

# Complex Safeguarding Wales

## Youth Charter



<https://ComplexSafeguardingWales.org>

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# Youth Charter

The Youth Charter was developed as part of a Health and Care Research Wales funded study into child criminal exploitation in Wales (Maxwell and Wallace, 2021). The study examined how young people were targeted, groomed and criminally exploited in Wales and what services need to do to identify, engage and safeguard young people at risk of or being criminally exploited. To do this, young people, parents, and practitioners with direct experience were asked about their experiences of criminal exploitation and what approaches and interventions were most helpful. The Youth Charter forms part of the co-produced practitioner toolkit (Maxwell et al., 2022) aimed at enhancing practitioner responses to child criminal exploitation.

Drawing on the principles of the Social Services Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, the Youth Charter was co-produced with the Peer Action Collective based at Media Academy Cymru. The Peer Action Collective consists of ten Peer Researchers aged 18-25 from Cardiff, Swansea and Wrexham. During a visit to the Cardiff University Social Science Park, the peer researchers worked in small groups to generate statements in response to the question, how do young people want practitioners to engage with them? The list of statements produced was subject to review and refinement drawing upon the wider research findings. The edited Youth Charter was sent to the Peer Action Collective for their comments and feedback until the final list was agreed upon.

The Charter consists of nineteen statements. It is underpinned by the principles of youth work and the need for practitioners to demonstrate 'unconditional positive regard' which refers to understanding, respecting and accepting young people for who they are, without judgement (Rogers, 1951). In doing so, the Youth Charter has been developed to enable practitioners to talk to young people about what matters to them, how their existing strengths and resources can be used to do these things and what services and approaches they would find most helpful.

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# Youth Charter

## Ask us

Give us the option about how, when and if we engage with you.

## Be yourself

Introduce who you are and why you want to talk to us.

## Create a safe place to talk

Find a safe, comfortable place to talk to us. Ask us where we would like to meet you.

## Don't assume you know us

We are all different. Take time to get to know us and what we may find upsetting.

## Explain your role and responsibilities

Be clear and upfront about your safeguarding roles and responsibilities. Tell us what information you must share and whether you will tell us before this happens.

## Focus on us, not what information you need

Don't just bombard us with questions. Let the conversation flow by taking part. Don't just write notes.



## Give us time

It may not be the right time for us to tell you what is happening. We may have obligations to our friends, or we may be afraid of repercussions from exploiters.

## Help us to trust you

Be honest. Tell us about your links and roles with other practitioners. It can be distressing if we don't know who you are talking to about us. But it can also be positive if we know you are working with other people to help us.

## Include us in decision making

Encourage and support us to make decisions about our lives. This includes what support we receive, the services we engage with and the activities we take part in.

## Jargon excludes us

Talk to us at our level and keep jargon to a minimum.



## Keep our needs in mind

We have different backgrounds and cultures. We may not want to engage in the same way. We may not feel comfortable in group meetings or activities.

## Listen to us

Be prepared to hear what we have to say. Respect our views and don't assume you know us.

## Maintain boundaries

While we want you to get to know us, this is still a service setting. Encourage us to develop a practitioner-young person relationship. Don't try to be our friends.



## Never force us

Be mindful of our body language and use of eye contact. Give us our personal space and be sensitive to our needs and triggers. Don't force us to disclose to you.

## Only promise what you can deliver

Don't make false promises or say you will do things unless you know you can do them. Be realistic about what you can and can't do.

## Prepare yourself to feel uncomfortable

It can be difficult to hear what we have to say, for a range of reasons. Don't judge us. Just listen.



## Query, but don't question

Check you understand what we've told you, but don't question or interrogate us.

## Report back to us

Tell us when you will do things and what will happen next. Let us know what actions have been taken since we met you.

## Say goodbye

Let us know if you are changing jobs or roles. Say goodbye to us and introduce us to the person taking over your role.

The Youth Charter has been co-produced with the Peer Action Collective based in Media Academy Cymru and with reference to the research findings from the Health and Care Research Wales funded study 'County lines: a co-ordinated Welsh community response to child criminal exploitation'.





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