

Taking action. Creating change. Preventing child sexual abuse.

**May 9th 2024 IICSA Changemaker initial response to consultation outcome**

# **on child sexual abuse: mandatory reporting**

We welcome leadership from Government in addressing some of the areas raised by the final report from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) in 2022.

A duty on mandatory reporting should be about effectively dealing with perpetrators and preventing sexual abuse to further protect children. The risk we currently face is that survivors, practitioners, and service providers have been left without sufficient details of that duty for some time and have not been informed about when this duty will be implemented.

We welcome the Government’s acknowledgement that they will ensure safe spaces for children to speak openly about their experiences remain available, but it is vital that Government ensures delivery of this commitment and explains how that will be delivered through legislation.

As the consultation response acknowledges, the recommendations are intended as a suite and there are many other areas that require action and focus.

**Survivor voice**

The lack of detail shared by Government on this duty has left many survivors in the dark. Andy, a child sexual abuse lived experience expert, said: “*We are further neglecting our children by not making the detail to professionals and the community alike really clear and simple on how we should report child sexual abuse. No one supported me in this way and I would have happily spoken about what I was going through if someone had of asked. Ignorance is not a defence but clear guidance around such a duty will go a long way to supporting children.”*

Bryony, a survivor and lived experience expert, said: “*As a survivor, and someone who works within a sector aiming to improve practice with child sexual abuse victims and survivors, my concern is that without clear and detailed explanations around duty and implementation, the mandatory reporting legislation may result in more harm being done. In my work I speak to people with years of experiencing working in the child sexual abuse victims and survivors sector and time and again the issue is raised about just how unprepared and untrained many professionals are on the topic of child sexual abuse. Mandatory reporting, cannot be seen as a ‘fix all’, or placing a plaster on an already festering wound. And if it is going to work at all it has to be met with clear guidance on duty and implementation that can be replicated consistently cross-agencies, across organisations and across the country.”*

**Service providers**

Service providers who would usually run practices to support child sexual abuse survivors are finding it hard to continue with ambiguity. For example, an organisation that delivers therapeutic support recently told us *“We run a project for young survivors who have not reported their abuse – we are unsure if this will be able to continue in its current format which makes planning and financing very difficult”.*

Ciara Bergman, CEO at Rape Crisis England & Wales said: “*It remains challenging to see how this duty is going to work for survivors without any commitment for the funding of vital specialist sexual violence services. Children and their non-abusing family members must be able to access advocacy, therapy, and peer support so they can re-establish their lives after the trauma of rape and sexual abuse*. *It is only right that survivors of child rape and sexual abuse can then access timely support once reports are made through the new duty - and so already under-funded specialist services must be resourced to meet the need”.*

We know that effective and timely reporting is a vital part of a well-functioning child protection system. Mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse needs to be part of that process, but any mandatory duty must be matched with sufficient training and resources for professionals. Currently, the Government response to the consultation on mandatory reporting does not provide enough detail or commitment on this.

Anybody who falls under this legal duty must have robust access to training and resources so that they can identify and respond appropriately to any concerns.

The focus now must be in the detail so that survivors and service providers can see and feel the change that is needed.

IICSA Changemakers will be updating this page as the rest of the [Government response](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/child-sexual-abuse-mandatory-reporting) is worked through.