

Briefing paper

Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse Recommendations (Wales).

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Summary

There are more than 4,700 places of worship in Walesⁱ. Many provide a range of community-based support initiatives. This provides a significant opportunity, alongside their responsibility to effectively contribute to safeguard children, to collaborate and work together.

This briefing paper draws together key areas from the work of Thirtyone:eight's manifesto to contribute to debates and discussions around the implementation of recommendations from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) for Wales.

Thirtyone:eight have highlighted the importance of an introduction of a Child Protection Authority that gives key focus and consideration to safeguarding for unregistered settings such as faith-based organisations, a minister at Cabinet level with overall oversight and focus on children and a strong mandatory reporting duty which incorporates faith communities.

Thirtyone:eight also emphasises that co-production and partnership working with Victims and Survivors of child sexual abuse, and public awareness for faith communities needs to be central to the Senedd's considerations when implementing the IICSA recommendations.

Key considerations for the implementation of IICSA recommendations:

- **Recommendation 2:**
Child Protection Authority
- **Recommendation 3:**
Cabinet minister for Children
- **Recommendation 4:**
Public Awareness
- **Recommendation 13:**
Mandatory Reporting

Recommendation 2: Child Protection Authority

It is key that there is representation on the National Independent Safeguarding Board (NISB) from faith-based communities and that consideration is given to safeguarding and child protection in faith-based contexts.

Currently the focus on safeguarding practice focuses on regulated and registered settings which faith setting are not.

Recommendation 3:

Cabinet minister for Children

Although Wales have four Ministers (two at cabinet level) with portfolios across key areas for children including education, health and safeguarding, there is not a single Minister at cabinet level with an exclusive focus on children.

The IICSA recommendation clearly sets out that one Minister at cabinet level with overall oversight and coordination of areas relating to children is required.

► Co-production and partnership with Victims-Survivors

Victims and Survivors need to be at the heart of the implementation.

This should include representation from a cross-section of faith and belief. Awareness of the impact that the current secular system can have on Victims and Survivors from non-Christian faiths is key.

A faith informed system of thinking is required when engaging with Victims and Survivors across faith groups.

Recommendation 4:

Public Awareness

► Co-production and partnership with faith communities

Many faith communities will be the sole organisations interacting regularly with children and young people within the context of their families.

The legislation needs to have provisions for and understanding of these groups. There is an opportunity to safeguard children and young people well in these communities, but it starts by working together and including them in the conversation as partners.

There needs to be consideration for engaging with faith groups where there is currently limited levels of engagement with law and best practice or who have specific needs or barriers to access. Engagement with faith communities across the board is key to understanding how the proposed legislation will apply to them, to increase their awareness of child sexual abuse and relevant responsibilities through Wales' national publicity campaigns.

Recommendation 13:

Mandatory Reporting

► Current duties – Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014

Duties exist in Wales under the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 for 'relevant partners' of the local authority to inform their authority when they have suspicions of adults or children.

The 'relevant partners' as defined in the Wales Safeguarding Procedures do not explicitly reference faith communities or the third sector. This should be added to the guidance to bring clarity and further information into scope.

► Mandatory reporting – child sexual abuse

The current arrangements (above) have no real sanctions for failure to report.

The mandatory reporting duty needs to apply to individuals too with criminal sanctions attached.

The current roles covered under the duty do not address unregulated settings and professionals such as faith and sport, which leaves a gap for children in Wales.

► Regulated activity definition

A review of the definition of regulated activity is required. Effective mandatory reporting, positions of trust, duty to refer and eligibility decisions all hinge on this definition.

The frequency element of the definition of regulated activity is currently a loophole for those working and volunteering with children and young people monthly in faith communities as they are either not classed as being in regulated activity or do not understand it.

The definition should be based on the nature of the contact rather than other factors that cannot easily or consistently be applied across settings.

Any queries or for further information about Thirtyone:eight and our Policy and Advocacy work email Katy Jackson on katy.jackson@thirtyoneeight.org or go to [@Thirtyoneeight](https://thirtyoneeight.org/manifesto)

This briefing paper has been produced by Thirtyone:eight.

References

ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/datasets/numberofplacesofreligiousworshipinlocalareasenglandandwales

Conclusion

There should be an introduction of a Child Protection Authority that gives key focus and consideration to safeguarding for unregistered settings such as faith-based organisations, a Minister at Cabinet level with overall oversight and focus on children and a strong mandatory reporting duty which incorporates faith organisations.

Co-production and partnership working with Victims and Survivors of child sexual abuse, and public awareness for faith communities needs to be central to the Senedd's considerations when implementing the recommendations.