# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Peer-on-peer sexual harassment in education settings: action plan** |
| **DATE** | **24 January 2024** |
| **BY** | **Jeremy Miles, Minister for Education and Welsh Language** |

[The Peer on Peer Sexual Harassment Plan](https://www.gov.wales/peer-peer-sexual-harassment-education-settings-action-plan), published today, sets out the actions Welsh Government, and partners will take to prevent and respond to the issue of peer-on-peer sexual harassment and harmful sexual behaviour ([HSB](https://www.safeguarding.wales/en/chi-i/chi-i-c6/c6-p7/)) in education settings.

Since the launch of the [Everyone’s Invited](https://www.everyonesinvited.uk/) platform, subsequent Estyn reviews and the Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Committee inquiry we now have a much greater awareness of the prevalence of peer-on-peer sexual harassment in our schools.

It is critical that education settings understand their roles and responsibilities in ensuring that all children and young people have access to a safe learning environment. The Plan recognises that quality professional learning opportunities are key to this, ensuring that education settings feel confident speaking and teaching about all forms of sexual harassment, in a developmentally appropriate way.

The Curriculum for Wales is central to supporting children and young people to recognise the characteristics of safe, healthy relationships. The mandatory Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Code sets out core learning which aims to tackle troubling issues such as bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination. Online safety in particular is a key feature within the RSE Code and educating young people on how to engage with social media safely is a cross-curricular issue.

We are all too aware of the prevalence of online sexual harassment and addressing this forms a critical aspect of this plan. Our education settings are integral to a pro-active whole community approach, including the creation of policies and educating children and young people on vital issues such as diversity, respect, consent, and healthy relationships in the online world.

Aligned with our [National Digital Resilience in Education plan](https://hwb.gov.wales/keeping-safe-online/enhancing-digital-resilience-in-education-an-action-plan-to-protect-children-and-young-people-online/), our actions are designed to empower education settings and learners to understand, prevent, and effectively respond to online sexual harassment. The actions we are taking in this plan will contribute to the well-being and safety of learners and challenge the normalisation of sexual harassment online.

The work aligns with the Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual

Violence (VAWDASV) National Strategy and the Blueprint approach to

making Wales the safest place to be a woman or girl.

This Action Plan aims to meet the needs of all learners and acknowledges that

different groups of learners such as Black and minority ethnic LGBTQ+, or learners

with intersecting protected characteristics, will have different needs.

To support implementation of this plan, NSPCC have worked with young people to

identify opportunities to understand young people’s knowledge of peer-on-peer

sexual harassment, whether they feel listened to and supported when they talk about

and report peer-on-peer sexual harassment, and what the solutions could be to

stopping peer-on-peer sexual harassment in Wales. This work will ensure that learner voice is a central part of our ongoing work to tackle this issue. More information will be made available later this year.

The Plan has been developed and refined by engagement with a range of partner, across sectors. This includes education, local government, Police and the third sector.

We look forward to continuing these conversations as we move into delivery of the Plan. It is this spirit of partnership that will ensure we can ensure all our learners have access to a safe learning environment.