# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TITLE**  | **Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation** |
| **DATE**  | **3 March 2016** |
| **BY**  | **Mark Drakeford AM, Minister for Health and Social Services** |

The Welsh Government is clear that child sexual exploitation is a crime, which requires co-ordinated action by all safeguarding partners. Tackling this form of child abuse is a priority for this government.

In 2011, the Welsh Government published statutory guidance underpinned by a dedicated child sexual exploitation protocol within the All-Wales Child Protection Procedures. This approach ensures a standardised, multi-agency response whenever child sexual exploitation is identified, based around the application of the Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (SERAF) tool developed by Barnardo’s Cymru.

The Welsh Government has ensured that practitioners are equipped to apply this coherent framework through dedicated training to help identify children at risk, take steps to protect them and allow action to be taken against perpetrators.

In December 2015, the Welsh Government published an education resource pack to help safeguard children and young people from sexual exploitation. It includes tools to help education practitioners to talk openly to children and young people about the dangers of sexual exploitation and risky behaviours that might put young people in harm’s way.

A national training programme to support implementation is currently underway. All these actions ensure Wales has a coherent and consistent national approach to the delivery of safe outcomes for children. However, as our experiences and understanding of child sexual exploitation is further informed by evidence, we must ensure our leadership evolves and reflects the tools we have at hand to prevent and protect those at risk.

The Welsh Government has led the production of the *All-Wales National Action Plan to Tackle Child Sexual Exploitation*. It has been produced in partnership with Wales’ police and crime commissioners, the Children’s Commissioner, police forces, the National Offender Management Service in Wales, the Youth Justice Board Cymru, Wales Community Rehabilitation Company, health boards, the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales, the third sector and local government.

This is the first national action plan for Wales and provides a comprehensive framework through which the wide range of safeguarding partners can demonstrate co-ordinated cross-agency action to prevent and protect children from abuse and sexual exploitation.

I have issued the national action plan today, recognising that safeguarding children boards have a critical role in providing oversight in tackling child sexual exploitation. The boards will report annually to the Welsh Government about their work across Wales in this important area.

This work has highlighted the importance and availability of accurate and comparable data about the prevalence of child sexual exploitation in Wales. The Welsh Government has drawn on work undertaken by the Western Bay Safeguarding Children Board to develop and issue a common dataset and approach to collecting and reporting, which will provide an accurate and consistent reporting of child sexual exploitation across Wales.

The robustness of the guidance and dataset will be tested this year as we review and analyse the outcomes of the work to inform the delivery of effective protection and prevention arrangements.

The development of the national action plan does not mean work stops in this area. We will continue to work hard to protect our children and young people. Earlier this month, I announced appointments to the National Independent Safeguarding Board – the board will play an important role in ensuring we have the right policies and initiatives in place to safeguard children and adults across Wales.

To tackle the crime of child sexual exploitation we must work together.

The national action plan is available at: <http://gov.wales/topics/health/socialcare/safeguarding/?lang=en>