

# Safeguarding week: We need to act NOW to protect children and adults at risk from abuse

To mark the start of Safeguarding Week (12th – 16th November), the Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies and the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams, said they remain concerned about the number of people who suffer from abuse, neglect and exploitation in Wales each year.

Statistics show:

- Nearly 3,000 children in Wales are on the child protection register because of neglect, psychological, sexual or other forms of abuse.
- Over 19,000 adults were reported to local authorities as being at risk of abuse or neglect.

The Welsh Government has taken firm action to tackle the abuse and neglect of children and adults.

In 2016, a law was introduced in Wales – the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act – which strengthens existing safeguarding arrangements for children by placing on relevant partners, such as the NHS, police, probation and youth offending teams, a duty to report where they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is at risk.

The Act introduces parallel provisions for relevant partners to report to the local authority someone suspected to be an adult at risk of abuse or neglect. This is supplemented by a duty for the local authority to make enquires to determine whether any action is required to safeguard adults at risk.

Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“The abuse and neglect of children and adults is completely unacceptable. One of the most arrowing aspects of my role as Minister is receiving reports of children and adults who have experienced terrible abuse or neglect.

“As a government, we’ve introduced tough new laws to ensure robust mechanisms are in place to safeguard children and adults. I’m asking everyone to think about what they can do, how people act on their concerns is important because together we can all help to keep children and adults safe from abuse.”

As part of efforts to prevent abuse happening in the first place and to identify abuse when it happens, the Welsh Government is funding a new pan-Wales campaign, which is being launched this week. The theme of the Stop it

Now campaign will be to tackle child sexual abuse by providing information and learning for practitioners and to parents and carers. Nearly 1000 people across Wales will benefit from awareness raising sessions as part of the campaign.

Huw Irranca-Davies added:

“I’m really pleased the Welsh Government is working with Stop It Now! Wales to launch this new campaign, which will help encourage the people of Wales to play their part in stopping child sexual abuse.

“Together, we can and must ensure every child in Wales is safe.”

Activities during Safeguarding Week also includes a poster campaign aimed at raising awareness of the need to speak out and seek help, and where to go for that help.

Education Secretary, Kirsty Williams said:

“Safeguarding Week provides a really important opportunity for us to recognise the vital role that schools play in safeguarding our children and young people. It is school staff who have daily contact with our learners, so they are in a strong position to identify signs of abuse and neglect at the earliest possible stage so that action can be taken and support put in place. The campaign will increase awareness within our school communities and also make sure that both children and young people and school staff know where to turn for help.”