

NSPCC Cymru/Wales National Assembly for Wales Election Briefing 2016

**We estimate that over half a million children are abused in the UK each year¹
One in five children today have experienced serious physical abuse, sexual
abuse or severe physical or emotional neglect²**

We fight for safer childhoods. Will you?



The child pictured is a model.
©NSPCC 2014 Registered charity 216401 and SC037717

Our children are precious to us. We all want them to grow up in a safe and loving environment and become happy, confident adults. To get there they need to be surrounded by positive influences, good advice and the knowledge that if they ever need help and support there will be someone to talk to. **Children should be free to dream.** Abuse can destroy a child's dreams - but it never should.

Child abuse is more damaging, diverse and common than many of us are prepared to recognise. Instead of feeling unstoppable it can make children feel worthless, **ashamed, frightened and alone.** Abuse can derail a child's development and affect all parts of their life. It stops them doing what children should be doing, like playing, exploring, making friends, and learning new things. Without help, the damage can last long into adult life, affecting relationships, physical and emotional development, learning and wellbeing.

Child abuse changes childhood, but so can we. Everything we've learnt over the past 130 years shows that abuse can be prevented. Our mission is to end cruelty to children **but we can't do it alone.** We need everyone to take responsibility and play their part. Together **we can end child abuse.** That's why the NSPCC is here, that's what drives **all our work,** and that's why - as long as there's abuse - we'll continue to fight for safer childhoods. When a child is free from abuse, they're free to dream again.

¹ See NSPCC (2015) Child Abuse and Neglect. Available from: <http://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/>

² Radford, L. et al. (2011) Child abuse and neglect in the UK today. London: NSPCC

NSPCC Cymru/Wales asks all Welsh Assembly candidates to commit to preventing abuse & neglect and protecting children from the harm it causes. It's time to fight for safer childhoods.

Prevent



Everyone in Wales understands the consequences for children of abuse and how they can play their part in preventing it



Photography by Tom Hull. Photography by Jon Challicom.
The children pictured are models. ©NSPCC 2014 Registered charity 216401 and SC037717

For every child on a child protection register we estimate another 8 children have suffered maltreatment³

Although awareness of the high level of abuse and neglect continues to be fairly strong, most people are not clear on how to take action to keep a child safe⁴

Child abuse is action by a parent, carer, other adult or child that results in significant harm to a child. NSPCC Cymru/Wales believes that the context in which we live shapes all of our behaviours, including abusive behaviour and this means that abusers tend to be made and not born. Abuse can happen to any child, in any family. However certain things make abuse more likely to happen and the more risks are present, the more likely it is that abuse will occur.

³ Jutte, S et al., (2013) How safe are our children? The most comprehensive overview of child protection in the UK. London: NSPCC. In Wales, over 2,900 children were identified as needing protection from abuse last year. Welsh Government (2015) Children on child protection register by local authority and period of time. Available from: <https://stats.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Service-Provision/ChildrenOnChildProtectionRegister-by-LocalAuthority-PeriodOfTime>

⁴ Jutte, S et al., (2015) How safe are our children? The most comprehensive overview of child protection in the UK. London: NSPCC.

We believe that influencing factors on an **individual's behaviour can be identified and** therefore it is possible to prevent abuse before it occurs. Issues such as inadequate housing, poor mental health, domestic abuse, or substance misuse problems are all known risk factors for all forms of abuse and neglect. We want more attention to be given to support families facing adversity and we believe problems should be addressed early. These stressors often occur together and have a cumulative effect- the more of them there are in a family, the greater the risk to the child.⁵ Recent Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)⁶ research draws on growing evidence that experiences during childhood can affect health throughout the life course. Findings that adults in Wales who were physically or sexually abused as children or brought up in households where there was domestic violence, alcohol or drug abuse are more likely to adopt health-harming and anti-social behaviours in adult life underlines the importance in effective early interventions. This is likely to pay significant dividends that span learning, health and parenting of the next generation. Key to preventing abuse is also learning and improving when things go wrong, using for example the conclusions of Child Practice Reviews.

Moreover, new figures from the Early Intervention Foundation show the cost to public services of not intervening early. Late intervention cost services like health, local government and police in Wales £1.15 billion in 2014/5⁷. It is for this reason we believe funding needs to be refocused towards early intervention, particularly the first two **years of a child's life**. Furthermore, in times of increasing pressures on public spending, we need to make sure that the services offered to parents have a good evidence base so we know they will work, and at the NSPCC our new Impact and Evidence Hub aims to do this⁸.

NSPCC Cymru/Wales therefore believes it is vital that services for vulnerable children and families are co-ordinated and provide joined-up support to tackle these issues **and meet children's need. We believe the next Welsh Government should ensure** better co-ordination and coherence of services and programmes for children and **families at a national level to improve children's outcomes.**

⁵ Jutte, S., Bentley, H., Miller, P. and Jetha, N. (2014). How Safe Are Our Children (2014)? Data Briefing, Available from: <http://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/how-safe-children-2014-data-briefing.pdf>

⁶ Public Health Wales (2015) Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

⁷ Chowdry, H and Oppenheim, C (2015) Spending on late intervention: How we can do better for less. Early Intervention Foundation.

⁸ Available from: <http://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/impact-evidence-evaluation-child-protection/>

The next National Assembly for Wales should:

- **Ensure there is a Children's Minister with oversight and accountability for all Welsh Government children's policy areas that enhances co-ordination and coherence of all services provided to children and families.**
- **Raise awareness of child abuse among the public and encourage individuals who have concerns about children to speak out without delay.**
- **Tackle the risk factors which make child abuse more likely to happen and provide families with support at the earliest opportunity before problems escalate.**
- **Child Practice Reviews conclusions for Wales need to be regularly published so that lessons can be learned when things go wrong.**
- **Equip professionals working with children and young people with knowledge of how to identify and respond to risk factors and early signs of abuse.**
- **Give children and young people access to compulsory preventative education, to equip them to stay safe from abuse or neglect.**



Every child in Wales is safe from online abuse



Photography by Jon Challicom. The children pictured are models.
©NSPCC 2014 Registered charity 216401 and SC037717

60% of 13-18 year olds have been asked for a sexual video or image of themselves⁹

1 in 4 children have experienced something upsetting on a social networking site¹⁰

1 in 3 children have been a victim of cyberbullying¹¹

The internet is an extremely valuable resource to help children learn and explore the world but conversely it is also one of the newest threats to keeping children safe. It presents new risks, including the sharing and viewing of child abuse images by adults, 'sexting', viewing inappropriate content and bullying from other children. The constantly evolving nature of the digital world means the type and scale of the challenge is rapidly changing.

For many children there is no distinction between their online and offline lives. Our How Safe Are Our Children? report presents available data on cyber bullying, "sexting", viewing harmful content, child abuse images and sexual grooming.

- More children are reporting that they are viewing material online that worried or concerned them and the Internet Watch Foundation are identifying and removing increasing numbers of URLs including child abuse imagery.
- There were **11,095 ChildLine counselling sessions** about online abuse and safety in 2013/14 – a 4 per cent increase compared to the previous year, and 73 per cent increase since 2011/12.

⁹ NSPCC (2014) Under pressure: ChildLine review: what's affected children in April 2013 – March 2014. London: NSPCC

¹⁰ Lilley, C., Ball, R. and Vernon, H. (2014) The experiences of 11-16 year olds on social networking sites. London: NSPCC

¹¹ McAfee (2014) 'Number of children who are victims of cyberbullying doubles in a year' Survey of children and parents as reported in the Guardian. Available from: <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/nov/14/35pc-children-teenagers-victims-cyberbullying-fears-grooming-tinder-snapchat>

The NSPCC sees keeping children safe from online harm as a growing area of child protection, requiring urgent attention and a commitment to better understand the issues. We believe keeping children safe from online abuse needs to be a priority for each and every Government in the UK and the National Assembly for Wales has a responsibility to ensure that Wales is at the forefront of keeping children safe online.

We would therefore recommend the next Welsh Government develops a comprehensive action plan for online safety supported by a digital advisory group. Such an advisory group, operating at devolved level would ensure Welsh Government officials and Ministers are kept informed of the latest issues and developments for children. It would make sure professionals are adequately trained, it would work with parents to help them deal with the problem and – crucially – it would open a dialogue with social media providers about the issues facing children in Wales.

The next National Assembly for Wales should:

- **Ensure that Welsh Government produces a comprehensive Online Safety action plan supported by a digital advisory group to ensure Wales is at the forefront of keeping children safe online.**
- **Empower children to protect themselves and prevent abuse by making lessons on online safety a key element of compulsory age-appropriate PSE/SRE.**
- **Work with the new Wales National Safeguarding Board to make online safety a key part of its new National Strategy.**
- **Ensure adequate guidance for public service professionals on 'sexting' and the law with regards to children and young people.**

Protect



Every child can speak out about abuse and neglect and adults listen to them, believe them and support them to recover



Photography by Jon Challicom. The children pictured are models.
©NSPCC 2014 Registered charity 216401 and SC037717

1 in 3 children who have been sexually abused by an adult didn't tell anyone at the time¹²

On average it takes 7 years for young people to disclose sexual abuse¹³

Research and practice emerging over the last 30 years has consistently found that children and young people find it difficult to tell someone about the abuse they are suffering¹⁴. Some are developmentally unable to understand that the abuse is wrong, or lack the vocabulary to describe it. Others are threatened or intimidated by the perpetrator to keep silent. Many do not speak out because they feel ashamed and are afraid that they will not be believed. A number of children delay their disclosures for a significant period of time and some never talk about it at all¹⁵.

Delayed disclosures mean that victims of abuse often do not access the support they need to overcome their experiences until much later, and are left to deal with the consequences of abuse on their own. Research also shows that some disclosures are not recognised, dismissed, played down or ignored, which means the young person is not supported or protected¹⁶.

It is also crucial that after they have disclosed abuse, the right support is available to children to help them recover. Receiving support can mean the difference between

¹² Radford, L et al., (2011) Child abuse and neglect in the UK today. London: NSPCC

¹³ Allnock, D and Miller, P (2013) No one noticed, no one heard: A study of disclosures of childhood abuse. London: NSPCC

¹⁴ Allnock, D and Miller, P (2013) No one noticed, no one heard: A study of disclosures of childhood abuse. London: NSPCC

¹⁵ London, K, Bruck, M, Ceci, S. J and Shuman, D. W (2005) Disclosure of child sexual abuse: What does the research tell us about the ways that children tell? *Psychology, Public Policy & the Law* 11(1) pp. 194-226; McElvaney, R (2013) Disclosure of child sexual abuse: Delays, non-disclosure and partial disclosure. What the research tells us and implications for practice. *Child Abuse Review* 24 (3) pp. 159-169

¹⁶ Allnock, D and Miller, P (2013) No one noticed, no one heard: A study of disclosures of childhood abuse. London: NSPCC

overcoming their trauma, or a life shaped by the horror of their experiences. The impact of abuse includes mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, substance misuse, eating disorders, self-harm, anger and aggression, sexual symptoms and age inappropriate sexual behaviour.¹⁷

A recent survey of professionals carried out by the NSPCC in Wales suggests that unfortunately, there are insufficient services to help children and young people who have been abused and neglected overcome their experiences. This year, there has also been a 124% increase in ChildLine counselling sessions relating to mental health and wellbeing that mentioned problems accessing services across the UK.¹⁸

It doesn't have to be this way. We have a choice about how a child's life is shaped after abuse. By giving them the care and support they need now, we can help to free them from the trauma of their ordeal. It's up to all of us to make change happen.

The NSPCC has recently launched a UK-wide campaign, It's Time, to ensure that every child who has suffered abuse can access the right support they need to recover, at the right time. Children deserve a life after abuse. It's time we helped them live it.

The next National Assembly for Wales should:

- **Develop a comprehensive Child Sexual Abuse action plan.**
- **Ensure that all professionals working with children and young people know how to ask about abuse in a sensitive and age appropriate manner.**
- **Ensure that a review of the provision of therapeutic services for children and young people who have been abused and neglected is conducted.**
- **Ensure that the extra spend of £7.6 m a year for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services is maintained and includes a focus on the specific needs of children and young people who have been abused and neglected.**

¹⁷ Lanktree, C. B, Gilbert, A. M, Briere, J, Taylor, N, Chen, K, Maida, C. A and Saltzman, W. R (2008) Multi-informant assessment of maltreated children: convergent and discriminant validity of the TSCC and TSCYC. Child Abuse Neglect 32 (6) pp. 621-625

¹⁸ NSPCC (2015) "Always there when I need you": ChildLine review: what's affected children in April 2014 – March 2015. London: NSPCC.



Every parent is supported to do the best for their children



Photography by Tom Hull. Subjects are volunteers.
©NSPCC 2014 Registered charity 216401 and SC037717

Perinatal mental illness affects at least 10% of women in the UK¹⁹

Neglect is the main cause for child protection registrations in Wales, with 1,170 children being subject to a child protection plan due to neglect alone in 2014-2015²⁰

Supporting mothers living in an abusive relationship has a positive effect on their self-esteem and parenting²¹

Every new parent wants to do the best for their children but certain experiences and difficulties can affect the ability of parents to provide the warm sensitive parenting that babies and children need. 10% of women in the UK suffer from perinatal mental illness, which if left untreated can have a devastating impact on them and increase the likelihood of their children experiencing behavioural, social or learning difficulties.

Child development is a dynamic process – through which a child is transformed from reacting to sensations and being dependent on carers to becoming independent and making sense of the world. Babies, children and young people have many needs, both physical and emotional. Meeting these needs is crucial for optimal child development and failure to meet some or many of these needs, whether consistently or intermittently, is child neglect. Put simply, neglect is what parents are NOT doing. Child neglect covers a spectrum, and refers to a situation when the things parents

¹⁹ Hogg, S (2012) Prevention in Mind. All Babies Count: Spotlight on Perinatal Mental Health. NSPCC: London

²⁰ Welsh Government (2015) Children on child protection register by local authority, category of abuse and age group. Available from: <https://stats.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Service-Provision/childrenonchildprotectionregister-by-localauthority-categoryofabuse-agegroup>

²¹ McManus, E. et al (2013) Recovering from domestic abuse, strengthening the mother-child relationship: mothers' and children's perspectives of a new intervention. Child Care in Practice, 19(3): 291-310.

don't do risks **affecting a child's** health and development, leading to devastating and long lasting effects on children²².

To prevent this, babies and children need responsive and sensitive parenting to ensure all children can fulfil their potential. Research suggests that a **child's** development score at just 22 months can serve as an accurate predictor of educational outcomes at 26 years²³. Evidence indicates that the first thousand days, **from pregnancy to the child's second birthday, is when** crucial brain connections are formed and when the bonds between children and care givers are formed²⁴. That is why we **support Wales' Chief Medical Officer's recommendation that 'Health Boards and partners should have a 'First 1000 days plan'**²⁵. We also welcome the intensive support given to children aged 0-4 in Flying Start areas, but believe that all young children and families outside Flying Start areas should be provided with an enhanced health visiting service together with targeted evidence-based programmes to help address issues early.

This should include working with parents to build skills and effective strategies for **copng with their children's behaviour** in a positive, non-violent way. We believe a crucial part of this can be achieved by the introduction of legislation in the next Assembly to give children equal protection under the law on assault. 48 countries, and most recently the Republic of Ireland, have legislated to do this. A change in the law should be accompanied by suite of perinatal and family support programmes available for parents across Wales.

²² Core-Info (2014) Neglect or emotional abuse in children aged 5-14. Available from:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/advice-and-info/core-info-emotional-neglect-5-14.pdf>

²³ Allen, G (2011). Early Intervention: The Next Steps. London: HMSO. Available from:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/284086/early-intervention-next-steps2.pdf

²⁴ Welsh Government (2015) Chief Medical Officer for Wales Annual Report 2014-15: Healthier, Happier, Fairer. Available from:

<http://gov.wales/docs/phhs/publications/151014cmoreporten.pdf>

²⁵ Ibid

The next National Assembly for Wales should:

- **Strengthen ante-natal care and adopt a relational approach to supporting new parents in the perinatal period.**
- **Ensure strategic commissioning of perinatal mental health care pathways and training of universal health service staff to identify mothers suffering from perinatal mental illness.**
- **Offer an enhanced health visiting service and evidence based family support programmes to new parents of 0-4 year olds in Wales outside Flying Start areas.**
- **Develop a family support strategy that co-ordinates efforts nationally and locally to ensure children's needs are met. This must ensure universal services provide early effective support to parents and targeted evidence-based services are available to address issues early.**
- **Adopt legislation at the earliest opportunity to give children equal protection under the law on assault.**



Every looked after child and care leaver is supported to achieve their full potential



Photography by Tom Hull. Photography by Jon Challicom.
Subjects are volunteers. ©NSPCC 2014 Registered charity 216401 and SC037717

45% of care leavers in Wales were not in education, training or employment on their 19th birthday²⁶

There were over 5,600 children in care in Wales in 2015²⁷. Unfortunately, not all looked after children have positive experiences of the care system. Evidence shows that outcomes for children in care are not as good as those of the general population.

- Compared to all pupils in Wales, looked after children had lower educational attainments, with the latest figures showing that 39% of care leavers aged 16 or over have 5 or more GCSEs at grade A* to G²⁸
- Looked after children are at greater risk of experiencing poor mental health than children in the general population, with one study showing that 49% of children looked after by local authorities were identified as having a mental health disorder²⁹

NSPCC Cymru/Wales supports the development of a co-ordinated strategic approach to ensure that looked after children and care leavers can fulfil their well-being.

²⁶ Welsh Government (2015) Adoptions, Outcomes and Placements for Children Looked After by Local Authorities in Wales, 2014-15. Available from: <http://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2015/150930-adoptions-outcomes-placements-children-looked-after-local-authorities-2014-15-en.pdf>

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Meltzer, H., Corbin, T., Gatward, R., Goodman, R., and Ford, T. (2003) The mental health of young people looked after by local authorities in Wales. Office for National Statistics, London: HMSO

The next National Assembly for Wales should:

- **Adopt a rights-based approach: all policy and legislation relating to looked after children and care leavers should enable them to fully realise their rights under the UNCRC.**
- **Embed emotional well-being into the care system: this means clearly identifying emotional well-being as a strategic priority within the care system and ensuring that delivery is consistently monitored and tracked.**
- **Hearing the voice of looked after children and care leavers: Social workers, and carers and other professionals should support children to describe what is important to their well-being and how carers and professionals can help them achieve it.**
- **Work on improving permanence and stability: Work needs to be undertaken to better understand the placement needs of the Welsh looked after population, including better monitoring and supporting children who return home from care.**

When a child is free from abuse, they're free to dream again.

We fight for safer childhoods. Will you?



Policy and Public Affairs Team

NSPCC Cymru/Wales,
Diane Englehardt House,
Treglown Court,
Dowlais Road,
Cardiff CF24 5LQ

Email: publicaffairs.cymru@nspcc.org.uk
