



# **Llais consultation response: national strategy for preventing and responding to child sexual abuse (2025–2035)**


## **About Llais**

Llais is the independent body that reflects the views and represents the interests of people living in Wales in their National Health Service (NHS) and social care services.

We operate locally, regionally, and nationally. We work with people and communities in all parts of Wales so that everyone's voice can be heard, and used, to drive the planning, design, development and delivery of health and social care services for everyone. We:

-  reach out to hear from people within our local communities through an ongoing programme of engagement activities. We do this so that people know about and understand what we do, and to gather their views and experiences of NHS and social care services. We do this in lots of ways, face to face and digitally, including visiting places where people are receiving health and social care services
-  use what we hear to help health and social care services better understand how those of us who may need, and use services think services are meeting their needs, in the way that matters most to them. We help make sure the NHS and social care services take action to make things better where this is needed.

This includes working with health and social care services leaders when they are thinking about making changes to the way services are delivered, so that people and communities have their say from the start

-  provide a complaints advocacy service that is free, independent and

confidential to help people to raise their concerns about health and social services.

## **Background**

We have operated in Wales since 1 April 2023. Our response draws on what we've heard from people about their experiences of health and social services during this time. It reflects our role in supporting people through complaints advocacy, our wider engagement activities, and making representations to services. This includes safeguarding, support services, and system integration.

It means that we cannot answer all questions, or answer all questions in the way that the responses were requested, as people may not have told us about certain areas in the national strategy for preventing and responding to child sexual abuse (2025–2035) (The Strategy).

## **Section 1**

We strongly support the Welsh Government's vision that all children in Wales should live free from the harm of child sexual abuse, and that all those affected should be protected and supported across their lifespan.

We agree that a 10-year strategy is necessary to deliver the scale of change required. Child sexual abuse can have lifelong impacts, and short-term or fragmented responses can undermine recovery. This is in keeping with the Future Generations and Wellbeing long-term thinking.

A decade-long strategy allows for sustained system transformation, better integration across health and social care, and meaningful involvement of

victim-survivors.

The Welsh Government should consider regular reviews and updates to the Strategy and be up front with people and communities that the strategy, and its actions, may change over time to respond to need and the ever-changing context (particularly about online abuse).

We welcome the strategic objectives and priority actions outlined in the draft strategy. They broadly reflect what people have told us matters most to them.

However, we believe the strategy would benefit from greater emphasis on the following:

### **Whole system integration**

People tell us frequently how important it is to have joined-up services that respond to their needs. While the idea of a whole-system approach makes sense on paper, in practice, it is not consistently being felt. We often hear how integration across health and social care is uneven and fragile.

Experiences of a whole-system, person-centred approach vary significantly depending on geography, professional confidence, and organisational culture.

The strategy should include mechanisms to identify and address variation in practice and strengthen the role of Regional Safeguarding Boards and Public Service Boards in delivery of the actions.

Defining what a whole system, integrated service, looks like from a

service users' point of view may help guide the workstreams and their accountability.

## **Access, communication and person-centred care**

We often hear from people about long waits for support services, a sense of needing to be in crisis before being seen, and poor communication - including between organisations or departments of the same organisation. These are some of the biggest concerns we hear about.

We hear that while people are waiting for support, they do not always have the right information or know where to find it and like to have regular updates on when they may get the support they need.

Some people tell us that services can feel overly medicalised and impersonal, with limited emotional support or continuity of care.

The strategy should do more to encourage and embed relational, compassionate, trauma-informed care across all health and social care settings through workforce development, focusing on improved communication and the importance of continuity, and a rights-based, inclusive approach.

## **Young people's voices and feedback loops**

We welcome the commitment to establishing a Children and Young People's Advisory Group and incorporating findings from the literature review. This is essential.

However, we recommend that young people's voices are embedded not just in consultation, but in delivery, monitoring, and evaluation.

We also suggest that Local Authority feedback and complaints data, while more general, may be used as a mechanism to identify gaps, poor experiences, and opportunities for service improvement.

If they have not yet been involved, Cafcass Cymru and the Family Justice Young People's Board may be able to advise and provide data and insight to support the Strategy. The same could be true for children's advocacy services in Wales like the National Youth Advisory Service (NYAS), TGP Cymru, Voices from Care Cymru, SNAP, MEIC and Advocacy Matters Wales.

## **Data and intelligence**

We support the development of a core data set this will help ensure that the strategy is supported by both quantitative and qualitative intelligence.

We would ask that the experiences of people using services be built into the data set, along with other indicators, so that it reflects the lived experiences of children, families, and adult survivors.

Data should be made publicly available to support transparency and accountability.

## **Equity, diversity and inclusion**

We welcome the strategy's commitment to intersectionality and inclusive practice.

As experiences of child sexual abuse are shaped by overlapping factors such as disability, ethnicity, gender identity, and poverty, we would ask if

intersectional analysis is, or should be, embedded in all workstreams, ensuring accessible formats for all resources (e.g. Easy Read, BSL, trauma-informed language), and including third sector and advocacy services in support planning for underrepresented groups.

We would also ask that any children and young people's advisory group is representative of the population of Wales to ensure young people from different backgrounds inform actions and services related to the Strategy.

## **Forward look**

Llais looks forward to supporting the implementation of the Strategy and is committed to working collaboratively with Welsh Government, safeguarding partners, and communities to ensure that the strategy delivers meaningful change.

**06 October 2025**