

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i ymchwiliad y [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg ynghylch aflonyddu rhywiol rhwng cyfoedion ymysg dysgwyr](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee inquiry into Peer on peer sexual harassment among learners](#)

**PPSH 10**

**Ymateb gan: CBC Lleisiau Rhieni yng Nghymru**

**Response from: Parents Voices in Wales CIC**

---

Nodwch eich barn mewn perthynas â chylch gorchwyl yr ymchwiliad, sydd wedi'u grwpio'n 5 thema: | Record your views against the inquiry's terms of reference, which have been grouped into 5 themes:

1. Maint | Scale
2. Effaith | Impact
3. Effeithiolrwydd ymyriadau | Effectiveness of interventions
4. Y cyd-destun ehangach | Wider context
5. Arall | Other

### **1. Maint | Scale**

Parents Voices believes we do not know the real scale of this issue because of under reporting by learner, parent/carer or dumbing down of incidents by schools. Learners may also decline to report due to lack of transparent or accessible pathways to disclosures or because of humiliation, embarrassment or lack of awareness of what constitutes Sexual Harrassment. Equally poor relationships with schools or key staff can be a barrier for parents and learners to disclosures. An increase in school exclusions post COVID since September 2021 suggests an increase in incidence of inappropriate behaviours but there are groups of children who are more at risk of being perpetrators as much as victims of sexual harassment. Parents report that their children have been sent images outside of school to their phone or have been requested to send images of themselves. Others report sexual Harrassment by peers and although this predominantly female reporting it is not limited to female reporting. Some of our parents report that female peers have been the perpatrators have been female also.



## **2. Effaith | Impact**

There is a grey area where bullying can be sexual in nature and this tips into sexual harassment but is often not recognized by schools. One parent reports that a key member of staff told a female pupil that the boy touched her because the 'Male pupil fancied the girl pupil and that it was a hidden compliment.' The parent escalated this to the headteacher. Another parent reported that boys touching another girl was considered 'banter' by another key staff member. The impact on learners is that their confidence in safety at the school is undermined and equally endorses this behaviour to continue. The impact on staff is that without appropriate training on safeguarding of pupils and in educating the perpetrators on healthy relationships more of their time will be taken up in dealing with these issues whilst well-being of learners is impacted. In order for our school environments to meet the recommendations in the NEST framework and whole school approach, prevention and early intervention is required. Many learners with additional learning needs will be at higher risk of exploitation both as victims and perpetrators for a need to please and be accepted by peers. Inclusive practices by schools using relational approaches will be an important component in opening up the dialogue to protect vulnerable learners. We also need educators to be able to teach healthy relationships in an inclusive environment where the needs of all learners are met in receiving this information. We really need to ensure that for vulnerable learners education is accessible in small groups to meet learning needs

## **3. Effeithiolrwydd ymyriadau | Effectiveness of interventions**

We do not believe that current policies in schools are inadequate to prevent sexual harassment. Based on a medical model these incidents are acted upon after the event and parents report in some cases acted upon unsatisfactorily - but we need a social model educating whole school communities to protect LGBTQ+ and Additional learning needs pupils as well as female learners. We need Welsh Government to map third sector trainers such as Mermaids for trans learners, Umbrella for LGBTQ+ and Brook Cymru to embed education and embed Child Rights in school policies. Article 19 of UNCRC could help schools understand that their environments can tackle discrimination, misogyny and sexual harassment to ensure all learners feel safe in a nurturing empowering safe and trusted environment. This can be achieved by making The Right Way mandatory in schools to use the pupil voice in directing schools and colleges to meet learners needs.

Tackling sexual harassment has to be across system through serviced and education in preventative measures needs to involve all agencies. Police and social services as well as parents, health and education are equal in their responsibility to protect



children and young people. Police and schools telling children to avoid social media is ineffective and not preventative. We need to tackle the cause!

We thank Welsh Government for broaching this problem but we also need private sector eg broadband and social media giants to change practices so families can protect their children. Families need education too

#### **4. Y cyd-destun ehangach | Wider context**

Whole school community education on LGBTQ+, misogyny, discrimination, Additional needs. Well-being and inclusion with parents and carers as part of this as much as the school and learners would help Collaborative prevention measures. Families do not know what their children are doing online all of the time and may not have the skills to educate them on safety. Although the new curriculum for Wales RSE will be an important part of this prevention, we need earlier action because children and young people's safety will be compromised during the time duration of the roll out of the CfW across the school years. The impact on mental health and trauma from

Experiences can be life long.

A national campaign would be helpful in the meantime (eg akin to the anti smoking campaign) would raise its profile to communities. It could also signpost the public to resources of Wales based organizations or WG resources. Families need access to appropriate information to educate and protect their children.

We also believe that UK Govt has a role in calling social media giants to secure apps used by small children and other school age learners to ensure that parents can barrier inappropriate info from arriving to screens or having filters on broadbands for families to reduce the risk of images and sexual language.

#### **5. Arall | Other**

We believe that mandatory training in initial teacher training, qualified teachers and staff, health professionals, social care, childrens services, police and other services should include neurodiversity awareness to understand behaviour, vulnerability, learning styles, and differences that make Neurodivergent children and young people at risk of being perpetrators as much as victim of sexual harassment. This would help prevent school exclusion, school to prison pipeline, youth offending. We also believe that building relational practices in schools would open the likelihood of disclosures and allow the true levels of this concern to be reported. We would like a



national campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of misogyny, discrimination and healthy relationships as this is a societal issue.

