuse¹ through high profile cases that have led to changes in practice and increased our knowledge. However, there is still much that we do not know. There are gaps in our data and we do not have a full picture of basic information² such as duration and frequency of abuse; contexts and locations in which it takes place; and basic profile information about victims and perpetrators. The strategy acknowledges that Walsall, like other areas of the country, is faced with the challenge of tackling the issue of children and young people being abused through sexual exploitation, children and young people going missing, young people involved with gangs and/or being trafficked. Child sexual abuse includes child sexual exploitation. However, there is a separate Walsall strategy focusing on exploitation.

The sexual abuse of children in the family environment is just as much a priority as child sexual exploitation and yet we do not often apply the same learning. As a result, we are aware that not all professionals are equipped to know enough to be able to identify and offer the right support. Therefore, we are recommending that a greater focus is placed on better training and support for frontline staff on the issue of sexual abuse in the family environment.

What we do know from national surveys:

- The most recent prevalence surveys suggest that around 15–20% of girls and 7–8% of boys have been victim of sexual abuse. The 2019 Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimates that around 8% of all adults aged 18 to 74 experienced child sexual abuse before the age of 16.²
- That two thirds of child sexual abuse takes place in the family environment
- Girls and young women form a much higher proportion of identified victims of child sexual abuse, although it is clear that a large number of boys also suffer abuse
- Most children and young people do not tell anyone at the time abuse is taking place, and many wait until they are adults.³

¹ Definitions of CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE in Appendix 1

² Multiagency response to child sexual in the family environment Feb 2020

³ <https://www.childsexualabusecentre.org.uk/documents/briefing-English/>

- Child sexual abuse in the family environment often comes to the attention of agencies because of a secondary presenting factor, such as self-harm, which then becomes the focus of the intervention. ⁴ Of the 43,000 children in England who are subject to a child protection plan at any given time, only around 5% are on a plan for sexual abuse
- Child abuse images are being identified in increasing numbers, Around a quarter of child sexual abuse offences investigated by police result in a charge or summons, and around three quarters of child sexual abuse offences prosecuted end with a conviction
- Rates of attrition through the criminal justice system vary by offences: image offences, sexual grooming and child abuse have the highest rates of charging and conviction.
- Abuse online is a new context for child sexual abuse, and is generating new forms of abuse which are difficult to track accurately
- There are no accurate figures on the extent of harmful sexual behaviour

What do we know locally?

- 156 children were assessed as having experienced sexual abuse during 2018/2019
- 27 children were on child protection plans for sexual abuse in Walsall during 2018/2019
- Walsall Sexually Harmful Behaviour Service received 60 new referrals for request for either consultation, assessment and/or interventions with children and young people where concerns were identified regarding their sexual behaviours.
- It is estimated that up to 80 per cent of incidents are unreported and as few as 28 per cent of victims report their experience to the police.
- More than a third of rape victims and half of female victims of other sexual offences, including assaults, grooming and sexual exploitation, are under the age of 16. Girls aged 10 to 14 are most likely to be the victims of reported rape.
- Findings and themes from Safeguarding Practice Reviews and multi-agency audits in Walsall have demonstrated that we need to be better at supporting children who are victims of abuse and supporting non-abusing parents.
- This strategy is congruent with the vision of the West Midlands Sexual Assault and Abuse strategy (2020-2023) which is to reduce and prevent all forms of sexual assault and abuse.

⁴ Protecting children from harm: a critical assessment of child sexual abuse in the family network in England and priorities (November 2015)

- Walsall supports the Sexual Assault and Abuse (SAA) Board which is overseeing the Sexual Assault and Abuse Strategy, working to ensure the West Midlands offers a multi-agency, holistic and seamless service to victims of sexual assault and abuse; to enhance the services provided to those affected through the criminal justice pathway, to provide therapeutic support to victims to help them rebuild their lives and to hold offenders to account for their behaviour.

2. Key Messages⁵

- Getting help from the police or children's services is very much dependant on a child or young person telling someone they have been abused
- Teachers are the professionals to whom children will most commonly disclose, but the disclosure process can be helped or hindered by the way in which any professional engages with a child about whom concerns exist.
- Children and young people from black and ethnic minorities, and children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are likely to be underrepresented
- Children with a disability that impairs their communication skills are less able to report abuse directly and some children with a learning disability which may be indicative of sexual abuse may be attributed to their disability instead
- Harmful sexual behaviour may result from sexual abuse.
- The act of disclosing sexual abuse can heighten shame and guilt, which may be compounded by others reactions. This should not stop professionals from providing opportunities to children to disclose, but it is essential that children and their families receive appropriate support following disclosure.

⁵ Source: Protecting children from harm children's commissioner 2015 and CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE Centre

3. Aspiration and Ambition

We have set ourselves a powerful aspiration as a Safeguarding Partnership - that is to reduce child sexual abuse in whatever form it manifests itself. Whilst we acknowledge that some of the variables involved are beyond our ability to control or alter, our strategic aims remain to:

- Minimise the risk of children experiencing child sexual abuse in Walsall and to support those that are or have experienced it.
- Perpetrators to be effectively prosecuted, managed in secure estates/ community and have access to rehabilitation
- Increase support for victims and non-perpetrating parents and family members
- Create an environment in which children and adults and communities are able to talk about sexual abuse more easily, to understand what a healthy relationship looks like and how to recognise abuse
- Increase awareness in communities and agencies of what a healthy relationship looks like and how to recognise abuse
- Greater emphasis on multi-agency training
- We will use an evidence based approach to map the current position and from there we will plan to address any gaps as well as building on existing strengths and reviewing our commissioning of services.

Our ambition recognises that protecting and safeguarding children is about promoting good practice and continuous improvement within services. We want to build a trauma-informed system and we know that this requires multi-agency collaboration and cultural change. There is emerging evidence that trauma-informed systems are effective.

We want this to be the *Walsall Way*. This means that we must do all we can to raise public and practitioner awareness that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and we must respond effectively and swiftly when child sexual abuse has been alleged or occurs. We have identified the following:

4. Strategic Objectives and Measuring Impact.

4.1 We have identified three strands of activity that will support the implementation of the strategy and ultimately improve the way we manage CSA in Walsall. The three strands are:

- Training and Development
- Awareness Raising
- Practice /Pathway

Each strand is underpinned by an overarching commitment to robust Leadership and Governance.

4.2 All Walsall Safeguarding Partnership members must take a leadership approach in bringing this strategy and resulting implementation to their agency. The effectiveness of each agency's approach to CSA will be monitored through Section 11 audits, multi-agency file audits and the performance and quality assurance subgroup activity.

4.3 All Partnership members must commit to ensuring their staff access appropriate training and take responsibility for raising awareness amongst themselves and with their service users. Examples of good practice should be fed back through Walsall Safeguarding Partnership.

4.4 The Partnership has said that tackling CSA is a priority for Walsall and must ensure that the implementation is timely and monitored for impact.

Strategic Objectives: What will the partnership achieve?

Training and Development	Awareness raising	Practice/ Pathway
<p>MULTI-AGENCY: We will review and develop multi-agency training on CSA and sexually harmful behaviour to ensure it is fit for purpose for each agency.</p>	<p>PREVENTION: We will develop a package of preventative awareness raising materials which will include information about services, resources and most importantly; listening to the voice of the child, for use by all agencies, parents and the general public.</p> <p>We will continue to promote the NSPCC PANTS campaign.</p>	<p>RESOURCING GAPS: The Partnership will support commissioners/joint commissioning bodies in addressing any resourcing gaps particularly support for children who display sexually harmful behaviour or require therapeutic support following abuse.</p>
<p>SINGLE AGENCY: All agencies will review their own respective workforce's skill and knowledge in relation to CSA and provide single agency training where necessary to ensure the right level of skill and knowledge are achieved and that specialist practice is of a high standard.</p>	<p>REFERRAL PATHWAYS: We will publish referral pathways to support parents and professionals in knowing how to get support for children identified as being at risk of CSA, who have been sexually abused, or display sexually harmful behaviour.</p>	<p>ACCESS TO RESOURCES: We will ensure that pathways to resources that support children and families who have been affected by CSA, are clearly documented, communicated and accessible</p>
<p>CARING FOR CHILDREN: We will ensure that there are specific resources and training for residential workers, foster carers and adopters who find they are caring for/parenting a child who displays sexually harmful behaviour.</p>	<p>EARLY HELP/ WIDE ENGAGEMENT: We will engage with a wide range of agencies to promote awareness throughout the implementation of the strategy, including Schools, Children's Centres, Voluntary & Community Groups</p>	<p>MULTI-AGENCY WORKING: We will improve our information sharing across the partnership to promote the safety and welfare of children and prevent abuse wherever this is possible. This will include establishing communications with the local MAPPA Chair.</p>
<p>INCREASED VULNERABILITY: We will ensure that all aspects of training and awareness raising make explicit reference to early years, children with disabilities and children from minority ethnic backgrounds because evidence suggests there is</p>	<p>SAFEGUARDING IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY: Agencies will be responsible for actively promoting awareness raising materials and resources with their staff and service users.</p>	<p>PRACTICE STANDARDS: We will expect high quality of practice in relation to CSA to include greater transparency with families and within multi-agency meetings when we are worried about signs that a child is at risk of being sexually abused, has been sexually abused or displays sexually harmful behaviour.</p>

increased vulnerability combined with a higher risk of non-identification of CSA.		
VICTIM PREVENTION – Through appropriate training we will ensure that children who are more vulnerable or at higher risk are identified early and measures are put in place to protect children from becoming victims or re-victimised.	INTRANET PAGE- Assurance of continued promotion of helplines through safeguarding partnership website and newsletter.	OFFENDER MANAGEMENT – Agencies will use offender management initiatives, legislation and education to monitor and engage offenders and people who are at risk of offending.

Monitoring Impact: How will we measure the difference we make?

<p>We will monitor the impact of multi-agency training on frontline practice and ensure any deficits are addressed in future workforce development agreements.</p> <p>Agencies will report back on any single agency training being delivered and the impact it has had on the quality of practice.</p> <p>Children/young people and families will have an opportunity to provide feedback following criminal investigations to allow us to learn from their experiences and improve practice.</p> <p>We will seek feedback on the impact of training for residential workers, foster carers and adopters in terms of their ability to care for and meet the needs of the children they look after.</p>	<p>Agencies will report back on numbers of staff who have received awareness raising materials/training and the resulting impact on services provided</p> <p>We will seek staff feedback to establish if their confidence and knowledge has improved following the awareness raising training and the implementation of the strategy</p> <p>Agencies will be asked to seek feedback from parents and children/young people when they have shared resources with them, regarding whether their awareness of risks of child sexual abuse and exploitation have improved and whether they feel more empowered to prevent child sexual abuse.</p>	<p>We will monitor the impact of commissioning to ensure that the identified resourcing gaps have been addressed.</p> <p>We will monitor the effectiveness of pathways to help and support by asking children, young people and families about their experiences.</p> <p>Child Protection conference processes will be audited with the specific focus on CSA, categorisation and challenge</p> <p>Multi-agency audits will evidence that the voice of the child is integral to practice standards where child sexual abuse is suspected or raised as a concern.</p> <p>We will monitor frontline practice to ensure that professionals are working well together to prevent CSA and/or tackle it effectively. We</p>
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<p>We will seek feedback from practitioners on improved practice in tackling CSA in cases relating to early years, children with disabilities and children from minority ethnic backgrounds.</p>		<p>will ensure that services are in place and that the safeguarding arrangements are co-ordinated and joined up.</p>
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5. Governance and Leadership.

- 5.1 The Walsall Safeguarding Children Partnership will monitor the implementation and impact of the CSA strategy on children and young people through performance data and the results of multi-agency audit activity.
- 5.2 Gaps identified within the implementation of the strategy will be raised within the Safeguarding Partnership and escalated to the Leadership Group as necessary.
- 5.3 The partnership will give clear direction and guidance on information sharing for practitioners.
- 5.4 Leaders from within each agency will be accountable for ensuring their respective agencies are aware of the strategy, are appropriately resourced to actively implement it and are working intelligently with other agencies to effectively prevent CSA at primary, secondary and tertiary levels

Appendix 1

Definitions

Sexual Abuse⁶

- Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities,
- Does not necessarily involve a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.
- The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing.
- They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse.
- Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Child Sexual Exploitation

- Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse.
- It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.
- The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour

- Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) is developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour which is displayed by children and young people and which may be harmful or abusive (derived from Hackett, 2014).

⁶ Working Together 2018

- It can be displayed towards younger children, peers, older children or adults, and is harmful to the children and young people who display it, as well as the people it is directed towards.

Female Genital Mutilation

- Female genital mutilation (FGM), also known as female genital cutting and female circumcision, is the ritual cutting or removal of some or all of the external female genitalia. **This strategy does not cover FGM, further information can be found on the regional procedures [pages](#)**

Appendix 2

Assessment Tools

The Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool supports professionals working with children and young people by helping them to identify and respond appropriately to sexual behaviours.

By identifying sexual behaviours as GREEN, AMBER or RED, professionals across the partnership can work to the same criteria when making decisions and protect children and young people with a unified approach.

The tool lists examples of presenting sexual behaviours within four age categories. All green, amber and red behaviours require some form of attention and response, but the type of intervention will vary according to the behaviour.

<https://www.brook.org.uk/training/wider-professional-training/sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool/>

Appendix 3

Strength's and area to focus on in current service provision

What's Currently working well in Walsall?

Training and Development:

- PANTS campaign training – delivered Annually to professionals.
- PANTS campaign has been delivered in 23 primary schools.
- PHSE in place for older children.
- Safeguarding Children Level 1-4 includes CSA awareness
- Sexually Harmful Behaviour practitioner (CS) delivers annual training via the SP: *'Working Together to Meet the Needs of Children and Young People who have Displayed Sexually Harmful Behaviour'* to the wider partnership via WSP.
- Sexual Harmful behaviour training runs 2 x per year
- School Health Champions within Children's Services

Practice and Pathway:

- MASH
- SARC- Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) – new Provider in place- Pathway and training available for all practitioners in Walsall.
- Section 47 investigations
- Statutory Management Group (SMG) Process
- SHB practitioner employed by Children's Services
- At the request of the Courts, NPS (National Probation Service) will provide Pre-Sentence Reports to help inform the Court on sentencing proposals available and most importantly, interventions that will address sexual offending.
- Those cases sentenced for sexual offences will be allocated to NPS. A comprehensive OASys assessment will be completed which includes a risk assessment, a risk management plan and sentence plan. For those convicted of sexual offences the OASys will include a specific reference to those convicted of sexual offences, either current or previous sexual offence (ARMS informed OASys).
- NPS will ensure that appropriate interventions are in place for rehabilitation of those convicted of sexual offences. This will be balanced with the restrictive measures to help safeguard children in the community. For those convicted of sexual offences a MAPPA screening will take place, the appropriate MAPPA management level will be determined including the need for multi-agency or single agency involvement.
- For those 10 to 18-year-olds who have been sentenced by a court for a sexual offence, at the request of the Youth Courts, Walsall Youth Justice Service (YJS) will provide Pre-Sentence Reports and AIM3 (Assessment, Intervention and Moving On) assessment.
- The AIM3 assessment is completed jointly with Walsall SHB Service.

- The Pre-Sentence Reports alongside the AIM3 assessment help inform the Court on sentencing proposals available and most importantly, interventions that will address sexual offending.
- Those young people sentenced for sexual offences will be allocated to Walsall YJS and a comprehensive AssestPlus assessment will be completed which includes Risk of Serious Harm (ROSH) assessment, a risk management plan and sentence plan. This will be balanced with the restrictive measures to help safeguard children in the community.
- For those 10 to 18-year-olds who have come to the attention of the police because of their sexual offending behaviour but have not been charged but dealt with out of court, Walsall YJS also offer interventions that will address sexual offending. These young people are referred by West Midlands Police Service to the YJS's 'Out-of-court' Disposal (O OCD) panel. Again this intervention is delivered jointly with, or is overseen by Walsall SHB Service.
- WMP have a dedicated Sex Offender Manager Team (SOM) for Walsall which are part of the WS NPU (local policing). Their role is to manage registered sex offenders (RSO's) – ie those convicted of serious sexual offences, including most sexual offences against children. They refer all relevant parties to children's services with full details of offending and risks for assessments to be completed. Person posing a risk of harm referrals can also be completed for convicted offenders posing a risk even if there is no identified child.
- SOMS manage RSO court orders eg. Sexual Harm Prevention Orders, and investigate and convict as appropriate. SOMS officers manage the orders as given by the court and have responsibility for returning these orders to court for alterations where necessary (increase or change of risk).
- Complete ARMS assessments (in company with probation where relevant) and use assessments to gauge risk level and manage whilst in the community. Actions to be created tailored to each individual offender.
- Attend MAPPA meetings for MAPPA level 2 and 3 managed offenders both for offenders living in or moving to Walsall.
- Complete unannounced home visits to aid risk assessment
- Use available skills for interrogating internet enabled devices – in company with digital forensic officers where available
- Suspected CSA offenders - who are yet to be convicted, and therefore yet to be an RSO - are usually managed by appropriately trained child abuse investigators who are part of the Public Protection Unit. Officers consider relevant control measures – such as bail conditions – in order to prevent further offending and protect victims.
- For lower level offences, often involving younger offenders, PPU officers have the option of a more intervention and prevention focussed approach to offending behaviour. These are known as out of court disposals and may involve conditional cautions, community resolutions (designed for both restorative outcomes and preventative interventions), or even referral to other agencies or services without a criminal justice outcome.
- PPU Child Abuse now have a dedicated Complex Team which deals with multiple victim/multiple offender investigations (such as Operation Satchel)

Areas to focus on

Awareness Raising:

- Neglect communications work encourages communities to be alert to signs of neglect in CYP
- NSPCC have resources for older children to be utilised by all agencies
- Contact to be made with head teachers Sept/Oct 2020 regarding promotion of PANTs within schools
- PANTs Campaign to be revisited every year
- PHSE will be mandatory from September 2020. This includes whole school policies around RSE, teaching for all children around positive relationships, communication with parents and all staff feeling confident in delivering messages
- With Covid-19, schools are being given a year to embed. This will ensure that policies are in place to support CYP to maintain healthy relationships.
- Need to develop a communication strategy for professionals and some information/handout/ community engagement activity for professionals and the wider community.

Training:

- CSA training to be agreed, commissioned or sourced
- Supervision Training to be agreed, commissioned or sourced
- CSA workplan is being developed
- Assurance from school nursing practices
- Update Website
- Update WSP and partner agency websites
- Training foster carers to deliver with our support
- Consider micro sessions through ED via WHT

Practice and Pathway:

- 157/175 Audit (21/22) to be completed to consider evidence of quality of PHSE