



Home Office

Tackling Child Sexual Abuse

Progress Update

April 2025



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Introduction

1. The scale of child sexual abuse is truly staggering. Children make up only 20% of the population but are the victims in 40% of all sexual offences. 7.5% of all adults in England and Wales are estimated to have been sexually abused before the age of 16, according to the Office for National Statistics' Crime Survey for England and Wales. That equates to 3.1 million adult victims and survivors of child sexual abuse.
2. The National Crime Agency's National Strategic Assessment of the Child Sexual Abuse Threat in 2025 makes clear that the risk to children from sexual abuse continues to increase, aggravated by evolving online environments and technology adoption. It estimates there are up to 840,000 offenders who pose some degree of sexual risk to children, and there are 400,000 searches for online child sexual abuse material every month in the UK alone.
3. Over seven years of investigation, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) shone a light on the pain and suffering caused to victims and survivors of child sexual abuse and the failure of institutions to prioritise the protection of children in their care over personal and institutional reputations. In doing so, it drew on the testimony of over 7000 victims and survivors and considered over 2 million pages of evidence across 15 investigations.
4. IICSA's findings, culminating in the recommendations in Professor Alexis Jay's final report of October 2022, were a package of measures designed to give greater priority and focus, across Government, institutions and society, to protecting children from sexual abuse and to tackling the systemic weaknesses in organisations and practices which have left children vulnerable, exposed them to harm or denied them access to justice and support. Sadly, since IICSA reported, far too little progress has been made to put IICSA's findings and recommendations into action.
5. This Government is committed to put that right and will do everything in its power to prevent the horrors of child sexual abuse, providing the national and local leadership required to tackle offending, protect children from harm, and support victims and survivors, including setting out in this update our next steps towards acting on IICSA's recommendations.
6. At the same time, the Government recognises that child sexual abuse is not a 'historic' issue, and across the country children continue to be subject to horrific sexual exploitation and abuse which has a devastating impact on their lives. The Centre for Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse estimates that 500,000 children are sexually abused every year – in the family home, in institutions, in our communities and online. IICSA, for good reason, focused on how institutions have failed to protect children from sexual abuse, but our response must go further, addressing all of the spaces in which child sexual abuse is perpetrated.

7. Child sexual abuse is an evolving threat with ever-more sophisticated modes of offending creating new risks. That threat includes the exploitation of new technology, including AI, by offenders in the online world; and the growing identification and reporting of peer-on-peer abuse. At the same time, we must also acknowledge and address the harsh reality that the majority of child sexual abuse continues to be perpetrated within the family environment.

Action the Government has taken to tackle Child Sexual Abuse

8. Over the last ten years we have seen the publication of multiple local and national statutory and independent inquiry, investigation and inspectorate reports. It is critical that we continue to learn from where things have gone wrong, and it is vital that victims and survivors are heard. The Government will continue to support this vital work to uncover child sexual abuse and learn from past mistakes, and we have set out our commitment to support local inquiries into child sexual abuse and exploitation where they are required.
9. However, through engagement with victims and survivors, the former chair of IICSA Professor Alexis Jay, and child protection experts, Ministers across Government have heard clearly that what victims and survivors want above all is action to address the failings and respond to the body of evidence and clear recommendations made in successive reports.
10. Whilst this update sets out our next steps, this Government has already taken action through a number of ambitious and practical measures to step up the system-wide response to child sexual abuse.
11. These measures include responding directly to several of **IICSA's recommendations**:
 - Introducing, in the Crime and Policing Bill, a **new mandatory reporting duty** for individuals undertaking key roles with responsibility for children in England to report sexual abuse and creating a **new criminal offence of obstructing an individual from making a report** under the duty.
 - Legislating to **make grooming a statutory aggravating factor** in the sentencing of child sexual offences. This will include (but is not limited to) offences committed by individuals involved in grooming gangs.
 - **Removing the supervision exemption** from the definition of regulated activity so relevant roles are eligible for the highest level of check issued by the Disclosure and Barring Service, regardless of whether they are supervised or not.
 - **Removing the three-year limit** for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse to bring personal injury claims against those responsible through the civil courts.

- **Amending the Law of Apologies** to encourage organisations to apologise for action by current or former employees, including in cases of child sexual abuse.

12. The Home Secretary also announced earlier this year a range of measures to address the blight on communities of **group-based Child Sexual Exploitation** or **grooming gangs**:

- Strengthening the **CSE Taskforce and Child Sexual Abuse Review Panel** to drive stronger investigations.
- **Commissioning HMICFRS to reinspect forces** to ensure the police response to group-based child sexual exploitation is as robust as it can be.
- Appointing **Baroness Casey to oversee a rapid audit** to improve our understanding of the scale, nature and drivers of group-based child sexual exploitation at a national and local level, and provide a more robust and comprehensive assessment of the data around the ethnicity of victims and perpetrators, in relation both to Pakistani-heritage and other grooming gangs.
- Setting up a **£5m fund to support local independent inquiries and related local work to tackle grooming gangs** supported by a good practice framework drawing on learning from local inquiries like Telford.
- **Updating the guidance on child sexual exploitation**, to ensure advice for those working with children remains relevant and informed by the latest available evidence.

13. In addition, we are also taking forward several other measures through the **Crime and Policing Bill** to address the evolving threat posed by child sexual abuse and exploitation:

- Introducing a new offence that criminalises **AI models that have been optimised to create child sexual abuse material (CSAM)**. These optimised models produce hyper-realistic CSAM that often contains the likeness of real children. The models are not currently illegal in the UK.
- Updating the existing law **criminalising ‘paedophile manuals’** to cover Artificially Generated (AI) CSAM, reflecting the evolving nature of online child sexual abuse.
- Bringing in a new law to ensure there are no safe spaces for offenders to network and facilitate abuse. **We will criminalise those who provide, maintain or moderate online services which are being used to share child sexual abuse imagery** or commit other child sexual abuse offences.
- Modernising the legal basis under which Border Force detects **digitally held CSAM at the UK Border** to ensure it is fit for the challenges of the digital age.

- Introducing new measures so that **registered sex offenders** who pose a risk of using a new identity to offend will be restricted from changing their names, unless explicitly approved by the police. The **Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme** will also be put on a statutory footing.
14. Beyond the Crime and Policing Bill, we are also taking the following steps **to improve the system-wide response to child sexual abuse**:
- Introducing a new **child sexual abuse police performance framework** to ensure all forces work to a common framework to improve the law enforcement response.
 - Making additional **investment in the Police Undercover Online Network** to target livestreaming and offenders operating in encrypted environments.
 - Introducing new capabilities introduced into the **Tackling Organised Exploitation Programme** and **Child Abuse Image Database** using cutting-edge technology to identify offenders and victims.
 - Introducing legislation enabling **the restriction of the exercise of parental responsibility of child sex offenders**.
 - **And to lead the way internationally**, working collaboratively with Five Country, G7, EU, UN and Council of Europe partners to promote and share best practice and build the global capacity to respond and keep children safe in our communities and online across the world. This includes hosting Five Country Ministerial discussions in London later in the year, where tackling child sexual abuse continues to be at the heart of our engagement.
15. The Government is focused on supporting frontline professionals to build their confidence and skills in identifying and responding to child sexual abuse so that children receive the protection and support they need. The work of the independent **Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse (the CSA Centre)** has been instrumental in developing and testing evidence-based training and resources to address gaps in knowledge and practice, which we will continue to embed across the children's workforce. **We are pleased to commit further funding to the CSA Centre to continue this valuable work**, including specific funding to develop and embed the **Child Sexual Abuse Response Pathway** into multi-agency partnerships, and to improve the support available to victims, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, through evidence-based guidance and training.
16. The Government will continue to learn from and respond to audits and reviews, alongside IICSA, to ensure our approach to tackling child sexual abuse and exploitation continues to evolve and is informed by the latest learning and expertise. This includes the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's '**National Review into Child Sexual Abuse Within the Family Environment**' which explores the specific challenges which feature in the identification, assessment, and response to child

sexual abuse within the family environment. The Government recognises the need to improve how safeguarding agencies protect and support children at risk of sexual abuse within the family home. We have, therefore, set out our response to the report below and commit to implementing the seven recommendations for central government. In doing so, we will:

- Implement **new standards for child and family social work practice**, placing greater emphasis on child protection, through delivering a **national rollout of a new social work induction programme** for all those entering the profession.
- Develop **new standards and training for advanced child protection social work** to build expertise and help embed lead child protection practitioner roles.
- Develop **specialist child sexual abuse and exploitation training for social workers** and other key members of the children's services workforce, including family help workers.
- Commission two **Practice Guides for leaders and practitioners** on how to prevent child sexual abuse and exploitation and how to support victims.
- Legislate for **multi-agency child protection teams (MACPTs)** to strengthen multi-agency working and decision making.
- Make any necessary amendments to **Working Together 2023** at its next update, which includes clear guidance on multi-agency child protection expectations and standards, as well as on s47 enquiries and other child protection processes.
- Deliver the **national roll out of family help and child protection reforms** from April 2025, supported by guidance which includes expectations around multi-agency leadership, practice and information, including in the child protection system.
- Improve multi-agency information sharing, including through introducing provision for a **single unique identifier for children and information sharing duty** that provides a clear legal basis to share information for the purposes of safeguarding.
- Work with NHS England and public health commissioners to **audit pathways and services for child sexual abuse victims** within relevant health settings.
- The scope and pace of this work will depend on future funding decisions.

Tackling Child Sexual Abuse and the Government's Plan for Change

17. The Government's efforts to tackle child sexual abuse and exploitation are firmly linked to its **Plan for Change** and will be supported through the national missions on

safer streets, breaking down the barriers to opportunity, and building an NHS fit for the future.

18. Through the **safer streets mission** this Government is working to reduce serious harm and increase public confidence in policing and in the criminal justice system. Our work to tackle child sexual abuse is firmly linked to the Government's ambitious **commitment to halve VAWG in a decade** - while recognising that tackling child sexual abuse requires its own specific child-centred response.
19. We have already announced funding for a **new National Centre for VAWG and Public Protection**. This new intelligence-led policing centre will put the experiences of victims of child sexual abuse, rape and sexual offences, domestic abuse and stalking at the heart of police investigations, delivering new quality training for police officers, professionalising public protection work and driving up investigative and operational standards across all police forces in tackling these crimes.
20. To protect children from all types of harm, the Government also recognises the need for a **holistic Children's Social Care system** which can prevent harm, identify and respond effectively where it occurs, and support children to recover. We are committed to acting on the learning from a series of major reviews in recent years which have concluded that the children's social care system needs significant reform.
21. As such, the Government is leading a significant programme of evidence-based reforms that will improve the protection of children by increasing the emphasis on early intervention, supporting families and improving the system response to harms. This includes the **Families First partnership programme**, an end-to-end reform of children's social care that will provide holistic support from early help and prevention through to support for children where harm has occurred. This programme has **over £500m in funding going out to local areas from April 2025**, aiming to rebalance services towards family help, providing children and families with the right support, at the right time, and more effective oversight of child protection cases.
22. Through the **Opportunities mission**, and the measures being taken through the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, this Government will make the biggest reforms to children's social care in a generation. Amongst a broad range of measures the Bill aims to improve child protection by:
 - Introducing provision for a **single unique identifier for children and a clear legal basis to share information** for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
 - Requiring safeguarding partners to establish **multi-agency child protection teams**.
 - Placing **new duties on safeguarding partners to ensure education is sufficiently involved** in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements

- Placing a **duty on parents to get local authority consent to home educate their child** if they are subject to a child protection plan or section 47 enquiries.

23. The Bill also includes measures which will **strengthen Ofsted’s ability to hold provider group owners of residential care to account for the quality of care and support they provide to vulnerable young people**. The introduction of a **Provider Oversight Regime** will supplement the existing setting-by-setting inspection regime already in place with **new powers for Ofsted to take swift action when requirements are not being met** in groups of children’s homes. Ofsted will be able to issue the provider group with an improvement notice to ensure action is taken quickly. When that is not forthcoming Ofsted will be able to take enforcement action.
24. This Government is also taking direct action to tackle the growing use of unregistered children’s homes in order to ensure there is effective oversight of or accountability for care being provided to some of the country’s most vulnerable children. The Bill therefore includes **measures to strengthen Ofsted’s enforcement powers so they can fine unregistered providers**. This will allow them to act at greater pace and scale and act as a significant deterrent against those seeking to run unregistered provision. Only when provision is registered can Ofsted be assured of children’s safety.
25. A key part of the Government’s aim to build an **NHS fit for the future** is improving support for children and young people. Our Manifesto committed to a bold new ambition to raise the healthiest generation of children in our history. As part of the **10 Year Health Plan**, we are ensuring the voices of children and young people are heard and inform the development of the plan to make the NHS fit for the future.
26. Victims and survivors of child sexual abuse will benefit from the wider improvements that are part of the Government’s health mission, in the following ways:
- The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) is providing local authorities a further **£310 million (additional to the Public Health Grant) in 2025/26 to improve the quality and capacity of treatment and recovery for adults and children affected by alcohol and/or drugs**. Children and young people with alcohol and drug problems often present with multiple complex support needs. This includes current or historic trauma resulting from child sexual abuse and exploitation, and other child safeguarding issues.
 - DHSC will work with stakeholders including NHS Safeguarding leads and Royal Colleges on ways to **improve the knowledge, skills and confidence of all health care practitioners** to ensure that they are able to identify and respond to Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation.
 - NHS mental health services also provide important support for victims and survivors. The Government is **committed to improving mental health support for children** and we have set out what we are doing more widely and for victims

of child sexual abuse in response to IICSA's recommendation on therapeutic support.

27. This activity is essential to achieve our ambition of raising the healthiest generation of children ever. This Government will work with NHS providers, local authorities and the voluntary sector to focus on both keeping children safe and supporting victims and survivors of child sexual abuse.

Government action in response to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA)

28. This section sets out the action this Government is taking in response to IICSA's final report. This includes the introduction of mandatory reporting, the creation of a new Child Protection Authority for England, and the removal of the three-year statute of limitation period for personal injury claims brought by victims of child sexual abuse.

Improving Understanding of the Scale and Nature of Child Sexual Abuse

- Recommendation 1: A single set of core data relating to child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation.

29. IICSA highlighted the limitations of current methods of data collection and inconsistencies in approaches across key organisations impeding the ability to properly understand the true scale and nature of child sexual abuse. It called for agencies to produce consistent and compatible data about child sexual abuse. The Government will take the following steps in response:

- **By December 2025**, the latest data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) module on adults' experiences of sexual abuse as a child, will be published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), providing an updated estimate on how many adults had experienced CSA before the age of 18.
- We will support delivering the ONS' new "Safety During Childhood Survey" to measure the prevalence of child abuse, which includes child sexual abuse. Subject to agreement on funding, this will involve the ONS:
 - Piloting the survey in **Autumn 2025/Spring 2026**
 - Producing an estimate of abuse experienced during childhood by those aged 18-25 by **late 2026**
 - Producing a prevalence estimate of child abuse (including child sexual abuse) to be published in **mid/late 2027**.
- We will continue funding the **CSA Centre** which, through its **Trends in Official Data report**, brings together and provides up to date analysis of the latest official data from children's social care, policing, criminal justice and health to help inform improvements in prevention and response to child sexual abuse. We will also

continue to fund the CSA Centre to provide updates to the **Data Insights Hub**, which brings together local and national data on the prevalence, identification and response to child sexual abuse. This is to support the assessment of need and improve the availability of appropriate support.

30. The Government will also take forward a wider programme of work to support better multi-agency data-sharing:

- We will improve cross-agency use of data through measures in the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill to introduce provision for a **single child identifier** and ensure the **legal framework** leaves no doubt on agencies’ ability to share information to safeguard children.
- **By May 2025**, the Government will introduce an **improved police performance framework**, including new standards on public protection, child sexual abuse and exploitation.
- **By June 2025**, the Government will also set out a timetable to act on **Baroness Casey’s audit of group-based child sexual exploitation**, including any improvements to the collection and quality of data.
- The Government will work with stakeholders across the Criminal Justice System to agree **clear targets on child sexual abuse to drive up charges and prosecutions**.

Prioritising the Protection of Children

- Recommendation 2: Establish Child Protection Authorities for England and Wales.
- Recommendation 3: Appoint a Cabinet Minister for Children
- Recommendation 4: Public awareness raising

31. IICSA made several recommendations to improve the focus on and consistency of child protection approaches across national government and relevant agencies. This included the establishment of a Child Protection Authority to provide stronger national oversight of child protection and more robust inspection arrangements, the creation of a Cabinet level minister for children to provide a sharper focus across Government on issues affecting children, and a programme of public awareness raising to encourage a national conversation about the scale, nature and responses to child sexual abuse.

32. **The Government will create a Child Protection Authority (CPA) in England.** This will help make the system clearer, more unified and ensure there is ongoing improvement through effective evidence-based support. Whilst a CPA will need a broader remit and stronger mechanisms for driving improvements, we believe the national **Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel** (‘the Panel’) provides a strong

foundation from which to build. The Panel operates independently of government and reports to the Secretary of State for Education as the lead Cabinet Minister for child protection and safeguarding. The Panel's mission is to provide leadership on learning from serious cases across the child protection and safeguarding system. Its multi-agency composition reflects the focus on joint responsibility across safeguarding partners enshrined in law.

33. IICSA was clear that the CPA needs to look at child protection in the round. Underpinning the work of the Panel is the vision that all children are protected from all forms of abuse, neglect, and harm through excellent safeguarding practice. Building out from the Panel's remit therefore aligns with IICSA's vision of a body that looks holistically at the child protection landscape.
34. The journey towards a CPA therefore begins by taking immediate steps to focus the work of the Panel on the key aspects IICSA envisaged for the CPA. **In 25/26 we will give the Panel the resources it needs to increase its analytical capacity and its capability to develop high-quality material for practitioners.**
35. In parallel, **we will consult this year on a roadmap to a CPA.** This consultation will set out the actions that can be taken relatively quickly (e.g. re-orientating and expanding the capacity of the Panel) and consult on those that are more fundamental and will take longer (e.g. which require legislation). Following this consultation, we will set out a clear programme and timetable of activity which will create the CPA.
36. We will work to deliver the improvements to inspection recommended by IICSA by working with **Ofsted, the Care and Quality Commission (CQC), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP)** rather than taking inspection into the CPA. This is because of the importance of areas having a relationship with the CPA that supports effective learning and ensures local areas are transparent about failings to enable the CPA to provide expert advice on how to improve and change. Giving the same body inspection powers could impede the effectiveness of this approach. Government takes very seriously the findings by IICSA and others that inspectorates have failed to identify abuse taking place in institutions. This will be a core part of the work we will do with inspectorates and as we consider the role of the CPA.
37. The IICSA recommendations and findings will be core to the development of the consultation. We will do this work with those who delivered those findings, and a wide variety of other stakeholders, including victims and survivors of abuse as well as experts including those in the Panel and in the relevant What Works Centres.
38. To support the functions of existing national child protection infrastructure and oversight, we will also:
 - Create a cross-government working group focused on **strengthening single and joint inspection of child protection** and improving post-inspection accountability to ensure areas action recommended improvements.

- Ensure the Opportunity Mission Keeping Children Safe ministerial board receives updates on **multi-agency inspection and accountability reports** to inform actions it takes to improve child protection.
 - Ask the relevant inspectorates (Ofsted, CQC, HMICFRS and HMIP) to carry out the next **thematic Joint Targeted Area Inspection on child sexual abuse in the family environment in Autumn 2025**.
 - Strengthen the existing statutory guidance '**Working Together to Safeguard Children**' on local and national accountability for Safeguarding Partners at its next update.
 - Launch a Call for Evidence on **safeguarding in out of school settings in 2025**.
 - **Work with Ofsted to strengthen its powers over unregistered settings** in which looked after children are placed and enable Ofsted to issue improvement notices to providers where requirements are not being met in two or more children's homes (or other settings) owned by the same provider group.
39. Furthermore, to ensure the best social work practice, improve standards and embed better responses to child sexual abuse the Government will:
- Implement **new standards for child and family social work practice**, placing greater emphasis on child protection, through delivering a **national roll out of a new social work induction programme** for all those entering the profession.
 - Develop new **standards and training for advanced child protection social work** to build expertise and help embed lead child protection practitioner roles
 - Develop **specialist child sexual abuse and exploitation training for social workers and other key members of the children's services workforce**, including family help workers.
 - Commission two **Practice Guides for leaders and practitioners** on how to prevent child sexual abuse and exploitation and how to support victims.
 - The pace and sequencing of this work will depend on future funding decisions.
40. The Government agrees with the importance of having a clear focus on children across Government, including at Cabinet level. The **Secretary of State for Education** is the Cabinet minister for children. A new **Keeping Children Safe ministerial board** will also drive and mainstream the strong collective cross-Government focus on children's wellbeing, safety and opportunity. This will bring together Ministers from the Government departments with a key role on issues affecting children.
41. The Board will lead the delivery of the Keeping Children Safe pillar of the Government's opportunity mission, breaking the link between young people's backgrounds and their success. It will track the implementation of reviews from the

Child Safeguarding Review Panel, including the report on child sexual abuse in the family environment. Additionally, the Board will monitor progress on the delivery of the CPA and take advice from the CPA, once introduced, on the Government's policy development in relation to child protection. It will also oversee the work to strengthen multi-agency child protection inspection and national accountability. This approach will strengthen our national grip on child protection and ensure close collaboration across Government to keep children safe.

42. To secure the voice of the child in all our endeavours, the Department for Education has also established a **Children and Young People's Advisory Board** made up of 11–25-year-olds with a wide range of care experience. This Board meets monthly and informs all aspects of Children's Social Care policy and delivery.
43. The Government is committed to continue **raising public awareness** about the scale and impacts of child sexual abuse and will take the following steps in response:
- We will step up **national communications activity** to raise awareness of child sexual abuse throughout the next year and beyond.
 - We will continue to provide funding to **The Children's Society** to deliver its **Prevention Programme**, including the "Look Closer" campaign that raises awareness about the exploitation of children and young people and the vital role that everyone can play in prevention.
 - We will provide support to disseminate and embed the resources developed by **Crimestoppers** for its **Fearless Programme** in schools on child sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour.
 - We will build greater awareness of child sexual abuse amongst those working with children through a comprehensive **implementation programme of the new mandatory reporting duty** and by raising awareness of child sexual abuse and the CSA Centre's response pathway.
 - We will continue to support the **Lucy Faithfull Foundation's (LFF) Stop It Now!** Online Deterrence campaign and its services to prevent offending. In addition, we will continue to invest in LFF's **Shore** resource, an online resource for under 18s with concerns about harmful sexual behaviour.

Empowering Children and Young People

- Recommendation 5: Prohibit the use of pain compliance techniques on children in custodial institutions.
- Recommendation 6: Amend the Children Act 1989 to give parity of legal protection to children in care.

44. IICSA made recommendations to further empower children and young people. In particular it noted that children in care and custody are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse. IICSA concluded that the use of force against children in custody contributes to the perception that an institution condones violence and could discourage reporting of abuse. IICSA also concluded that the legal position of children in care should be improved, so that they can be empowered to challenge aspects of local authority decision-making for themselves.
45. The Government recognises the particular vulnerability of children in custody but to protect all children in custody, and staff, where physical safety is at significant risk, it is important that trained staff are able to use these techniques, as a last resort in an emergency, to bring an incident to a safe conclusion. We will work with the **Youth Custody Service** to ensure that staff continue to be appropriately trained in their safe use and that independent oversight, through an **Independent Restraint Review Panel**, ensures scrutiny and transparency over all uses of these techniques.
46. The Government also recognises the vulnerability of children living in residential care and the unique responsibilities on those caring for them to ensure they are well looked after. While there are a range of systems in place to ensure a child's care plan is properly implemented, and to enable children in residential care to raise concerns by talking to trusted adults, the Government agrees that more should be done to ensure children's voices are heard in decision-making. Their rights in the Children Act 1989 must be respected, with children in care having clear and timely routes to raise concerns about any aspect of their care, including where they are experiencing or at risk of experiencing serious harm, and such concerns must be acted upon.
47. To enable this strengthening of protections for children looked after by local authorities, we will introduce new **National Standards for Advocacy for Children and Young People** and revised statutory guidance on **Providing Effective Advocacy for Children and Young People Making a Complaint under the Children Act 1989** in 2025. This does not need an amendment to the Children Act 1989, but this will include new standards on:
- The provision of specialist non-instructed advocacy for children with complex needs and learning disabilities (as recommended by the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's report on Safeguarding children with disabilities in residential settings).
 - Requirements for advocacy in the safeguarding of children – being clear on the role of advocates in the identification of concerns and the need to make direct referrals and to escalate where necessary.

Creating a More Protective Environment for Children

- Recommendation 7: Registration of care staff in Children's Homes.
- Recommendation 8: Registration of staff in young offender institutions and secure training centres.
- Recommendation 9: Extended use of the barred list of people unsuitable for work with children.
- Recommendation 10: Improved compliance with statutory duties to inform the Disclosure and Barring Service about individuals who may pose a risk of harm to children.
- Recommendation 11: Extending the disclosure regime to those working with children overseas.

48. IICSA made a series of recommendations to national government to ensure that institutions, organisations and settings which work with or come into contact with children take adequate steps to create a protective environment for vulnerable children. This included ensuring that those working with children in care and in custodial institutions are subject to robust vetting, adherence to clear safeguarding policies and practices, and that there is appropriate oversight to ensure the best interests of the child in care remain paramount. IICSA also reflected on the importance of developing safer recruitment processes for those working with children, either through paid or voluntary positions and made several recommendations for improvements to the disclosure and barring system.

49. The Government has already set out a clear reform plan to improve the support available to families to avoid problems escalating to the point where children need to be removed from their homes, or – where that is necessary for the safeguarding of vulnerable young people – to support them to remain with extended families or friends. While our aim is to reduce the number of children who need to be in care, action is also needed to improve the quality of residential care for those who do need it.

50. The Government recognises the vital role that staff working in children's homes play in caring for and protecting vulnerable children in their care. Ensuring that staff are trained, have the right skills and are supported to provide good quality care, and can be challenged where they are not doing so, is an important protective factor for these children. One mechanism for improving the quality and accountability of this workforce is through extending registration to cover all staff working in children's homes. The Department for Education has already commissioned **Social Work**

England to scope potential models of professional registration for staff in children's homes, which has included consultation with key stakeholders in the sector and learning from devolved administrations.

51. Based on the outputs from this work **the Government will improve qualifications, standards and access to training, and continue work to determine whether registration of care staff is the right approach**. Without a strong foundation of high-quality training and qualifications, a registration regime would not succeed in achieving its aims. This will include taking the following steps **by 2028/29**:

- Work with the sector to **agree the standards, skills and knowledge** that we expect staff working in children's homes to demonstrate.
- Review the **mandatory qualifications in residential childcare** to ensure staff have the skills they need to provide the best possible care to children and young people.
- Work with the sector to understand **barriers to ongoing training for staff** and where government can support skills development in the sector.
- **Assess the risks and benefits of introducing a registration model for care staff**, including a wider consultation with the sector and considering emerging evidence.
- The pace and sequencing of this work will depend on future funding decisions.

52. The Government will also **undertake a programme of work to improve safeguarding and build workforce capability in the youth justice estate, with immediate action**. This will involve reviewing how we recruit staff employed to work with a group of children with complex needs and the training and qualifications they are provided to ensure they are best able to meet the needs of the children. In particular, we are reviewing the youth justice worker qualification and the support and development for our custodial managers for staff that work closely with children on a day-to-day basis.

53. We also commit to an **ongoing programme of work to determine the most suitable registration framework for the youth custody estate**. This will involve consulting with key stakeholders and assessing current and future options and costs for implementing a registration framework. As part of this work we will explore the merits of external registration, and announce our decision by **March 2026**.

54. The Government will take the following steps in response to IICSA's recommendations on the **disclosure and barring system**:

- We have introduced primary legislation to **remove the supervision exemption in the Crime and Policing Bill**.

- **By the end of 2025** we will **create the ability for the self-employed to access higher-level Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks** by introducing secondary legislation.
- **During 2025 and 2026**, working with the DBS, we will drive forward **a continuous programme of work to improve compliance with the statutory duty to inform the DBS** about individuals who may pose a risk of harm to children.
- Working with Ofsted, **we will continue to ensure that schools fully understand their duty to refer**, and that compliance continues to be part of Ofsted's assessment of safeguarding procedures during inspections and reflected in their frameworks.
- **By 2026**, working with ACRO Criminal Record Office and DBS, **we will enable those making decisions overseas to have access to DBS barred list data**.

Identifying and Reporting Child Sexual Abuse

- Recommendation 12: Mandatory online pre-screening for sexual images of children.
- Recommendation 13: Introduction of a statutory requirement of mandatory reporting for child sexual abuse.

55. IICSA made recommendations to national government to improve how child sexual abuse is identified and responded to by institutions. This included going further to mandate and require internet companies and service providers to pre-screen for known child sexual abuse images before material is uploaded, thereby reducing the risk of recurring trauma to victims and survivors. IICSA also considered evidence related to individuals who received disclosures or were aware of child sexual abuse yet failed to report this to statutory authorities, often due to a desire to protect an individual or institution from reputational damage. It concluded that a systemic change is needed and recommended mandatory reporting so that those who work with children in a relevant activity are under a legal duty to report child sexual abuse to the police or social services.

56. The Government will take the following steps in relation to online pre-screening for child sexual abuse material:

- The Online Safety Act gives Ofcom the power to require the use of accredited technologies or best endeavours to deal with child sexual abuse content in private channels where necessary and proportionate. This is in addition to the measures in Ofcom's illegal harms codes of practice that tackle child sexual abuse and grooming more widely. **The Government is committed to an ongoing assessment of whether additional measures are needed to ensure that children are not exposed to content in private channels, which could include pre-screening or**

other device level interventions, including to tackle the rise in self-generated indecent imagery which forms a large percentage of online child sexual abuse material.

- We will **monitor the implementation of the existing powers and remain alert to whether further measures are necessary for protecting children's safety**.
- From 17 March 2025, in-scope user-to-user and search services will need to comply with the illegal content safety duty in the Online Safety Act 2023. **Services must protect UK-based users from illegal content and activity that is facilitated or encountered via their services.**

57. The Government has already **introduced clauses through the Crime and Policing Bill (February 2025) to put a mandatory reporting duty into law**. We have moved quickly to deliver this crucial reform, described by Professor Alexis Jay as one of the most important recommendations she delivered to Government.

58. The duty will apply when disclosures are made by children and perpetrators of child sexual abuse, as well as incidents which are personally witnessed by a reporter. **Those who fail to report child sexual abuse which they are made aware of may be referred to the Disclosure and Barring Service, and face being barred from working with young people in the future.** They could also be referred to their professional regulator to consider their fitness to practice, where applicable. These bodies can prevent individuals from working with children – potentially losing their livelihood. This is a serious consequence, and an approach which will reserve the greatest impact for the right cohorts of people.

59. **The Bill introduces a criminal offence of interfering with a report being made under the duty**, which targets the behaviours underlying the concealment of abuse (particularly by senior or influential figures). The offence covers a wide range of inappropriate conduct which could be brought to bear to prevent a report from being made and will ensure that those responsible for cover-ups face an appropriate penalty for their actions.

60. While concerns or suspicions may not trigger the mandatory reporting duty for child sexual abuse, they should not be met by indifference or inaction by those in positions of responsibility for children. The new duty does not change or interfere with well-established processes for individuals who have concerns over potential signs and indicators of child sexual abuse. The Government already sets clear expectations through statutory and non-statutory guidance that those engaging with children should make an immediate referral to the relevant local authority children's social care or the police if they are concerned about a child. Everyone who is responsible for the safety and wellbeing of children should receive appropriate training on such referral processes. **The Government will work with regulators and professional standards-setting bodies to ensure the requirements of the new duty are clearly communicated ahead of implementation.**

61. The introduction of this duty is a significant moment. By creating a robust framework for mandatory reporting, we are empowering professionals and volunteers to take prompt, decisive action in what are often challenging circumstances. **It will create a culture of knowledge, confidence and openness among those most likely to be alerted to child sexual abuse and will help children and young people to trust that their voices will be heard when they speak out.**
62. We are determined for the duty to set high, consistent standards in identifying and responding to child sexual abuse. As well as improving transparency and accountability in safeguarding, and punishing those responsible for covering up abuse, the implementation of this duty will be one of the most effective tools at our disposal in **sustaining a national conversation on child sexual abuse**. It will make an important contribution to the long-term cultural change we want to see around all aspects of this hidden crime.
63. **The Crime and Policing Bill is currently before Parliament. We will deliver a full implementation programme during 2026**, ahead of commencement of the new duty (expected 12 months on from the Bill receiving Royal Assent and becoming law).

The Justice System Response to Child Sexual Abuse

- Recommendation 14: Compliance with the Victims' Code
- Recommendation 15: Removal of the three-year limitation period for personal injury claims brought by victims.

64. In hearing from over 7,000 victims and survivors, IICSA found that common themes were delays within the criminal justice system, and ensuring victims are able to give their best evidence and are supported throughout the process. While recognising wider challenges to the criminal justice system, IICSA commented that there were straightforward ways to improve the experience of victims and survivors in the criminal justice system, including ensuring awareness of and adherence to their rights under the Victims' Code. IICSA also concluded that the defence of limitation operates unfairly as a barrier to justice for victims and survivors at different stages of the civil claims process.
65. The Government has asked the Criminal Justice Joint Inspectorates (CJJI) to include **an inspection on the experiences of victims of child sexual abuse in the criminal justice system, including compliance with the Victims' Code, in their 2025-27 Business Plan** as a priority. This would build on their 2023 inspection which looked at Victims' Code compliance for victims of other crime types and focus on issues that affect CSA victims in particular. We are awaiting confirmation of the final programme, which we expect later this Spring.

66. The Government has also committed to **remove the three-year time limit for victims to bring civil child sexual abuse claims** with the burden of proof falling on defendants (rather than victims, as at present) to show that a fair trial is not possible. This will protect victims from having to relive their trauma any more than is necessary.
67. Furthermore, **we will amend the Law of Apologies through changes to the Compensation Act 2006 to encourage employers to apologise to people wronged by their employees**, where currently they fear doing so because of institutional liability, meaning that victims are more likely to receive apologies from, for example, schools, care facilities or hospitals for abuse carried out by an individual at these institutions.

Supporting Victims and Survivors

- Recommendation 16: A national guarantee of specialist therapeutic support for child victims of sexual abuse.
- Recommendation 17: A code of practice for retention of records pertaining to child sexual abuse
- Recommendation 18: Changes to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme
- Recommendation 19: A national redress scheme for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse in England and Wales.

68. IICSA made a series of recommendations to national government for how to improve support to victims and survivors of child sexual abuse. It drew out concerns regarding the availability and suitability of the current therapeutic support landscape across England and Wales and called for a national guarantee that child victims and survivors of sexual abuse will be offered specialist therapeutic support. IICSA also found that the approach taken by institutions to retaining records about victims and survivors care is inconsistent and acts as a barrier to victims pursuing criminal and civil claims or wishing to better understand their past.
69. IICSA also noted the significance of financial redress, recognising that no amount of money can fully compensate victims and survivors, but can provide some degree of reparation and access to support. It made several recommendations to improve access to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme. IICSA also reflected on the failure by institutions to meet the needs of victims and survivors seeking redress, often due to reputational and financial concerns, and recommended a national redress scheme.
70. Current support for children who have been sexually abused does not meet demand or help children cope and recover from trauma, and this needs to change. The Government is committed to improve the provision of therapeutic support which

means providing the wraparound support children need to thrive, and not just access to NHS mental health services. It is vital that those supporting victims have sufficient training and guidance on child sexual abuse to deliver effective support. To support this, the Government has **committed funding to the CSA Centre in 2025/26 to develop and deliver evidence-based training and resources for those working with victims and survivors of child sexual abuse, including providers of therapeutic services and those providing support to victims from minority ethnic backgrounds**. Furthermore, we have provided funding, via the **Families First for Children pathfinder programme**, which has enabled the CSA Centre to work with Warwickshire Council, to embed resources and training across social care, police and health partners. We will use the learning from this to support wider roll out, subject to future funding.

71. The NHS planning guidance for 2025/26 also sets out expansions to mental health support teams consistent with the aim of reaching 100% coverage by 2029/30. NHS children and young people's mental health services (CYPMHS) play a crucial role in supporting survivors and the NHS planning guidance for 2025/26 prioritises increasing access and reducing local inequalities in access to children and young people's mental health services.
72. We know that more must be done. That is why the Government will work on **ambitious proposals for improving the therapeutic support offer, with further details to be set out following the upcoming Spending Review**. These options will be developed with victims, experts and local areas to make sure they deliver the step-change needed. However, we know that meaningful change will require a shift in how support is delivered to vulnerable groups across the health, social care, justice and VCSE sectors. This means better integrated support, training and partnerships that are focused on the needs of victims, such as the Child House model in North London which brings together child protection, criminal justice, physical and mental health support under one roof.
73. The Government also recognises the specific challenges in relation to the provision of and access to support for adult survivors of child sexual abuse. Responding to previous research around the needs of adult survivors and the ongoing challenges in accessing timely support, the Government will provide additional support to the CSA Centre to work with service providers and victims and survivors to develop a **framework to support local leaders and commissioners to develop more holistic and joined-up provision for adult survivors across England and Wales**. In addition, **the Home Office will double the funding it provides for national services supporting adult survivors of child sexual abuse in 2025/26**.
74. The Government has carefully considered the recommendations on the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme **and the information and views provided by victims and survivors to the previous Government's consultations in 2022 and 2023**. The core principle of the compensation scheme is that it is universal for all crimes and that victims should be able to access the scheme based on the injuries

sustained rather than according to the nature of the crime committed against them. That makes it difficult to amend the scheme along the lines of the IICSA recommendation.

75. However we recognise the specific challenges faced by victims and survivors of child sexual abuse in applying to the Scheme. Given that it can often take many years for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse to be ready to report their experiences, we understand that this will affect their ability to comply with some of the Scheme's requirements.
76. The Scheme already allows discretion to extend the time limits for applying in exceptional circumstances and evidence suggests that discretion is being used effectively. The Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA) has worked to improve its service for compensation applicants. CICA provides its staff with specific training on the impact of psychological and emotional trauma in sexual abuse cases, and guidance on applying the exceptional circumstances discretion to sexual abuse cases – particularly child sexual abuse. CICA also works to raise awareness of the Scheme among victims and those that support them.
77. We will consider suggestions on how we can further publicise and improve awareness of the Scheme to make sure potentially eligible victims hear about it promptly, and to ensure that there is proper awareness of the arrangements for exceptional circumstances if appropriate in cases of child sexual abuse. In addition, campaigns to raise awareness of the Victims' Code and our planned consultation on the Code will help make sure victims are made aware of their right to be provided with information about compensation and signposted to the Scheme and other methods of redress.
78. The Government recognises the importance of victims and survivors being able to seek redress from institutions for sexual abuse suffered during childhood and that redress can take several forms. This includes financial compensation, support to cope with the long-term impacts of sexual abuse, meaningful apologies and assurances from institutions, and government, that the lessons have been learned and that children will be better protected in future. In some cases where there have been serious institutional failings which contributed to abuse, those institutions have provided financial redress schemes or compensation to victims and survivors who are affected. We continue to support such schemes as recognition by those institutions that they badly failed children in their care.
79. The Government is not currently taking forward any further steps on the IICSA proposal for a separate, national financial redress scheme for all victims and survivors of child sexual abuse with a connection to state or non state institutions. We have considered the huge challenges in establishing the scope of such a redress scheme given the varied and widespread nature of child sexual abuse in different settings. We also recognise that in the current fiscal environment, this recommendation is very difficult to take forward, and we believe that the first priority for investment should be

to provide greater support and care - including therapeutic support - for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse.

80. However survivors must continue to be able to seek redress from individual institutions where there has been fault. In recognition of the specific challenges that victims and survivors face in accessing justice through the civil courts, we are committed to removing the three-year limitation period for personal injury claims brought by victims and survivors. In recognition of the importance of genuine and meaningful apologies to victims and survivors, we will also amend the Compensation Act to better facilitate the offering of apologies by organisations.

81. To respond to IICSA's recommendation on records retention the Government will lay regulations in **Autumn 2025** instructing the Information Commissioner's Office to produce a **code of practice on the retention of personal data relating to CSA**. The Code cannot mandate organisations to keep such records for 75 years but will include best practice guidance. The Government remains open to legislating if the Code does not have the desired effect.

Evolving Challenges

- Recommendation 20: More robust age-verification requirements for the use of online platforms and services.

82. IICSA reflected on the challenges that continue to be posed by emerging technologies and the ever-expanding online access for children, including through gaming and social media platforms. Particular concerns were raised about the ease with which children under 13 are able to access social media platforms and services, without robust age assurance and verification measures in place.

83. The Government will take the following steps in response:

- The Government has recently completed a study **exploring the feasibility of opening up datasets for the training and testing of age assurance tools** to improve their ability to determine the age of children at younger ages. Relevant findings from the study will be published shortly.
- We will continue to monitor whether the **Online Safety Act** is appropriately tackling the issue of children accessing social media below the minimum ages set in firms' terms of service. If this is found not to be the case, we will consider what further intervention is needed to strengthen the enforcement of minimum age limits.

Next Steps

84. This update has set out some of the immediate and longer-term steps that the Government will take to act on IICSA recommendations and to tackle child sexual abuse and exploitation more broadly. But it does not represent the final word, or the totality of the important work being driven forward across Government to prevent and respond to these crimes.
85. The Government recognises that making real progress on preventing and responding to child sexual abuse requires a truly cross-Government focus with concerted effort from departments across Government, including but not limited to the Home Office, Department for Education, Department for Health and Social Care, Ministry of Justice, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, Department for Culture Media and Sport and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.
86. To ensure a continued cross-Government focus on this issue, the Minister for Safeguarding has established a **dedicated Interministerial Group on child sexual abuse**. This group, including representation from all departments with a role in tackling child sexual abuse, will monitor Government action to implement the IICSA recommendations as well as broader cross-government work to address all elements of child sexual abuse. There will also be Cabinet level oversight by the Secretary of State for Education and the Home Secretary through our Keeping Children Safe and Safer Streets Missions.
87. Victim and survivor engagement will be at the heart of our approach. The Home Secretary has also announced the establishment of a **victim and survivor panel** to support and inform the work of the Government in tackling child sexual abuse. The Government is undertaking scoping work to draw on lived experience best practice. We will be engaging with key representatives from across the child sexual abuse sector to help shape and inform the approach to victim and survivor engagement, with a view to meaningfully integrate victim and survivor experience across cross-Government work on tackling child sexual abuse.

