

## **Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) Wales response to Welsh Government safeguarding in Wales stakeholder engagement survey**

*June 2025*

RCPCH Wales welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Welsh Government's [safeguarding in Wales stakeholder engagement survey](#). While the survey offers an opportunity to engage, the [RCPCH position on mandatory reporting of child abuse \(2025\)](#), explores the topic in great detail and cannot be simplified into a response suitable for a survey. The RCPCH position on mandatory report is supported by the Royal College of General Practitioners.

### **At a glance: RCPCH's position on Mandatory Report of Child Abuse, 2025.**

A mandatory reporting duty is a duty or obligation, placed on an individual or organisation, to report child abuse to the relevant authority ("mandatory reporting").

The goal of any child protection policy is to ensure that children are protected from harm. An evidence review by the RCPCH has shown that mandatory reporting increases the instances of reported abuse, however there is limited evidence to show that an increase in reports leads to an increase in protection or better outcomes for children.

Outcomes for children depend, at least in part, on the capacity of the system into which reports are made. It is essential that there is assurance that reported abuse will be investigated and acted upon, and that potential unintended consequences of mandatory reporting do not occur. There is little information about any unintended consequences that arise from changes in thresholds to referral, secondary to the induction of mandatory reporting. These could include potential harm from families not feeling comfortable to seek help and the impact non-substantiated referrals can have on the children and their family.

The RCPCH is asking the Welsh Government to consider five key points before considering whether a mandatory reporting duty is best for children in Wales. Further detail of each of the below can be found in the attached document.

1. All types of child abuse must fall under any mandatory reporting duty;
2. A children's rights-based approach must be followed and a children's rights impact assessment must be carried out;
3. A Government system impact assessment must be carried out;
4. Measurable outcomes for children must be built into any plans; and
5. Clearer definition must be provided.

RCPCH cannot recommend a blanket introduction of mandatory reporting until these recommendations are addressed, however strengthening measures can be applied to existing mechanisms, such as better use of the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) system, increased registration (by regulators) of professionals, standardisation and strengthening of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) processes; and an alignment of standards across the UK regulators in relation to mandatory reporting.

### **Mandatory reporting: The RCPCH's five key asks**

RCPCH is asking the Government to consider the five following points when considering whether a mandatory reporting duty is best for children.

#### **1. All types of child abuse**

Any introduction of a mandatory reporting duty must apply to all forms of child abuse, not individual categories of abuse, so as not to create a 'hierarchy of abuse'.

#### **2. A children's rights-based approach**

RCPCH recommends the Government carry out an assessment of the introduction of mandatory reporting of children.

#### **3. Impact assessment**

In light of evidence that social care systems cannot always respond to the rise in reports when mandatory reporting is introduced, RCPCH recommends the Government carries out a full impact assessment in order to better understand how social care systems will adequately respond to child abuse reports.

#### **4. Measurable outcomes for children**

Should the Government proceed with the introduction of mandatory reporting legislation, RCPCH recommends that clear, defined outcomes for children are identified and built into any proposal and that the result of an introduction of mandatory reporting is monitored to ensure that it is resulting in better outcomes for children, rather than simply an increase in reports.

#### **5. Clearer definition**

The government must establish and clearly define the practical mechanisms which would exist as a part of a mandatory reporting duty including:

- Threshold for reporting
- Reporting systems
- Reporting processing
- Abuse types
- Thresholds for culpability

## About us

The **Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health** works to transform child health through knowledge, innovation and expertise. We have over 600 members in Wales, 14,000 across the UK and an additional 17,000 worldwide. The RCPCH is responsible for training and examining paediatricians. We also advocate on behalf of members, represent their views and draw upon their expertise to inform policy development and the maintenance of professional standards.

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