

Mandatory Reporting Seminar 2: A Summary Report

August 2019

INTRODUCTION

1. This report provides a summary of the second seminar on mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse, which the Inquiry held on 29–30 April 2019.
2. The purpose of this document is to summarise the discussions at the seminar and to highlight key themes. It is not intended to be a comprehensive analysis of all the views expressed at the seminar. The seminar did not constitute a formal evidence-gathering session.
3. The Chair and Panel of the Inquiry were present at the seminar. Proceedings were facilitated by a member of the Inquiry’s legal team.
4. The seminar was attended by representatives from government departments in England and Wales, third sector representatives, campaign groups, professional representatives and victims and survivors of child sexual abuse. The full list of participants can be found on the Inquiry’s website.¹
5. The seminar was made up of five sessions. The sessions considered the arguments for and against the introduction of mandatory reporting legislation in England and Wales, and the practical considerations involved in introducing such a law.
6. Sessions were predominantly discussion based. To support discussions, the Inquiry invited Professor Ben Mathews from Queensland University of Technology to deliver two presentations on mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse in countries other than England and Wales.
7. Core participants and other attendees in the public gallery were invited to make comments or observations at the end of each session. All materials, transcripts and presentations from the seminar are available on the Inquiry’s website.²
8. The Inquiry would like to thank everyone who contributed to or attended the seminar.

1 Mandatory Reporting Seminar 2: List of participants: Day 1. Available at: <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/key-documents/10911/view/mandatory-reporting-seminar-day-1-participant-list.pdf>. Day 2. Available at: <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/key-documents/10915/view/mandatory-reporting-seminar-day-2-participant-list.pdf>

2 Mandatory Reporting Seminar 2. Available at: <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/research-seminars/mandatory-reporting-child-sexual-abuse>

Session 1: Mandatory reporting in other jurisdictions

9. The first session explored the introduction of mandatory reporting in other jurisdictions. The session began with a presentation by Professor Mathews, which provided background to the introduction of mandatory reporting laws for child sexual abuse, focusing particularly on the introduction of this legislation in Australia.³
10. Professor Mathews told the Inquiry that mandatory reporting laws were first introduced in the early 1960s in the USA to address concerns that medical professionals were failing to respond to signs of physical abuse of children. Over time, the scope of these laws was extended to include other forms of abuse, including sexual abuse.
11. In Australia, mandatory reporting laws began being introduced in the 1960s. Professor Mathews told the Inquiry that professionals were not acting upon the signs of abuse and, as a result, children who were being abused were not coming to the attention of child protection services. Through the introduction of mandatory reporting, Australia sought to bring cases of significant abuse to the attention of protective welfare agencies, and promote service provision and family assistance.
12. Professor Mathews distinguished mandatory reporting from other duties to report child sexual abuse in law and policy, such as criminal law duties to report knowledge of sexual offences, civil law duties of care, and policy-based duties which apply to certain professions and occupations. Professor Mathews suggested that mandatory reporting laws are more comprehensive and efficient than these other duties as they are accompanied by clear legislative protection for reporters and impose a clear obligation.
13. Mandatory reporting laws now exist in all states and territories in Australia, although the laws differ significantly in their detail. Professor Mathews noted that some Australian territories have enacted broad reporting laws which apply to all forms of abuse and neglect, while others have introduced narrower mandatory reporting laws which only apply to one or two types of abuse. Despite these differences, all Australian states and territories have introduced mandatory reporting for child sexual abuse.
14. Following Professor Mathews' presentation, participants discussed the merits and possible implications of a different approach to reporting child sexual abuse compared to other forms of abuse and neglect. Some participants cautioned against taking a different approach. It was suggested that focusing solely on identifying and reporting child sexual abuse could risk missing wider information which may indicate that a child is being sexually abused. In addition, one participant said that other types of abuse

³ Mandatory Reporting Seminar 2: Professor Ben Mathews' Presentation 1. Available at: <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/key-documents/11005/view/professor-ben-mathews-presentation-1.pdf>

can have an equally devastating impact and that taking a different approach for child sexual abuse may risk establishing a hierarchy of response.

15. Other participants suggested that it was preferable to take a different approach to reporting child sexual abuse to other forms of abuse and neglect. One participant said that the infrastructure already exists for agencies to handle other forms of abuse and neglect. However, signs of child sexual abuse can be more complicated and sometimes ignored, therefore child sexual abuse needs to be responded to differently.
16. Participants were asked whether mandatory reporting would discourage children from disclosing abuse that they have suffered. A number of participants agreed that mandatory reporting would not prevent or discourage a child from disclosing abuse. Participants suggested that a child's decision to disclose is more likely to be impacted by whether they feel that they are in a safe environment or not. One participant suggested that it is unlikely that younger children would be aware of and understand the mandatory reporting legislation, therefore its implementation would not discourage a child from disclosing.
17. Participants also discussed whether the non-statutory duties and policies that are currently in place in England and Wales are sufficient to encourage reporting. Participants noted that over the last ten years there has been a significant increase in the number of referrals being made to children's social care and the number of social care assessments being conducted. Some participants suggested that this indicates that existing duties are already sufficient to encourage reporting.
18. One participant speculated that the increase in referrals to children's social care in England may be a result of a more risk-averse society and the rising awareness of the negative impact that abuse has on children. It was noted that despite the increase in investigations by children's social care, there was a decrease in the proportion of children being placed on child protection plans.

Session 2: The impact of mandatory reporting in other jurisdictions

19. In the second session, Professor Mathews presented five different empirical studies into the impact of mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse in different Australian states.⁴
20. The first study analysed trends in the numbers and outcomes of reports of child sexual abuse before and after the introduction of mandatory reporting in Western Australia. The study found that following the introduction of this law in 2009, the number of reports relating to child sexual abuse increased by a factor of 3.7. Similarly, the number of substantiated reports where child sexual abuse was proven to exist doubled. In the three years before the introduction of this legislation, there were on average 160 substantiated reports per year, whereas in the four years following this legislation, there were on average 327 substantiated reports of child sexual abuse.
21. The second study analysed the reporting trends in numbers and outcomes of reports of child sexual abuse in Victoria from 1993 to 2012, following the introduction of mandatory reporting. This study found that there was an initial increase in reports made in the first two years after the introduction of mandatory reporting, yet reporting trends were generally stable thereafter. Professor Mathews noted that in the last four years there has been a marked increase in reports, yet he suggested that this has been due to increased awareness-raising and investment in child protection services.
22. The third study looked at the difference in numbers and outcomes of reports of child sexual abuse in two comparable jurisdictions with equivalent child populations, where only one has a mandatory reporting law for child sexual abuse. The study found that in 2010, 5,870 reports relating to child sexual abuse were made in Victoria, Australia, where reporting was mandatory. In Ireland, where reporting was not mandatory, only 2,962 reports were made in 2010. Victoria also had 4.7 times as many substantiated reports relating to child sexual abuse as Ireland.
23. The fourth study analysed reporting trends for different types of child abuse in New South Wales, where mandatory reporting has been introduced for all types of child abuse and neglect. The study found that in 2017, there were 291,000 reports across all types of child abuse and neglect, involving 121,000 children. Reports relating to sexual abuse constituted 13.6% of those reports; in total there were 39,000 reports of child sexual abuse, involving 18,000 children, which is approximately 1% of the child population in New South Wales. Professor Mathews concluded that sexual abuse is reported far less often than other forms of abuse and represents a relatively low

⁴ Mandatory Reporting Seminar 2: Professor Ben Mathews' Presentation 2. Available at: <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/key-documents/11027/view/professor-ben-mathews-presentation-2.pdf>

proportion of reports where mandatory reporting has been introduced for multiple types of abuse.

24. The last study focused on how reports of child sexual abuse differ from reports of other kinds of abuse and neglect. A comparative analysis was conducted in all eight Australian states and territories. Overall, reports relating to child sexual abuse constituted 5% of the total number of non-mandated and mandated reports made. Professor Mathews suggested that this shows that reports relating to child sexual abuse represent a small proportion of the overall systemic burden.⁵ Nationally, there were 64,000 substantiated reports of child sexual abuse from all sources over that decade, involving approximately 1.3% of children. Approximately half of the substantiated reports of child sexual abuse were made by mandated reporters.
25. Professor Mathews described the findings of these studies as demonstrating a substantial gain in child protection. Overall, where mandatory reporting laws had been introduced, there were enhanced reporting outcomes for children, with both substantiated and unsubstantiated reports leading to children at risk of harm being identified. Professor Mathews noted that even when a report relating to child sexual abuse is found to be unsubstantiated, there may be other harms and risk factors in a

child's life which are identified as a result of the initial report.

26. Professor Mathews commented on the concern that the introduction of mandatory reporting legislation can lead to undesirable reporting and a significant increase of unsubstantiated referrals. He said that this only concerned reports of domestic violence and perceived emotional abuse in two states. Further, some of these reports were made within groups that did not fall within mandatory reporting obligations.
27. Following Professor Mathews' presentation, participants considered what is already known about reporting of child sexual abuse in England and Wales. It was noted that there is no data available yet on the impact that the duty to report children at risk in Wales has had. However, one participant suggested that the duty to report has had a positive impact on the culture, workforce and training in Wales.
28. Participants discussed the long-term impact of mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse, in terms of health, educational attainment and youth justice outcomes. One participant noted that there was little long-term empirical evidence in relation to these outcomes. However, existing evidence indicates that mandatory reporting is associated with a greater number of referrals being made to health services and

⁵ Mandatory Reporting Seminar 2: Professor Ben Mathews' Presentation 2. Available at: <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/key-documents/11027/view/professor-ben-mathews-presentation-2.pdf>

children in need of protection being placed under formal child protection orders.

29. Participants also considered the likely impact of a mandatory reporting duty in England and Wales. One participant highlighted the impact that an increasing number of referrals is having on children's social care. In particular, there has been a significant decline in the provision of early help to children and their families as local authorities have needed to prioritise statutory safeguarding responsibilities.
30. Some participants urged that an overarching consistency in approach across institutions is essential to ensuring the success of any mandatory reporting legislation. One participant suggested that this is why mandatory reporting laws are superior to isolated policy-based approaches, which have shown to be insufficiently consistent and not prioritised by professionals.
31. Participants were asked what had been introduced elsewhere alongside mandatory reporting to support its implementation. One participant commented that any support needs to be a systemic response across a wide range of sectors. It was suggested that any short-term investment to support implementation, such as in children's social care and health services, will likely result in long-term economic gain as a result of increased early interventions and offender detection associated with mandatory reporting.
32. To conclude session two, the seminar facilitator opened the second day by asking for further reflections on the impact of mandatory reporting legislation. Reference was made in particular to Gillick competency and Fraser guidelines,⁶ which are methods that are used to establish autonomy and allow children to be involved in decision-making over their lives. One participant expressed concern that mandatory reporting might not allow children to be able to have this type of agency as children would not be able to decide whether their abuse is disclosed.
33. Participants referred to the different points of view on mandatory reporting expressed in response to the Government's consultation on reporting abuse and neglect.⁷ One participant highlighted the need to consider that mandatory reporting could result in the state taking a greater role in family life. It was suggested that many would find this unfavourable due to the possible increase in the number of investigations being conducted by children's social care, with the possibility of more unsubstantiated cases.

6 NSPCC (2019) Gillick Competency and Fraser Guidelines. Available at: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/1541/gillick-competency-factsheet.pdf>

7 HM Government (2018) *Reporting and Acting on Child Abuse and Neglect: Summary of consultation responses and Government action*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/685465/Reporting_and_acting_on_child_abuse_and_neglect_-_response_to_consultati...pdf

34. One participant said that mandatory reporting would have financial implications for an already overburdened system. Participants expressed concerns that mandatory reporting would add to the work in children's social care, resulting in a shift of resources to investigate concerns that may not be substantiated. However, other participants suggested that countries which have introduced mandatory reporting legislation also face resource issues, but have decided that children's rights to safety and protection from sexual abuse are sufficiently important to demand investment in the implementation of mandatory reporting legislation.
35. One participant highlighted the risk of conflating consequences of mandatory reporting for all types of abuse and neglect with just sexual abuse. It was noted that if mandatory reporting was introduced just for child sexual abuse, the burden on the system, both in terms of the numbers of reports and the financial resources required to respond to them, would be far less than if it was introduced for all other forms of abuse.

Session 3: Experiences of reporting child sexual abuse

36. Discussions in the third session focused on the barriers that particular communities face in reporting child sexual abuse in England and Wales.
37. The session began with discussions on reporting of child sexual abuse within communities and institutions in England and Wales, particularly in ethnic minorities and religious institutions.
38. Participants commented on current reporting practices of child sexual abuse in ethnic minorities. One participant described the poor relationship between statutory authorities, such as the police, and ethnic minorities. It was noted that ethnic minorities have a history of being misunderstood around health and social issues, which makes it increasingly difficult for individuals from this community to engage with these services. As a result, it was suggested that members from the ethnic minorities might be reluctant to report as there are concerns that authorities do not fully understand their community dynamics and culture.
39. One participant described how community leaders and elders in closed communities often prioritise the community as a whole over victims of sexual abuse and violence, with known perpetrators being moved to another setting where they can continue the abuse. Those who disclose abuse are often perceived as betraying the community by informing a secular authority, and the repercussions may include excommunication by the community. It was suggested that if religious leaders were subjected to mandatory reporting, with the possibility of a penalty for failing to report child sexual abuse, children in religious communities would be better protected.
40. One participant said that a body is needed to hold religious institutions accountable to report child sexual abuse due to the power and secrecy that can be present in religious institutions. Several participants suggested that mandatory reporting could set boundaries regarding acceptable behaviour, with children having a greater awareness of their rights. There were suggestions that mandatory reporting would enable those who work with children and young people to feel more empowered and protected to make reports.
41. Participants discussed particular barriers to identifying abuse, especially for children with autism and/or learning disabilities. One participant described how behaviour which may indicate a child being sexually abused is often overlooked in children with learning disabilities and/or autism, with sexualised behaviour often being attributed to the disability. It was suggested that this misunderstanding results in underreporting of child sexual abuse for children with learning disabilities and/or autism. A number of participants agreed that education should accompany mandatory reporting obligations to enable a better understanding of learning disabilities and/or autism, otherwise these

children's experiences will be overlooked and underreported.

42. The session then focused on reporting of child sexual abuse within various institutions, particularly in schools, health sector services and the police. In response to the suggestion that professionals may be deliberately not reporting child sexual abuse, one participant said that they had not read a Serious Case Review where there has been a failure to report an incident of child sexual abuse.
43. One participant described the significant changes that are being made in schools to build a safeguarding culture. They described how the culture has changed within educational institutions and that procedures are now in place for teachers to report. Despite the shift in culture, there are still concerns as to what type of behaviour should be reported. For example, one participant expressed concern that teachers might feel a responsibility to report every single case of youth produced sexual imagery. One participant suggested a cautious approach to including sexual imagery in any mandatory reporting legislation, as it could result in children being brought into the criminal justice system.
44. One participant described the reporting culture within the health sector. It was suggested that cultures can exist in which junior members of staff may find it more difficult to raise concerns, including about children who might be at risk. It was noted that work is being done to create a culture in which staff feel able to have discussions about whether professionals are meeting their responsibilities to vulnerable patients and raise concerns appropriately.
45. The end of the session focused on reporting of child sexual abuse in the voluntary sector. One participant expressed the need to foster an open and transparent culture in which children can openly and confidently say what happened to them. It was further suggested that this culture would enable volunteers to identify and appropriately respond to concerns about child sexual abuse. In the Scouts for example, there is a code of practice that all adult volunteers must sign up to, which sets out the responsibilities of volunteers. It also establishes what actions can be taken if a young person discloses they are being abused, or if an individual has concerns about a young person.⁸
46. One participant described the difficulties that children experience in reporting concerns within sports, especially elite sports. They said that children are sometimes unwilling to report any concerns due to the power that the coach holds over the child's sporting progression. As a result, children may not disclose any abuse they have suffered. It was suggested that

⁸ The Scout Association (2018) Young people first (yellow card). Available at: <https://scouts.org.uk/media/996788/Yellow-Card.pdf>

grassroots sport needs a standardised safeguarding document which clearly outlines the safeguarding responsibilities of parents and volunteers.

47. Several participants highlighted the need for more education and training so that professionals are able to gain a more sophisticated understanding of the manifestations of trauma and are able to fulfil their safeguarding obligations.

Session 4: Features of mandatory reporting models

48. The fourth session began with a presentation of key features of mandatory reporting models and how these features differ between four different examples of statutory reporting duties.⁹
49. Participants discussed the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to who statutory reporting duties should apply to, particularly with consideration to England and Wales. Several participants said that the responsibility to report should rest with the leads of organisations, and they should ensure that the right processes are in place in which everyone understands what their roles are. Several participants suggested that penalties for failing to report should apply at an organisational rather than individual level. This would also ensure that organisations are facilitating an environment which supports individual staff to identify and report concerns about child sexual abuse.
50. Other participants suggested that statutory reporting duties should apply to individual professionals, and they should be required to make the report directly to the relevant child protection authority. It was described how mandatory reporting laws should apply to early childhood education and care practitioners to ensure successful reporting of child sexual abuse.
51. Participants discussed which professions mandatory reporting duties should apply to. One participant suggested that any statutory reporting duty should follow the model proposed by Mandate Now, which includes faith organisations. It was suggested that professionals that fall within the duty to report in Wales might have limited contact with children, but others, for example sports clubs and religious organisations, will have regular and frequent contact so they would be better placed to identify any concerns.
52. The seminar facilitator asked participants to consider whether statutory reporting duties should extend to harmful sexual behaviour, which is developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour that is displayed by children and which may be harmful or abusive.¹⁰ Several participants recognised the risk of including this type of behaviour within statutory reporting duties as a report may have unintended consequences, such as leading to children being criminalised at a young age. However, it was noted that even when sexual activity between young people appears to be consensual, there may still be a young person who has been coerced into that activity. Participants emphasised the importance of ensuring the right support is in place for children that are exhibiting harmful sexual behaviour.

⁹ Mandatory Reporting Seminar 2: Features of mandatory reporting models. Available at: <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/key-documents/11051/view/iicsa-presentation-key-features-mandatory-reporting-models-30-april-2019.pdf>

¹⁰ NSPCC Learning: Protecting children from harmful sexual behaviour. Available at: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/harmful-sexual-behaviour/>

53. Participants also discussed whether non-recent child sexual abuse should be included in mandatory reporting duties. One participant suggested that mandatory reporting legislation could require institutions to report previously undisclosed incidents, which could assist the work of Operation Hydrant. Support for the inclusion of non-recent child sexual abuse under statutory reporting duties was further expressed by one participant, as it was felt that the sexual abuse of children may continue until the perpetrators are either deceased or incarcerated.
54. Others felt that the discretion to report should be left to the adult victim and survivor. Participants also noted that it would be challenging to establish at what point the cut-off period would be for reporting concerns about non-recent child sexual abuse.
55. Participants considered the benefits and possible implications of an independent body being established to receive mandated reports. Some participants suggested that it would be beneficial for reports to be made to an independent body and noted that this type of referral process already exists in England and Wales, for example via the NSPCC or the Inquiry's Truth Project. One participant commented that not all members of the public would feel confident enough to directly contact statutory services and their reports might better be served through a less formalised reporting process. It was suggested that an independent body might enable the work of other safeguarding authorities to be more streamlined.
56. Several participants expressed concerns that a separate system for reporting child sexual abuse could cause confusion for local practitioners and members of the public in understanding how to report their concern about a child at risk, which could hinder reports being made in the first instance. It was also suggested that professionals working with children might be reluctant to share information with other organisations, so an additional body may risk making information sharing more difficult.
57. Discussions then moved to consider the consequences for those who fail to report child sexual abuse in line with their statutory duties.¹¹ The Inquiry heard how the Welsh Government had decided to not introduce any statutory consequences for failing to comply with the Welsh duty to report. It was explained that the Welsh Government was concerned that introducing a statutory penalty for failing to report could result in a fear or blame culture developing, and that it might lead to an increase in the number of inappropriate referrals being made.

11 Mandatory Reporting Seminar 2: Features of mandatory reporting models. Available at: <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/key-documents/11051/view/iicsa-presentation-key-features-mandatory-reporting-models-30-april-2019.pdf>

58. One participant suggested that the imposition of criminal sanctions could be problematic as it would likely lead to an increase in unsubstantiated reports. This could also have severe implications for professionals who may be falsely accused of abusing children. The participant described how professionals are often suspended pending investigation in countries that have introduced mandatory reporting. This has resulted in many clinicians losing their careers due to the impact that false allegations have had on their self-confidence and on their reputation.
59. One participant highlighted how professionals already have a responsibility under the statutory guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2018)¹² to share information and report concerns about children at risk of harm. Some participants discussed how introducing mandatory reporting and a criminal penalty for failing to report may risk deterring professionals from working with children. One participant expressed particular concern that introducing criminal sanctions may make the recruitment of teachers more challenging.
60. Other participants spoke of the need to focus on fostering a culture of learning and development, rather than focusing on imposing criminal sanctions. Several participants noted that staff working with children should be encouraged and able to use their professional judgement. It was suggested that introducing a criminal sanction could deter staff from using that judgement.
61. One participant described the concerns that were raised by the General Medical Council during the development of *Protecting children and young people: The responsibilities of all doctors* (2012).¹³ Healthcare professionals were concerned with the penalties that could be imposed when trying to meet their safeguarding responsibilities. It was suggested that in some circumstances, healthcare professionals have found themselves subject to complaints by families when they had raised concerns about a child's safety and wellbeing. It was noted that professionals need to be supported in making difficult decisions about whether to raise concerns and be confident in their judgements.
62. One participant argued for the imposition of sanctions for failing to report concerns about child sexual abuse. They suggested that this would emphasise to mandated reporters how serious the duty is, the gravity of their obligations and that the duty must be complied with. Further, it was suggested that imposing statutory consequences can help to combat gaze aversion and compel individuals to act.

12 HM Government (2018) *Working Together to Safeguard Children*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779401/Working_Together_to_Safeguard-Children.pdf

13 General Medical Council (2012) *Protecting children and young people: The responsibilities of all doctors*. Available at: https://www.gmc-uk.org/-/media/documents/Protecting_children_and_young_people_English_1015.pdf_48978248.pdf

Session 5: Final comments and reflections

63. The fifth session consisted of final remarks and comments from participants. Comments focused on what changes could be implemented to improve reporting of child sexual abuse in England and Wales.
64. Some participants noted changes that have already been implemented in England and Wales to improve reporting and responses to child sexual abuse, particularly within the healthcare sector. One participant described how there has been an increasing focus on strengthening legislation around safeguarding, particularly through the Children and Social Work Act 2017.¹⁴ It was noted that alongside this work, the NHS has established a system to improve information sharing about children in need of protection. In addition, one participant commented on recent changes, such as the updated statutory guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2018),¹⁵ as having improved working relationships between statutory agencies.
65. Several participants noted that the Government has taken steps to create a learning environment in which professionals share best practice around safeguarding and are able to effectively protect children. However, it was suggested that there is still more to be done in relation to child sexual abuse.
66. Several participants reiterated their support of mandatory reporting. One participant said that the evidence shows that legislative mandatory reporting, accompanied by investment in systemic responses, represents the optimal public policy to increase the identification of cases of child sexual abuse that would otherwise remain hidden. Statistics were also presented to highlight how the UK is behind other countries in supporting the implementation of mandatory reporting.¹⁶
67. One participant supported mandatory reporting and said that leads of organisations should be held criminally responsible for failing to report. However, it was acknowledged that this would only work if there was a mandatory and clear framework of safeguarding training and practice throughout all organisations.
68. Some participants raised concerns in relation to what would happen after a mandatory report was made, if mandatory reporting were to be introduced in England and Wales. It was suggested by several participants that, without sufficient resources to support implementation, then this would risk children being less safe. One participant said that greater clarity is needed regarding what mandatory reporting would look like, who would be the mandatory reporters, and where

14 Children and Social Work Act 2017. Available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/contents/enacted>

15 HM Government (2018) *Working Together to Safeguard Children*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779401/Working_Together_to_Safeguard-Children.pdf

16 Mandate Now: Why We Exist. Available at: <http://mandatenow.org.uk/why-we-exist>

the investment would come from. It was expressed that the right procedures need to be put in place so that when reports are made, they are dealt with correctly.

69. It was agreed amongst several participants that more still needs to be done to improve the identification of and response to child sexual abuse. One participant explained the need for increased resourcing around mandatory reporting within healthcare settings, and that training should be made readily available to the wide range of professionals and volunteers who regularly come into contact with children. Several participants felt that training should enable professionals to have a better understanding of trauma and the impact of trauma so that they are able to respond more appropriately.
70. Several participants emphasised the need for culture change so that the emphasis is on prevention and early intervention as well as reporting. It was agreed that a culture of openness and transparency was needed, especially to be able to effectively protect children in closed communities. One participant expressed the need to continue with thinking about culture and raising awareness to educate individuals so that everybody understands the role that they have to play in protecting children. One participant suggested that broader cultural, moral and social issues should also be taken into consideration as they are often at the heart of grooming and sexual exploitation.

71. Some participants also stressed that responses need to be more child focused. It was suggested that any intervention should be about responding straight away and making sure that the child gets whatever they need at that moment. This needs to be done in a way that is meaningful for the child in their particular circumstances. One participant described how children need to feel listened to, believed, emotionally supported, and that action is being taken to protect them.

Future work

72. This seminar has provided the Inquiry with helpful information about the impact of mandatory reporting legislation in countries in which it has been introduced. In addition, the seminar has given the Inquiry valuable insight into the possible advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to statutory reporting duties, particularly with regards to England and Wales.
73. This seminar formed part of the Inquiry's wider consideration of the important issue of mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse. The Inquiry is gathering evidence and information on this topic through its investigations and will also consider the experiences of reporting as shared by victims and survivors through the Truth Project and the recent survey of the Victims and Survivors Forum.¹⁷

¹⁷ Mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse: A survey of the Victims and Survivors Forum. Available at: <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/key-documents/10597/view/mandatory-reporting-child-sexual-abuse-a-survey-victims-survivors-forum.pdf>