

The Report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

October 2022

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This is the last statutory report published by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.

The Inquiry has examined the responses of a broad range of institutions and organisations to allegations of child sexual abuse. It has considered a huge and complex picture to spot similarities, patterns and any unique circumstances. The Inquiry held 325 days of public hearings. It processed over two million pages of evidence and heard from 725 witnesses. The Inquiry has also published 61 reports and publications.

Over 7,300 victims and survivors engaged with the work of the Inquiry. More than 700 gave evidence at public hearings or provided statements. Over 6,200 came forward to share their experiences at the Truth Project and nearly 1,800 joined the Inquiry's Victims and Survivors Forum.

Many common themes were evident from the Inquiry's work. The Inquiry heard repeatedly how institutions prioritised their own reputations, and those of individuals within them, above the protection of children. Many lacked appropriate policies and procedures.

We also looked at the internet, which is being widely used to distribute indecent images of children. The internet can be used to groom and manipulate children to commit sexual acts on screen, often for the purpose of sexual exploitation. It is also used to live stream the sexual abuse of children from around the world.

It is hard to be sure of the scale and extent of child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation as data collection is poor. The available data present a confused and confusing picture. There is no consistent approach to data recording, even by key statutory agencies such as the police and local authorities.

Child sexual abuse data



Recommendation 1: A single core data set

The UK government and the Welsh Government should improve data collected by children's social care and criminal justice agencies about child sexual abuse and exploitation. There should be one single set of data covering both England and Wales.

Data should be consistent and should include the characteristics of victims and alleged abusers, such as age, sex and ethnicity. It should include factors that make victims more vulnerable to child sexual abuse or exploitation. It should say where the child sexual abuse and exploitation happened and the context in which it happened.

Data should be compiled and published regularly and should be capable of being organised at national, regional and local levels.

Prioritising the protection of children



Recommendation 2: Child Protection Authorities for England and for Wales

The UK government should create a Child Protection Authority for England. The Welsh Government should create a Child Protection Authority for Wales.

Each Authority's purpose should be to:

- improve practice in child protection
- advise and make recommendations to government to improve child protection
- inspect institutions and settings as it thinks appropriate.

The Authorities should also monitor the implementation of the Inquiry's recommendations.

Recommendation 3: A cabinet Minister for Children

The UK government should create a cabinet-level ministerial position for children.

The Welsh Government should ensure that there is cabinet-level ministerial responsibility for children.

Recommendation 4: Public awareness

The UK government and the Welsh Government should commission regular campaigns to increase public awareness of child sexual abuse. These should say what to do if child sexual abuse is happening or suspected.

The campaigns should challenge myths and stereotypes about child sexual abuse. They should use different approaches, such as public information campaigns and creative media such as television drama.

Empowering children and young people



Recommendation 5: Pain compliance

The UK government should ban the use of any technique that deliberately induces pain. These are sometimes referred to as 'pain compliance techniques'. The UK government should withdraw any policies that allow pain compliance techniques to be used in custodial institutions where children are detained, and should prohibit the practice. (A similar recommendation was made in the Inquiry's February 2019 Sexual Abuse of Children in Custodial Institutions: 2009–2017 Investigation Report.)

Recommendation 6: Children Act 1989

The UK government should amend the Children Act 1989 so that looked after children or someone acting for them can apply to the family courts for orders to mandate or limit a local authority's exercise of its parental responsibility. If a child in the care of the local authority is or is believed to be being significantly harmed, or is at risk of significant harm, it would allow the court to stop a local authority taking or planning particular action or allow the court to give directions in relation to the local authority's exercise of parental responsibility for that child.

Creating a more protective environment for children



Recommendation 7: Registration of care staff in children's homes

The UK government should introduce a system for registering staff working in care roles in children's homes including secure children's homes. (A similar recommendation was made in the Inquiry's April 2018 Interim Report.)

Registration should be with an independent body. This body should set and maintain standards of training, conduct and continuing professional development. It should also have the power to enforce these through fitness to practise procedures.

Recommendation 8: Registration of staff in care roles in young offender institutions and secure training centres

The UK government should introduce a system for registering staff in roles responsible for the care of children in young offender institutions and secure training centres. (A similar recommendation was made in the Inquiry's February 2019 Sexual Abuse of Children in Custodial Institutions: 2009–2017 Investigation Report.)

Recommendation 9: Greater use of the barred list

The UK government should enable anyone who hires people to work or volunteer with children on a frequent basis to check if they have been barred by the Disclosure and Barring Service from working with children. This should also apply where the role is supervised.

Recommendation 10: Improving compliance with the statutory duty to notify the Disclosure and Barring Service

The UK government should take steps to improve compliance with the duty to notify the Disclosure and Barring Service.

The National Police Chiefs' Council should work with regulators and inspectorates to make sure that the arrangements are clear for referring breaches of the duty to the police.

The Disclosure and Barring Service and the regulators and inspectorates should put in place an information-sharing protocol.

Recommendation 11: Extending disclosure regime to those working with children overseas

The UK government should enable the Disclosure and Barring Service to provide enhanced certificates with barred list checks of those not allowed to undertake certain work with children, including on a voluntary basis. These certificates would be for people from or living in England and Wales applying to work with children based outside the UK in particular circumstances. (A similar recommendation was made in the Inquiry's January 2020 Children Outside the United Kingdom Phase 2 Investigation Report.)

Identifying and reporting child sexual abuse



Recommendation 12: Pre-screening

The UK government should require regulated providers of internet search services and user-to-user services to pre-screen for known child sexual abuse before material is uploaded.

Recommendation 13: Mandatory reporting

The UK government and Welsh Government should introduce laws requiring certain people to report child sexual abuse. These people are called 'mandated reporters'. These laws would apply where a child or an abuser tells a mandated reporter that a child is being sexually abused, as well as if a mandated reporter witnesses a child being sexually abused or can see signs that indicate that a child has been sexually abused.

The Inquiry's final Report sets out further detail about this recommendation including that it should be a crime to fail to make a mandatory report in certain circumstances. People who work in regulated activity in relation to children (under the Safeguarding and Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, as amended) and people in positions of trust and also police officers should be mandated reporters. Mandated reporters should make these reports as soon as possible to local authority children's social care or the police.

The justice system response to child sexual abuse



Recommendation 14: Compliance with the Victims' Code

The UK government should arrange for a joint inspection of compliance with the Victims' Code in relation to victims and survivors of child sexual abuse. The Victims' Code sets out the minimum level of service to be provided by the criminal justice system. (A similar recommendation was made in the Inquiry's April 2018 Interim Report.)

Recommendation 15: Limitation

The UK government should change the law to remove the time limit for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse to make a legal claim for compensation. These provisions should apply whether or not the current three-year period has already started to run or has expired, except where claims have been dismissed by a court or settled by agreement. The right to a fair trial should be expressly protected. These changes should not apply to claims brought on behalf of the estates of victims and survivors.

Supporting victims and survivors



Recommendation 16: Specialist therapeutic support for child victims of sexual abuse

The UK government and the Welsh Government should guarantee that all child victims of sexual abuse will be offered specialist and accredited therapeutic support. Children in all parts of England and Wales should be able to access support when they need it if they have been a victim of child sexual abuse.

Recommendation 17: Access to records

The UK government should direct the Information Commissioner's Office to introduce a code of practice on keeping and accessing records which relate to child sexual abuse.

The code should require records about child sexual abuse and allegations of child sexual abuse to be kept for 75 years, with appropriate review periods.

Making amends



Recommendation 18: Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

The UK government should make further changes to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme.

- It should include other forms of child sexual abuse, including online-facilitated sexual abuse.
- Victims and survivors with unspent convictions should not be automatically excluded where the crimes are likely to be linked to the sexual abuse they experienced as a child.
- The time limit to apply for compensation should be increased to seven years. This period should run from the date the offence was reported to the police or from the date that the person applying reached the age of 18, where the offence was reported while the victim was a child. In both situations, the discretion to extend the time limit should remain.

Recommendation 19: Redress scheme

The UK government should set up a single redress scheme for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse and exploitation.

The detailed rules and funding for this redress scheme should reflect the following key points.

- The scheme should be for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse and exploitation that occurred in England and Wales, including sexual abuse by other children.
- There should be a clear connection between the child sexual abuse and institutions in England and Wales, whether State or non-State.
- The scheme should apply to child sexual abuse that took place before its establishment and should be open for a period of five years.
- The scheme should not allow an applicant to receive money twice for the same matter.
- The scheme should make payments through a two-tier system. The first should be a fixed flat-rate recognition payment. Victims and survivors who wish to provide more details and evidence could apply for a second-tier payment.
- The process must be accessible, straightforward and sensitive to the needs and vulnerabilities of victims and survivors of sexual abuse.
- Central and local governments should fund the scheme. England and Wales may carry out and pay for the schemes differently. Non-State institutions should also be asked to contribute.

Evolving challenges

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Recommendation 20: Age verification

The UK government should change the law to make sure that internet companies that provide online internet services and social media introduce better ways to check children's ages. (A similar recommendation was made in the Inquiry's March 2020 [The Internet Investigation Report](#).)

This rapid read document is not intended to provide a comprehensive overview of the report. It is a summary that includes information about the report's context, findings and recommendations.

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