

## **Agenda – Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee**

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Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 1 – Senedd

Meeting date: 6 February 2020

Meeting time: 09.00

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**At its meeting on 29 January, the Committee resolved to exclude the public from item 1 of today's meeting**

- 1 Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill: consideration of key issues**  
(09.00 – 11.00)
- 2 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest**
- 3 Post legislative inquiry into the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015: follow-up work – evidence session 1**  
(11.00 – 11.45) (Pages 1 – 55)  
Eleri Butler, Chief Executive Officer, Welsh Women’s Aid
- 4 Post legislative inquiry into the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015: follow-up work – evidence session 2**  
(11.45 – 12.30) (Pages 56 – 101)  
Huw Rees, Audit Director, Wales Audit Office  
Philippa Dixon, Senior Auditor, Wales Audit Office



Nick Selwyn, Audit Manager, Wales Audit Office

## **5 Paper(s) to note**

(Page 102)

### **5.1 Update from the National Advisers for Violence against Women, Gender-based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (December 2019)**

(Pages 103 – 113)

### **5.2 Written submission from the NSPCC Wales in relation to the post legislative inquiry into the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015**

(Pages 114 – 117)

### **5.3 Written submission from the Gwent VAWDASV Partnership Board in relation to the post legislative inquiry into the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015**

(Page 118)

### **5.4 Letter from the First Minister to the Llywydd in relation to the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill**

(Page 119)

## **6 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 (vi) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting**

## **7 Post legislative inquiry into the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015: follow up work – consideration of evidence**

(12.30 – 12.40)

Document is Restricted



## Welsh Women's Aid: Evidence Briefing for Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee

### Follow-up work on the post legislative inquiry into the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015

6<sup>th</sup> February 2020

The Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 (the Act) has been recognised internationally as ground breaking piece of legislation aimed at improving the response of the public sector in the prevention of all forms of violence against women and the protection and support of those that experience it.

In 2016, Welsh Women's Aid welcomed the Equality and Local Government Committees post-legislative review and the recommendations to Welsh Government to improve the implementation of the Act.

Over the last five years, there has been some strategic and practice developments in Wales to further the prevention of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) and maximise the support and protection of survivors. However, we still have some way to go to fully realise the potential and intent of the Act by Government and devolved public services in Wales.

This Evidence Briefing sets out, for the Committee, where Welsh Women's Aid feels further improvements are needed, to positively impact on the lives of survivors of abuse in Wales and to begin focussing on prevention in the short and longer term.

#### **Background - Key statistics**

Welsh Women's Aid annual membership data for 2018/9<sup>1</sup> shows:

- The Live Fear Free Helpline responded to 31,981 calls, emails and web chats.
- 21,599 survivors were referred to VAWDASV specialist services during the year, this is a 61% increase from 2017/18.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Annual-Membership-Report-2018-19-FINAL.pdf>



- 20,405 survivors were supported by VAWDASV specialist services during the year, which is a 68% increase from 2017/18.

Refuge and community-based support for domestic abuse:

- 2,482 survivors (adults and children) benefited from refuge-based support; around 268 children on average are in refuges each quarter through the year.
- 89% of survivors felt safer after accessing refuge services.
- 512 survivors were unable to be supported in refuges because of a lack of service space, capacity or resources at the time they needed help.
- 30 women with 'no recourse to public funds' were supported in refuges who would have otherwise faced destitution, by the specialist service covering the housing-related costs themselves.
- 16,591 survivors were supported by domestic abuse specialist services in the community.
- At the year-end, 239 survivors were on waiting lists for community support.

Community based support for sexual violence/rape crisis services:

- 1,332 survivors received support from dedicated sexual violence services in our membership.
- At the year-end, 251 survivors were on waiting lists for rape crisis support at 3 Welsh Women's Aid member services.

### **Welsh Government National VAWDASV Strategy 2016-2021 and Cross Government delivery Framework 2018-20**

The Welsh Government National VAWDASV Strategy 2016-2021 and Delivery Framework 2018-2021<sup>2</sup> sets out the government's commitment to achieving the Act. These have led to some progress in the implementation of the Act, including the delivery of national campaigns and a number of guidance documents being published.

Welsh Women's Aid welcomed the Wales Audit Office 'Progress in implementing the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act' report<sup>3</sup> published in November 2019, that highlighted gaps in engagement with specialist services and survivors in the implementation of the Act. The report highlighted the inconsistency and fragmented approaches that remain in the public sector across Wales despite the purpose of the Act to coordinate prevention, support and protection for VAWDASV.

Concerns have been expressed that the Cross Government Framework for the delivery of the Welsh Government Strategy lacked clear milestones to monitor delivery. Local VAWDASV Strategy Guidance was published in February 2018 (local authorities and health boards were required to produce strategies by April 2018) and Statutory VAWDASV Commissioning Guidance was published in May 2019; much of this has come later than anticipated to achieve

<sup>2</sup> <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/cross-government-delivery-framework-2018-2021.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.audit.wales/system/files/publications/VAWDASV\\_eng.pdf](https://www.audit.wales/system/files/publications/VAWDASV_eng.pdf)

any significant impact to date. Without published timescales or milestones it has been difficult to hold the Government and devolved services to account to delivery within a specified timeframe.

We also have concerns that strategic leadership from across Government departments has been slow and inconsistent, for the Strategy and its delivery to be effectively embedded by all Departments. Although there is a small VAWDASV team in Government, it appears that there has been limited progress in embedding VAWDASV prevention across the strategic and delivery functions of Welsh Government and relevant responsible authorities. This presents significant missed opportunities to embed VAWDASV prevention into budgeting and delivering on cross-Government priorities for Wales so that it becomes core business nationally, regionally and locally.

For example, Education leads have made some commitments to deliver the National Strategy and delivery framework, including monitoring the implementation of, the Good Practice Guide: Whole Education Approach to Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence in Wales and ensuring the recommendations of the Sexuality and Relationships education panel inform the new curriculum however there is little evidence provided to demonstrate how these are being delivered on. Education has not produced data on the roll out of the Whole Education Approach and many schools report either not knowing about it or having limited capacity to implement it in full.

From other government departments there has been even further limited join up to demonstrate their commitment to VAWDASV. An area of particular concern has been the lack of engagement from Health (at both national governments, at public health and at local health board levels). Despite decades of international evidence and practice which makes the clear business case that violence against women prevention must be a public health priority, there has been little appetite to address this in Wales through public health priorities (other than by the recently appointed ACE Hub director) in comparison to other UK nations and globally. While the ACEs agenda has incorporated VAWDASV, a wider public health approach informed by evidence from the World Health Organisation has not been prioritised, which presents significant missed opportunities (e.g. when addressing the wider determinants of health and well-being) to achieve greater impact.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1. Cross government framework is refreshed with a demonstrated high-level commitment from all Ministers and Director Generals is given to ensure implementation of the Act is embedded in their portfolios.***
- 2. The Minister for Health provides leadership to ensure public health and health boards prioritise the prevention of VAWDASV and improve responses to survivors and perpetrators.***

The VAWDASV Act was supposed to ensure prevention improvements across all forms of violence against women and girls, however at both a national and regional level there is a trend to, by default, to focus on domestic abuse and assume this will meet the varying complex needs of all survivors of VAWDASV. This is evidenced in the Welsh Government

VAWDASV Perpetrator Guidance that is domestic abuse only and is gender neutral in its approach.

We are concerned that the focus of national and regional VAWDASV Strategy delivery remains predominantly on domestic abuse, which means responses and funding for other types of VAWDASV is less prioritised leading to unequal access to support for survivors of all forms of VAWDASV.

Our members who work with survivors of sexual violence, for example, have told us survivors of sexual abuse are not receiving the equivalent priority by commissioners and public services as survivors of domestic abuse. For example, sexual violence survivors and those exploited through the sex industry have been excluded from *Supporting People* funded accommodation-based support (like refuges) due to funder restrictions, in many areas of Wales, because they lack understanding of sexual violence survivors' housing-related support needs. While survivors may have multiple support needs, if their presenting issue is sexual violence, it is not treated as priority by housing support and they are often not considered a priority for rehousing.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1. Welsh Government collaborates with Welsh Women's Aid and other experts by experience (including survivors, specialist service providers and academics) in all forms of VAWDASV, to inform its new strategy.**
- 2. Ensure Housing Support Grant commissioning covers all forms of VAWDASV, rather than a default assumption that a focus on domestic abuse meets the varying needs of all survivors of VAWDASV.**

**Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Abuse (the 'Istanbul Convention')**

Welsh Women's Aid welcomed the Welsh Government commitment to the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Abuse (the 'Istanbul Convention')<sup>4</sup> which sets out clear measures on how to prevent violence against women and support survivors.

Covered within the scope of the Convention is the adequate geographic distribution of short and long-term specialist services that are accessible to all women and their children as well as an adequate delivery of preventative approaches for all forms of violence against women and girls.

Although the Act has brought in many positive measures<sup>5</sup> which help to meet the Istanbul Convention in Wales, it is clear from our assessment that whilst Welsh Government has provided verbal assurances about meeting the Articles within the Convention, there are a number of examples where we feel there is, as yet, only partial compliance with the

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/text-of-the-convention>

<sup>5</sup> These include the commitment to National and Local strategies, Local VAWDASV Commissioning Guidance with a definition of specialist services, and Whole Education Approach Good Practice Guidance.

Convention articles. In some cases, we feel there is limited compliance with the Convention (see Appendix 1: Welsh Women's Aid Briefing May 2019 - Wales and the 'Istanbul Convention').

Under the Council for Europe structures, the UK Government hold the membership for the devolved nations and will be the signatory to the Convention when it is ratified. Wales is acknowledged as a territorial entity. There are many Articles under the Convention, such as criminal justice and foreign affairs, which are reserved matters and so are the responsibility of Westminster Government and Wales is dependent on a unified legislative approach to their implementation at present. However, as stated in the Welsh Government Strategy, there are a number of articles that sit within the devolved jurisdiction and it is welcome that the Government are committed to meeting these.

In order to implement these commitments, it must be recognised that under Council of Europe procedures for the Convention a ratifying country cannot evaluate itself as meeting the Convention. There is a formal process of assessment through the GREVIO committee<sup>6</sup> including shadow reports being presented by VAWDASV sector experts and survivors to provide evidence of its effective implementation. At present the Welsh Government has not undergone any external evaluation to demonstrate that it is compliant to the Convention and so cannot claim to have ratified or implemented it.

***RECOMMENDATION: Welsh Women's Aid would recommend that in the process of developing their new VAWDASV Strategy post 2021, the Welsh Government utilise the Istanbul Convention as a framework and engage with the VAWDASV sector and survivors to evaluate its progress in delivering to relevant articles as well as work collaboratively to develop an agenda to work towards implementation.***

### **National VAWDASV Outcomes and National Indicators**

The VAWSDASV National Indicators have been published in draft in June 2019 and Welsh Women's Aid welcomes the consultative process that the Welsh Government is carrying out to finalise them, by holding a series of stakeholder workshops over several months.

We have raised concerns that whilst national indicators provide a suite of measures for what agencies can collect nationally, they are not informing measures of progress within an overarching VAWDASV outcomes framework, informed by our vision for improving protection, support and delivering on prevention. Indicators should be a measure of achieving national outcomes, yet we still do not have VAWDASV outcomes framework for Wales, to inform commissioning and regional and national action or measures.

In their draft format Welsh Women's Aid is concerned that there is too much of a focus in the proposed indicators on what is available to collect (e.g. within the justice system) and not enough aspiration to achieve real change. The focus therefore is very much on domestic abuse for much of the indicators and measures, and this needs to be widened to all forms of VAWDASV. More needs to be done to look at how the wider VAWDASV agenda can be

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<sup>6</sup> GREVIO is the independent expert body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Convention <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/grevio>

considered through these objectives and how survivors of other forms of VAWDASV are impacted and supported.

As mentioned above, there is also an overreliance on criminal justice as a data source for the indicators and measures, which will only reflect a narrow cohort of survivors and perpetrators. To be meaningful and measure real positive change, data should be provided by local authorities and health boards to reflect the impact of the Act's implementation in improving devolved public sector responses. Data provided by Welsh Women's Aid and Live Fear Free helpline should be fully utilised in the Indicators and Measures to give a more comprehensive picture of VAWDASV in Wales, as recommended by the Wales Audit Office Progressing implementing the VAWDASV (Wales) Act<sup>7</sup> published in November 2019.

Welsh Women's Aid is also calling for additional indicators that measure outcomes related to the progress we make nationally in changing attitudes to VAWDASV as a cause and consequence of the unequal position of men and women in our society and how this intersects with other forms of discrimination. At present there is no baseline data for Wales to measure improvements in prevention or earlier intervention for Wales.

Similarly, Wales is lacking distinct cost analysis of the impact of VAWDASV. The UK government has carried out a cost analysis of the impact of domestic abuse across England and Wales that has evidenced the cost of domestic abuse is at least £66 million a year.<sup>8</sup> This includes costs incurred by survivors physical and emotional harm, loss of economic output and costs to local government, health services and criminal justice services.

***RECOMMENDATION: Welsh Government creates VAWDASV outcomes framework for Wales and improves the indicator measures; commissions baseline cost analysis of the impact of VAWDASV to identify the current social and economic cost to Wales in order to inform its investment in the implementation of the Act.***

## **Commissioning**

Welsh Women's Aid welcomed the statutory Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Commissioning Guidance (in May 2019) by Welsh Government, particularly the inclusion of the sector's definition of "VAWDASV specialist services", the inclusion of the national suite of quality assurance frameworks available for domestic and sexual violence service standards in Wales, and requirements that regional strategic commissioning is delivered by responsible authorities and partner agencies. . This guidance becomes statutory from April 2020, and 2019-20 was a year during which regional boards were able to prepare for its delivery.

At present there is no clear indication that regions are ready to implement this statutory guidance, and no clear mechanism to hold local authorities and health boards to account for

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.audit.wales/system/files/publications/VAWDASV\\_eng.pdf](https://www.audit.wales/system/files/publications/VAWDASV_eng.pdf)

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[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/772180/horr107.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/772180/horr107.pdf)

its delivery at the local level. As Wales Audit Office<sup>9</sup> identified, there remains great variability in the quality and levels of data collected and many authorities simply do not know what they deliver and how much they spend on responding to VAWDASV nor on its prevention.

Feedback from our members highlights that local procurement procedures in according with local authority standing orders, contradict the best practice embedded in this statutory commissioning guidance. Some areas also continue to insist that services go out to competitive tender when their value falls below European thresholds for public procurement,<sup>10</sup> and often this is done without collaboration with specialist services and survivors to inform the assessment of needs, resources mapping and gaps, best practice on service standards and models of delivery, and what is required in local communities. This places local specialist services at risk and under pressure and has led to several specialist service mergers with larger or regional providers which results in a loss of small community-based provision. There is still much work to be done in terms of commissioners' understanding of the requirements under the new VAWDASV commissioning guidance.

Welsh Women's Aid is holding a workshop (funded by Lloyds Bank Foundation) to support commissioners in their delivery of the commissioning guidance and to encourage a collaborative 'best practice' approach to VAWDASV commissioning based on the 2016 National VAWDASV Commissioning Toolkit (produced by Welsh Women's Aid, Lloyds Bank Foundation, National Adviser and other services).

The Welsh Government commissioning guidance must be applied across all grant and funding streams that commission of VAWDASV services including housing, social care, serious violence prevention, children and families and offender management.

Historically the Supporting People budget has been the largest single funding stream that contributes to the delivery of refuge and community domestic abuse specialist services in Wales. It remains uncertain whether Welsh Government is committed to ensuring the Housing Support Grant and Children and Communities grant supports VAWDASV provision, despite VAWDASV cutting across all priority areas these grants will cover. It is particularly concerning as the outcomes framework for these new grants does not include sufficient VAWDASV specific goals, outcomes and measures as recommended by the specialist sector and by some commissioners. Not making VAWDASV explicit in new grant funding arrangements and simply prioritising what the old grants delivered will result in more of the same, lack of prioritisation given to VAWDASV provision, and risks insufficient spending on specialist services.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

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<sup>9</sup> [https://www.audit.wales/system/files/publications/VAWDASV\\_eng.pdf](https://www.audit.wales/system/files/publications/VAWDASV_eng.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> The EU procurement threshold for the light touch regime is €750,000 (approximately £560,000). This means that contracts under this size do not need to go through a competitive tendering process and commissioners can be creative in their approaches, including using grant funding. This is outlined in Procurement Policy Note 18/15: New Threshold Levels [www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-policy-note-1815-new-threshold-levels-2016](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-policy-note-1815-new-threshold-levels-2016)

- 1. Welsh Government to ensure that the VAWDASV commissioning guidance is mandatory for all commissioners, is applied across funding streams, and ensures commissioners for the Housing Support Grant and Children and Communities Grant understand the definition of specialist services and their role in maintaining a network of provision across Wales.**
- 2. Welsh Government to include distinct VAWDASV outcomes for each goal in the outcome's framework for the grant, in line with the outcome aim of a more equal Wales within the Future Generations Act.**

## **Sustainable funding**

Despite a commitment in the Welsh Government National VAWDASV Strategy 2016-21 to deliver equal access to safety, protection and support from specialist services and to deliver secure and sustainable funding for VAWDASV specialist services, we have continued to see only further short-term annual funding in most areas (with notable exceptions where 5 and 7 year contracts have been issued by commissioners).

The majority of the VAWDASV sector continues to face uncertainty because of a lack of secure and sustainable funding. Many VAWDASV services in Wales have reported that they continue to find it challenging to adequately plan for the future due to their reliance on annual local authority funding and additional short-term grants. Specialist services “by and for” Black and minoritised women specialist services for women with complex and multiple needs, specialist services for children and young people, and specialist rape crisis and sexual violence services remain particularly at risk.

Welsh Government has committed to reviewing how secure sustainable funding might be achieved nationally, and a time-limited ‘task and finish’ working group has been meeting for nearly 4 years led by Government and National Advisors.

However, at the time of writing, we are still unclear about what this solution might look like from Government. Welsh Women’s Aid has mapped and provided the Welsh Government with information on the funding and resources going in to the VAWDASV specialist sector across Wales, this was provided to the Welsh Government Sustainable Funding Task and Finish Group in 2018. Currently there has not been similar mapping that has produced the equivalent information for the public sector or for Government departments. We have also published annual State of the Sector reports<sup>11</sup> analysing membership data to set out the current demand for specialist services and the current funding landscape. These have documented the continued struggle of specialist services to find the funding they need to provide high-quality, needs led services to all survivors of VAWDASV. We have also made several recommendations and proposals on how to achieve this. Most recently we have written a paper with recommendations for delivering this, in collaboration with some regional commissioners, however we have yet to discuss this at the Group.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/State-of-the-Sector-2018-Eng.pdf>  
<https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/WWA-State-of-the-Sector-2017-ENG.pdf>  
<https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/State-of-the-sector-report-2016-FINAL.pdf>



The VAWDASV grant is relatively small and is allocated by Welsh Government to national or regional providers and to local authorities, as well as to some national services and to Welsh Women's Aid as the umbrella body in Wales.

As stated earlier, the majority of the funding for specialist services comes through other mechanisms. However there appears to be no strategic oversight as to how each Government Department's funding is utilised on VAWDASV, or how each local authority and health board spends its resources on VAWDASV, or how mainstream commissioning through grants or contracts benefits specialist services or other community provision to address VAWDASV.

For instance, it is well evidenced that the cost of VAWDASV to the health service is significant, however at present it is unknown how much investment is made by health services across Wales in identifying and responding to VAWDASV. Feedback from our members shows that engagement and investment by local health boards is ad hoc and is a significant gap in many areas. There is no mechanisms at present that look at all government department and local authority and health board spend on VAWDASV as a whole, so that investment can be made to embed VAWDASV delivery across all areas.

Welsh Women's Aid has joined with Cymorth Cymru and Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru for the Housing Matter Campaign<sup>12</sup> calling for an increase in the funding for the Housing Support Grant. We have calculated the cost to provide support to survivors both in refuge and in the community in Wales at £22,035,958. In 2017/18, the VAWDASV sector received only £8,947,707 from supporting people funding. Greater joined up investment is needed so that no survivor is turned away and that services can provide change that lasts through a holistic model of support from identification to recovery including supporting children and young people alongside the non-abusive parent. This would include refuge services (including shared housing, self-contained units and dispersed accommodation), resettlement support, outreach and floating support, crisis interventions, dedicated support for children and young people and therapeutic support such as support groups.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1. Welsh Government prioritises meeting its commitment to deliver secure and sustainable funding model for VAWDASV specialist services, including:**
  - **Reviewing Welsh Government and other funding sources that currently support VAWDASV services and interventions across Wales**
  - **Facilitating greater collaboration between relevant partners and provides the opportunity for future funding to take account of gaps in service provision and be more responsive to local needs**
  - **Developing the principles and framework for a model for sustainable funding of VAWDASV specialist services that takes account of the above review and regionalisation agenda**

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/campaigning/housing-matters/>



- 2. Welsh Government increases in the funding for the Housing Support Grant to adequately meet the need to provide support to survivors both in refuge and in the community in Wales.***

## **Dedicated provision for children and young people**

Welsh Women's Aid has carried out analysis of the current provision and funding for dedicated children and young people's specialist services in Wales.<sup>13</sup> The continued 'post code' lottery of services for children across Wales is a major concern for Welsh Women's Aid and this is linked to the ongoing lack of action to deliver the Strategy commitment to ensure secure sustainable funding by Welsh Government.

Our analysis of evidence suggests that at least 69% of children in Wales who experienced violence and abuse did not receive specialist support last year<sup>14</sup>. The current picture of specialist service provision is varied across Wales. Within our membership of specialist services:

- 33% of specialist services have just one dedicated children and young people's member of staff providing full (19%) or part time (14%) support.
- In one organisation this part time provision equates to 5 hours a week to provide support to all the children and young people using their service.
- One service has no specialist children and young people staff in place at all.
- 24% of specialist services have between 1 and 2 members of staff providing full (10%) or part time (14%) support.
- 33% of specialist services have between 2 and 3 members of staff providing full (19%) or part time (14%) support.

Short-term grant funding means that services are precarious and this impacts on staff-turnover and service continuity, which impacts adversely on children and young people who have experienced trauma and need time to build trusting relationships with professionals.

Specialist children's services have a particularly effective role in early intervention to combat the impacts of violence and abuse and significant improvements are seen in health, safety, wellbeing and achievement. Some VAWDASV specialist services in Wales, usually funded by charitable trusts and foundations, offer trauma-informed specialised domestic abuse, sexual violence counselling, and play therapy services for children and young people, which could inform best practice and development and commissioning of further services.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Children-and-Young-People-participation-report-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

Our analysis of regional strategies in Wales shows they do not give adequate commitment, if any, to develop and provide specialist provision for children and young people affected by VAWDASV.

Welsh Women's Aid is also concerned that eligibility for the Housing Support Grant does not expand to children residing in refuges with their mother. Current funding restrictions and limitations prevent services from being able to fully support both mother and child holistically, which is in the best interests of the child.

The Welsh Government has committed to adhering to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which states; 'children who have experienced neglect, abuse, exploitation, torture or who are victims of war must receive special support to help them recover their health, dignity, self-respect and social life', something the specialist sector is best placed to deliver.

Considering the Welsh Government's commitments to addressing and mitigating adverse childhood experiences, investment in earlier intervention and support to reduce the impacts of VAWDASV will significantly improve outcomes for some the most vulnerable children and young people in our society and result in savings to the public purse in the longer term.

***RECOMMENDATION: Welsh Government ensure it embeds provision for children and young people with in its secure and sustainable funding model for VAWDASV specialist services.***

### **Multiple needs**

Welsh Women's Aid welcomes the recent announcement by the Welsh Government of £1.2 million capital funding for move-on and dispersed units, particularly focused on increasing support for those with multiple needs.

The new capital grant is welcome, as the second most prevalent reason for survivors not being accepted into refuge-based support was because the service did not have the capacity to meet their support needs however this is mainly due to lack of revenue funding for support services. **77% of survivors who were unable to access refuge (512) were due to issues surrounding capacity;** whether this was because they were full, unable to meet support needs due to complex needs, lacked accessibility for disabled survivors, lacked resources to support women unable to claim benefits, the survivors were high risk or had previous criminal convictions, or were displaying abusive behaviour.

Whilst capital allocations are welcome, significant coordinated consideration needs to be made about the revenue investment in the provision of support for those that access this accommodation. Not all services in Wales are resourced to have the capacity to offer support to survivors with additional/complex support needs and are limited in how many families they are able to support due to current occupancy, staffing and funding. A joined-up approach is needed between commissioners regionally and Welsh Government, which in some areas, has been lacking.

Further to this, evidence from our joint report with Disability Wales titled '*Supporting disabled people experiencing violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence in Wales*'

<sup>15</sup>highlighted the vital need for adequate funding is available for disabled survivors. We found services were not always fully resourced to support disabled survivors, additionally, disabled survivors knew this, with many responses stating they did not report the abuse, as one pointed out ‘the support was not there for me to move away from the family home, so there was little point in me reporting the abuse’.

***RECOMMENDATION: Welsh Government and relevant authorities, work with specialist services to ensure there is alignment of capital and revenue funding streams to support all survivors of VAWDASV.***

### **Women with No Recourse to Public Funds**

Last year 30 women without ‘recourse to public funds’ were supported by our members in refuges who would have otherwise faced destitution. However, funding to support women with no recourse to public funds is significantly limited, and there remains misunderstanding about what constitutes a “public fund” under immigration law, for the purposes of supporting survivors of abuse. UK government immigration rules clearly state “housing and homelessness assistance” constitutes very specific discharge of statutory duties to prevent homelessness.<sup>16</sup> This is further outlined in the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 which does not reference supporting people funds. We are of the understanding that these duties do not restrict supporting people funding and other similar grants being used to support those with no recourse to public funds.

We have continued to see a lack of resources available to enable the specialist VAWDASV sector to support women with an insecure immigration status. While we appreciate decisions on welfare are made at a UK level, we are clear Welsh Government must do more, within the powers it has, to support survivors with no recourse to public funds, particularly given Wales’ commitment to becoming a Nation of Sanctuary for refugees and asylum seekers. By providing a different level of access to women with an insecure immigration status is a discriminatory approach and is not in line with a commitment to the Istanbul Convention principles of ensuring all survivors have access to support including migrant women.

The draft guidance on the new Housing Support Grant established by Welsh Government currently stipulates that anyone whose immigration status determines they cannot access “public funds” cannot, from next year, be supported in Wales by this– even if the grant is used for delivering support not related to statutory duty discharge. This results in discrimination against a large group of people. This **specifically discriminates against survivors of domestic and sexual violence**, who would have previously been able to access specialist advocacy and community support or support in refuges (if the service could cover rental costs) to help them

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/WWA-and-Disability-Wales-2019-report-Final-ENG.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> For example: allocation of a council house; allocation of housing association property if this is allocated under the local authority duty discharge.  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/518624/Public\\_funds\\_v13.0.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/518624/Public_funds_v13.0.pdf)

recover from abuse and meet their housing support needs. This is contrary to UK immigration rules as outlined above.

Considering the Welsh Government duties to adhere to the Istanbul Convention and its support for all migrants and refugees as part of its commitment to become a Nation of Sanctuary, we would expect to see a commitment from Welsh Government to do more to support this cohort of women and urge Welsh Government to clarify if Supporting People/Housing Support Grant funding can be used for this cohort.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1. Welsh Government publishes the Equality Impact Assessment on the Housing Support Grant guidance as it stands.**
- 2. Welsh Government clarifying that any new grants and funding streams introduced by Welsh Government do not constitute public funds under immigration rules, unless they specifically fall within immigration law and associated rules.**
- 3. Welsh Government introduce a national destitution fund for survivors with no recourse to public funds who fall outside of Government concessions and whose well-being and safety is being impacted detrimentally as a result.**

#### **Education**

In 2015 we were pleased to work with the Welsh Government to publish the Whole Education Approach Good Practice Guidance on Violence Against Women and Girls. As part of this, Welsh Women's Aid have welcomed the development of the new curriculum to improve relationship and sexuality education. However, we continue to be presented with evidence with the lack of progress in delivering a "Whole Education Approach" to meet the needs of children who are survivors of abuse and their non-abusive parents as laid out in the guidance.

According to the Estyn report on Healthy Relationships<sup>17</sup> it was recommended schools "implement Welsh Government guidance to provide a whole-school approach to preventing violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence" (R1) and "ensure that all staff who work in schools complete the training set out in the National Training Framework" (R2).

Our engagement with survivors, specialist services, education professionals and regional advisers suggests that the implementation of the Whole Education Approach, where it is happening, is predominately focused on one off RSE lessons and is not embedding a response to survivors of VAWDASV (both children and adults) throughout the school system. This engagement has suggested that key areas of the Whole Education Approach are not being delivered on. This has left some survivors feeling that their children have been further victimised by a school system that could not support their needs.

There is no public data or information on the monitoring of teachers and other school staff having adequate training on VAWDASV. Similarly we are significantly concerned that the Welsh Government *Online safety action plan for children and young people in Wales 2019* stated that "in light of the need to reduce bureaucratic burdens, and the review of the

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-reports/review-healthy-relationships-education>

curriculum, the Welsh Government does not intend, at this stage, to introduce the duty for local authorities to report on educational provision in respect of the (VAWDASV) Act” under action 15.

The Welsh Government committed to review and monitor the impact of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 and local authorities’ duties in relation to education provision. As we are hearing evidence from survivors that schools are not responding adequately to children surviving VAWDASV we feel that it is critically important that the government reconsider the above decision.

While schools are providing generic mental health responses or safeguarding responses to children and young people affected by VAWDASV, these do not provide them with the specialist support they need. School counsellors are not necessarily VAWDASV-trained / experts and cannot provide the specialist support needed by the child or young person. In many areas funding to engage local specialist support services to engage with education institutions does not exist and referral pathways are minimal. Training is vital to ensure teachers and other staff are aware of referral pathways to specialist support services for children, parents and staff affected by VAWDASV.

In December 2017 Welsh Government published The Future of the Sex and Relationships Education Curriculum in Wales: Recommendations of the Sex and Relationships Education Expert Panel.<sup>18</sup> As a member of this panel Welsh Women’s Aid would call for the implementation of the recommendations set out in the report.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1. Welsh Government carries out monitoring of the full implementation of the Whole Education Approach, this should be included in an inspection framework as part of aligning new inspection arrangements to the new curriculum.**
- 2. Welsh Government should implement in full the recommendations of the SRE Expert Panel report<sup>19</sup> including Welsh Government establishing a SRE professional development pathway, differentiated for stage of education, to be incorporated into ITE and professional learning courses.**

**Prevention**

A coordinated response to prevention is essential. Too often support has not been available until abuse reaches crisis point, whereas preventative work can step in at a much earlier point and stop escalation, work to stop the irreversible impact of living with long-term abuse on children and ultimately save spending pressure on the public purse.

Our analysis of regional and local VAWDASV strategies shows very limited reference to and commitment to delivering collaborative preventative approaches. We need national and local

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<sup>18</sup> <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/the-future-of-the-sex-and-relationships-education-curriculum-in-wales.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/the-future-of-the-sex-and-relationships-education-curriculum-in-wales.pdf>

policy makers and elected members to commit to prioritising prevention, including allocating resources towards the prevention of VAWDASV in housing, health, education, safeguarding, criminal justice and community safety, local government and finance. Spending on prevention work remains low despite the policy intent of the Act 2015. Delivery of sustainable funding, as discussed earlier, should also work towards an effective prevention model as well as ensuring the maintenance of a network of life saving support services. While, over time, prevention work can ease demand on other services, funding for the lifesaving, crisis intervention work provided by the specialist VAWDASV sector must continue.

The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 wellbeing goals are relevant to the prevention of VAWDASV and supporting survivors, including an equal Wales, a resilient Wales and a healthy Wales. Relevant authorities have to take action to achieve these goals, yet to do so effectively they need to take action to end VAWDASV as a cause and consequence of inequality between women and men and which has a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of survivors and their children. VAWDASV is prominent within the Future Generations Commissioner's journey to a more equal Wales however further leadership from Welsh Government to ensure public service boards and regional partnership boards prioritise VAWDASV prevention within their development and delivery of well-being goals and plans is needed to embed it across their priorities.

Prevention work includes early intervention work both with survivors and children who are experiencing the 'early signs' of violence and abuse but that also targets perpetrators showing signs of abusive behaviour, before escalation starts.

Welsh Women's Aid's "Change that Lasts" model has been supported by Welsh Government as a model for early intervention and prevention, based on years of working with survivors and evidence of research on a needs led, strengths based approach. The model (Ask Me, Trusted Professional and early intervention work with survivors and perpetrators in specialist services) is an example of systems change on prevention and early intervention, where survivors and perpetrators are identified early and responded to and communities are upskilled to spot the signs earlier, respond appropriately and signpost people to access specialist services that provide a holistic response beyond a risk based approach to provide needs-led and strength based support. Despite Welsh Government advocating for this model in the National Strategy, current funding for the pilot in South Wales, which incorporates all aspects of the model, is funded by the Home Office Transformation Fund as well as Tampon Tax funded Ask Me in Mid, West and North Wales regions. The funding streams end in 2020. Welsh Women's Aid has written to the DCMS and Home Office to raise concerns of the loss of this highly effective model in Wales.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1. Closer alignment of the VAWDASV Act and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act in their implementation and monitoring.**
- 2. Welsh Government monitors and holds to account public service boards and regional VAWDASV strategic boards on prioritising prevention and early intervention within their strategic planning and needs assessments.**

***3. Welsh Government ensure that investing in evidence-based prevention and early investment is an integral part of a secure and sustainable funding model.***

**National Advisor positions as required by the Act**

Welsh Women's Aid has welcomed the allocation of additional hours to make this position a full-time equivalent post.

At present the engagement with Welsh Women's Aid and the specialist sector is minimal and predominantly through the reconfigured National Advisory Board (now called the "National Expert Group") that has met once in over a year.

While an annual plan has been published, clarity as to how this position is effective in holding Welsh Government, local authorities and health boards to account for their delivery the Act is still necessary.

We recognise the role's function in providing guidance and monitoring activities, although to date there has been limited information published as to what has been the result of successive annual plans and what has been ascertained from monitoring activities.

There has been a recent resurgence of strong support for the need for a VAWDASV Commissioner in Wales, following the Wales Audit Report and during recent Wales Centre for Public Policy consultation on public services' responses to VAWDASV in Wales. It remains unclear what the remit is of the Advisor role if there is a necessity to challenge Welsh Government or other public bodies about not fulfilling their statutory duties. It is unclear what sanctions will take place if these statutory duties are not met, and how these sanctions will be imposed. Sanctions are absolutely vital if the legislation is to 'have teeth' therefore clarity is needed on whether imposing sanctions on non-compliant organisations a statutory function is to be fulfilled by the Adviser or another body.

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For further information, please contact Head of Public Affairs and Communications,  
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## Appendix 1

### *Welsh Women's Aid Briefing May 2019*

## Wales and the 'Istanbul Convention'

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Welsh Women's Aid has considered the articles within the **European Convention on Preventing and Tackling Violence against Women and Domestic Violence** (the *Istanbul Convention*) within a Wales context.

Although Wales is acknowledged as a territorial entity under the EU structure, the UK hold the membership for the devolved nations and UK Government will be the signatory to the Convention when it is ratified. There are many Articles under the Convention, such as criminal justice and foreign affairs, which are reserved matters and so are the responsibility of Westminster Government. Wales is dependent on a unified legislative approach to their implementation at present.

We have focussed our assessment on the articles that are the responsibility of Welsh Government. We adopted a 'traffic-light' system to evaluate where we feel Welsh Government is complying with the Convention and where improvement is needed. Although the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 (the Act) has brought in many positive measures which help to meet the Istanbul Convention in Wales, it is clear from our assessment that whilst Welsh Government has made strides to meet the articles within the convention, there are a number of examples of where we feel there is, as yet, only partial compliance with the Convention articles, and in some cases we feel there is limited compliance. The Articles flagged as red and amber, below, highlight where we feel more work and investment is still needed to ensure compliance.

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**NON-COMPLIANT**

Article 14, point 2 - This is focused on education. While Welsh Government will meet point 1, 'the necessary steps to include teaching materials on issues such as equality... non-stereotyping gender roles, mutual respect, non-violent conflict resolution'. We feel not enough is done in 'informal education facilities' to promote the above principles.

Article 16, point 2 - 'Set up or support treatment programmes aimed at preventing perpetrators, in particular sex-offenders from re-offending'. While perpetrator guidance has been developed, not enough is being done to prevent perpetrators at a national level in terms of funding for safe accredited programmes.

Article 21 - There is a gap at a Welsh Government level for survivors to access specific regional and national complaint mechanisms, currently this is only available via super complaints at a UK level, or on issue specific areas.

**PARTIALLY-COMPLIANT**

Article 4 - Expects the state to promote and protect the rights of everyone, particularly women to live free from violence; by condemning all forms of discrimination, embedding appropriate legislation and ensuring the practical realisation of this. Prohibiting discrimination, abolishing laws which discriminate against women and ensuring special measures to prevent and protect women from gender based violence. While Wales has taken legislative steps to protect the rights of women in public and private life via the Act – implementation is slow on the ground and the gendered nature needs to be strengthened, particularly in regard to women's disproportionate suffering and women's inequality not being addressed.

Article 6 - The state should implement gender sensitive policies and while we have violence against women within the Act – a more gendered perspective is still needed, with some gender neutral practice still in place.

Article 7 - The state should ensure policies are co-ordinated to encompass measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence. While stakeholder engagement is good, the 3rd sector is not always included. In addition, while there is a written commitment to having survivors central to Welsh Government work, this is not always happening in practice in a meaningful way with recommendations being acted upon.

Article 8 - Appropriate financial and human resources should be allocated for the adequate implementation of policies and programmes to combat VAW. We feel that while financial resources are being put into specialist services, not enough financial or human resources are being invested in this area, which is leading to slow implementation of the Act. In addition, there is no money attached to the Advisor post and despite repeated calls from WWA the question of sustainable funding for services is not being answered

Article 11 - Disaggregated data should be collected at regular intervals on all forms of VAW to help study the root causes and effects and the prevalence of it. We feel data collection should fall under the National Advisor post, however progress has been slow to date. Prevalence assessments have been held up as well due to slow implementation of the VAWDASV indicators. There is still no framework or data collection, five years after implementation of the Act. There has been no commissioning of data collection or utilising data from the specialist sector.

Article 12 - The state should promote social and cultural changes in eradicating prejudice and other practices rooted in the idea of women's inferiority; take into account the needs of people made vulnerable by circumstances; promote the involvement of men and boys in preventing VAW and ensure so called honour is not used to justify acts of violence. Welsh Government funds campaigns to promote social change, however this could go further and there is often a gender neutral approach to campaigning. We feel Welsh Government considers those made vulnerable due to circumstances, except in cases of women with NRPFs. In terms of programmes for the empowerment of women – more investment would be beneficial.

Article 13 - While Welsh Government runs regular awareness raising campaigns, we are concerned there is not a strong emphasis on prevention in these campaigns.

Article 17 - The state should work with the private sector and social media to set guidelines and self-regulatory standards to prevent VAW. WWA have been resourced to do work with the private sector as well as develop workplace guidance however we are not aware of work done directly by Welsh Government. Welsh Government has produced an action plan for online safety for young people and guidance on cyber bullying. We are unaware of any work with tech companies around the harmful impacts of social media.

Article 18 - The state should take steps to protect all victims from any further acts of violence and there is effective co-operation between agencies to protect and support victims and witnesses. We are concerned that not enough measure have been taken to protect specialist services from funding cuts, or about prevention, early intervention and perpetrator work. There are effective measurements in place to ensure co-operation between agencies via Strategies and Advisory Boards as expected in the Act. However, some of the important agencies within that are non-devolved so Welsh Government's impact is limited. The Live Fear Free helpline is available as a triage referral tool. We are concerned that while the Act includes violence against women, Welsh Government responses are still gender neutral at times and do not always consider the societal response to the survivor, particularly in terms of multiple disadvantage and poverty. While benefits and Universal Credit are non-devolved, there are steps Welsh Government could take to do more around ensuring more economic independence.

Article 22 - The state should provide or arrange for specialist women's support services for all women and children. There is a network of services across Wales, however specific support for children is not always available or adequately resourced.

Article 25 - The state should provide for accessible rape and sexual violence centres; there is not enough fully resourced services for sexual violence survivors. Funding is not sustainable, and there are excessive waiting lists.

Article 31 - VAW should be considered when determining contact arrangements between the perpetrator and children. Guidance and training is being developed by CAFCASS Cymru in this area, but there is a lot of progress to make. We are also concerned that a history of domestic abuse is not always considered a good enough reason to limit perpetrator access to children.

Article 40 - Sexual harassment is a non-devolved criminal offence, but enforcement is not always strong. Welsh Government could also do more at a community safety level to change social attitudes to women and harassment.

Article 42 - The state should ensure justification is not made for so-called 'honour' based crimes. While legislation around this is non-devolved, there is a strategic leadership group in Welsh Government and more could be done on community safety, social attitudes and increasing funding for specialist by and for BAME services to address this.

Article 51 - Risk posed should be carried out by all relevant agencies; Welsh Government part funded the development of the Priority Perpetrator Identification tool. In addition the DASH RIC is used in Wales by specialist services, professionals and the Live Fear Free helpline.

## Detailed analysis of Wales' compliance with the Istanbul Convention

Article	Detail	Compliant	Partial progress	Limited/no progress
<b>Purposes, definitions, equality and non-discrimination, general obligations</b>				
Article 4 - Fundamental rights, equality and non-discrimination	<p>1. Parties shall take the necessary <b>legislative and other measures to promote and protect the right for everyone, particularly women, to live free from violence in both the public and the private sphere.</b></p> <p>2. Parties condemn all forms of discrimination against women and take, without delay, <b>the necessary legislative and other measures to prevent it</b>, in particular by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <b>embodying in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation the principle of equality between women and men and ensuring the practical realisation of this principle;</b></li> <li>b. <b>prohibiting discrimination against women, including through the use of sanctions, where appropriate;</b></li> <li>c. <b>abolishing laws and practices which discriminate against women.</b></li> </ol> <p>3. The implementation of the provisions of this Convention by the Parties, in particular <b>measures to protect the rights of victims, shall be secured without discrimination on any ground</b> such as sex, gender, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, state of health, disability, marital status, migrant or refugee status, or other status.</p> <p>4. Special measures that are necessary to prevent and protect women from gender-based violence shall not be considered discrimination under the terms of this Convention.</p> <p><i>Wales has taken legislative steps to protect the rights of women via the Act – however other measures to secure the realisation of this right are slow to introduce and implement. Practical realisation of women’s equality is not a reality on the ground, and neither have practices which discriminate against women been abolished.</i></p> <p><i>We call for a non-discriminatory approach to be put on a statutory footing to mark the importance of this as a legal guiding principle. In the absence of a comprehensive support framework in Welsh legislation, it is essential that there is cohesion and consistency in the</i></p>	<p>x</p>	<p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p>	

	<i>approach taken by public authorities when responding to victims. As it stands protections for migrant women are limited, victims face a post-code lottery to protection and valuable specialist services are not protected and Wales lacks delivery of adequate funding for refuges and support services, particularly for victims without recourse to public funds.</i>			
Article 5 - State obligations and due diligence	<p>1. Parties shall refrain from engaging in any act of violence against women and ensure that State authorities, officials, agents, institutions and other actors acting on behalf of the State act in conformity with this obligation.</p> <p>2. Parties shall take the necessary legislative and <b>other measures to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate, punish and provide reparation for acts of violence</b> covered by the scope of this Convention that are <b>perpetrated by non-State actors</b>.</p> <p>There are still some questions around enforcement of law for crimes against women for example rape attrition rates, we appreciate the CJS is devolved so limited in terms of Welsh Government impact on this. However there are known examples of violence against women by the state, from police officers for example and responsibility for this would lie with the PCCs which are devolved. Additionally, Welsh Government has a role to play in ending sexual harassment and published a report 'Creating the right culture' September 2018 on conduct within the Welsh Assembly and further afield.</p>		X  x	
Article 6 - Gender-sensitive policies	<p>1. Parties shall undertake to include <b>a gender perspective in the implementation and evaluation of the impact of the provisions of this Convention</b> and to <b>promote and effectively implement policies of equality between women and men and the empowerment of women</b>.</p> <p>While we have violence against women recognised on the face of the Act, the adoption of a gendered perspective across all aspects of delivery is yet to be achieved, with some gender neutral practice still in place.</p>		x	
<b>Integrated policies and data collection</b>				
Article 7 - Comprehensive and co-ordinated policies	<p>1. Parties shall take the necessary <b>legislative and other measures to adopt and implement State-wide effective, comprehensive and co-ordinated policies encompassing all relevant measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence</b></p>		X	

	<p><b>covered by the scope of this Convention and offer a holistic response to violence against women.</b></p> <p>2. Parties shall ensure that <b>policies place the rights of the victim at the centre of all measures and are implemented by way of effective co-operation</b> among all relevant agencies, institutions and organisations.</p> <p>3. <b>Measures taken pursuant to this article shall involve, where appropriate, all relevant actors</b>, such as government agencies, the national, regional and local parliaments and authorities, national human rights institutions and civil society organisations.</p> <p>Stakeholder engagement is good, however the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector civil society organisations are not always included in opportunities for co-operation to achieve effective policies and practice. The Strategy commits to having survivors rights and experiences central to multi-agency coordination and work, but this is not always happening in practice.</p>		X	
Article 8 - Financial resources	<p>1. Parties shall <b>allocate appropriate financial and human resources for the adequate implementation of integrated policies, measures and programmes to prevent and combat all forms of violence</b> covered by the scope of this Convention, <b>including those carried out by nongovernmental organisations and civil society.</b></p> <p>Financial resources are being invested into specialist services, however this is not secure nor sustainable so cannot be considered appropriate. Slow implementation of the Act has also been noted, which is in part due to limited resources being allocated to its delivery.</p>		X	
Article 9 - Non-governmental organisations and civil society	<p>1. Parties shall <b>recognise, encourage and support, at all levels, the work of relevant nongovernmental organisations</b> and of civil society active in combating violence against women and establish effective co-operation with these organisations.</p> <p>Welsh Government recognises and supports the work of some NGOs and involves civil society and NGOs in co-operating on some – but not all - aspects of Strategy delivery. The legislation doesn't secure the provision of specialist VAWG NGOs in Wales as it solely focusses on the public sector.</p>		X	
Article 10 - Co-ordinating body	<p>1. Parties shall designate or establish one or more official bodies responsible for the coordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by this Convention. These bodies</p>	X		

	<p>shall co-ordinate the collection of data as referred to in Article 11, analyse and disseminate its results.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Parties shall ensure that the bodies designated or established pursuant to this article receive information of a general nature on measures taken</li> <li>3. Parties shall ensure that the bodies designated or established pursuant to this article shall have the capacity to communicate directly and foster relations with their counterparts in other Parties.</li> <li>4.</li> </ol> <p>Welsh Government has allocated a national team leading on implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and measures regionally and locally, and resources a national umbrella body to secure this data from the third sector. National data collection and analysis is in its early stages. There is a National Advisor roles in place in Wales but the role should be further resourced and independence from the government should be ensured. The Act sets out that the role of the Advisor is to advise the Welsh Ministers about pursuing the Act or tackling related matters, give assistance to Ministers, undertake research relating to the Act ‘tackling related matters or examining whether abuse of any kind is related directly or indirectly to inequality of any kind between people of a different gender, gender identity or sexual orientation’ advise other people on matter relating the Act and produce reports on the Act.</p>	<p>X</p> <p>x</p>		
Article 11 - Data collection and research	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Parties shall undertake to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <b>Collect disaggregated relevant statistical data at regular intervals on cases of all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention;</b></li> <li>b. <b>Support research</b> in the field of all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention in order to study its root causes and effects, incidences and conviction rates, as well as the efficacy of measures taken to implement this Convention.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Parties shall endeavour to <b>conduct population-based surveys at regular intervals</b> to assess the prevalence of and trends in all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.</li> <li>3. Parties shall provide GREVIO (<a href="https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/grevio">https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/grevio</a>) with the information collected in order to stimulate international co-operation and enable international benchmarking.</li> </ol>		<p>X</p> <p>x</p>	





	<p>While more could be done to ensure acts of violence within the context of so called honour are prevented, we feel Welsh Government is clear that there are no justifications for this crime.</p> <p>Welsh Government funds campaigns to promote social change and has legislated to create statutory duties to prevent violence against women. However implementation on the ground is patchy or non-existent. There is consideration of those made vulnerable due to particular circumstances, but this does not often address multiple disadvantage faced by women particularly migrant/BME women without recourse to public funds. The promotion of programmes and activities for women's empowerment are limited and not evidence-based.</p>			
Article 13 - Awareness-raising	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parties shall <b>promote or conduct, on a regular basis and at all levels, awareness-raising campaigns or programmes</b>, including in co-operation with national human rights institutions and equality bodies, civil society and non-governmental organisations, especially women's organisations, where appropriate, <b>to increase awareness and understanding among the general public of the different manifestations of all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention, their consequences on children and the need to prevent such violence.</b></li> <li>Parties shall ensure the <b>wide dissemination among the general public of information on measures available to prevent acts of violence</b> covered by the scope of this Convention.</li> </ol> <p>National ad-hoc awareness campaigns have been created and disseminated, but these have not covered all forms of VAWG nor have they had a wide-ranging reach. Information amongst communities to prevent VAWG has been limited and needs further attention.</p>	X	x  x	
Article 14 – Education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parties shall take, where appropriate, the necessary steps to include teaching material on issues such as equality between women and men, non-stereotyped gender roles, mutual respect, non-violent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships, gender-based violence against women and the right to personal integrity, adapted to the evolving capacity of learners, in formal curricula and at all levels of education.</li> <li>Parties shall take the necessary steps to promote the principles referred to in paragraph 1 in informal educational facilities, as well as in sports, cultural and leisure facilities and the media.</li> </ol>	X		x

	Once compulsory SRE is in place, Welsh Government will comply with teaching materials on equality and VAW. However we are not aware of progress on 'informal education' such as in sports facilities and the media			
Article 15 – Training of Professionals	<p>1. Parties shall provide or strengthen appropriate <b>training for the relevant professionals dealing with victims or perpetrators of all acts of violence covered by the scope of this Convention, on the prevention and detection of such violence, equality between women and men, the needs and rights of victims, as well as on how to prevent secondary victimisation.</b></p> <p>2. Parties shall encourage that the training includes training on coordinated multi-agency co-operation to allow for a comprehensive and appropriate handling of referrals in cases of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.</p> <p>Training of professionals as expected by the convention is covered through the National Training Framework, however 'ask and act' only refers to victims of abuse, without including perpetrators.</p>	x	x	
Article 16 – Preventative Intervention and treatment programmes	<p>1. Parties shall take the necessary <b>legislative or other measures to set up or support programmes aimed at teaching perpetrators of domestic violence to adopt non-violent behaviour</b> in interpersonal relationships with a view to preventing further violence and changing violent behavioural patterns.</p> <p>2. Parties shall take the necessary <b>legislative or other measures to set up or support treatment programmes aimed at preventing perpetrators, in particular sex offenders, from re-offending.</b></p> <p>3. In taking the measures referred to, <b>parties shall ensure that the safety of, support for and the human rights of victims are of primary concern and that, where appropriate, these programmes are set up and implemented in close co-ordination with specialist support services for victims.</b></p> <p>Welsh Government has developed guidance for commissioning perpetrator services to suggested minimum standards but the access to and availability of programmes (to UK</p>	X	x	x

	standards) for domestic abuse and sexual offending is limited. Where programmes are commissioned by the state, sufficient resources to ensure victims are supported is limited.			
Article 17 – Participation of the private sector and media	<p>1. Parties shall <b>encourage the private sector, the information and communication technology sector and the media</b>, with due respect for freedom of expression and their independence, to participate in the elaboration and implementation of <b>policies and to set guidelines and self-regulatory standards to prevent violence against women</b> and to enhance respect for their dignity</p> <p>2. Parties shall develop and promote, in co-operation with private sector actors, <b>skills among children, parents and educators on how to deal with the information and communications environment that provides access to degrading content</b> of a sexual or violent nature which might be harmful.</p> <p>WWA have been resourced by Government to do work with the private sector as well as develop workplace guidance however we are not aware of work yet done directly by Welsh Government. Welsh Government has produced an action plan for online safety for young people and guidance on cyber bullying. We are unaware of any work with tech companies around the harmful impacts of social media.</p>		X	
<b>Protection and support</b>				
Article 18 – General Obligations	<p>1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to protect all victims from any further acts of violence.</p> <p>2. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures, in accordance with internal law, to ensure that there are appropriate mechanisms to provide for effective co-operation between all relevant state agencies, including the judiciary, public prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, local and regional authorities as well as non-governmental organisations and other relevant organisations and entities, in protecting and supporting victims and witnesses of all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention, including by referring to general and specialist support services as detailed in Articles 20 and 22 of this Convention.</p> <p>3. Parties shall ensure that measures taken shall:</p> <p>a. be based on a gendered understanding of violence against women and domestic violence and shall focus on the human rights and safety of the victim;</p>	X	X	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. be based on an integrated approach which takes into account the relationship between victims, perpetrators, children and their wider social environment;</li> <li>c. aim at avoiding secondary victimisation;</li> <li>d. aim at the empowerment and economic independence of women victims of violence;</li> <li>e. allow, where appropriate, for a range of protection and support services to be located on the same premises;</li> <li>f. address the specific needs of vulnerable persons, including child victims, and be made available to them.</li> </ul> <p>4. The provision of services shall not depend on the victim’s willingness to press charges or testify against any perpetrator.</p> <p>5. Parties shall take the appropriate measures to provide consular and other protection and support to their nationals and other victims entitled to such protection in accordance with their obligations under international law.</p> <p>Where we have scored amber for point 1, we are concerned that not enough measure have been taken to protect specialist services from funding cuts, or about prevention, early intervention and perpetrator work to protect all victims from harm. Under point 2, there are effective measurements in place to ensure co-operation between agencies via Strategies and Advisory Boards as expected in the Act. However, some of the important agencies within that are non-devolved so Welsh Governments impact is limited. Under point 3, we are concerned that while the Act includes violence against women, Welsh Government responses are still gender neutral at times and does not always consider the societal response to the survivor, particularly in terms of multiple disadvantage and poverty. While benefits and universal credit are non-devolved, there are steps Welsh Government could take to do more around ensuring more economic independence. Point 5 we believe this is reserved.</p>	x		
<p>Article 19 – Information</p>	<p>Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that victims receive adequate and timely information on available support services and legal measures in a language they understand.</p> <p>This is delivered via the Live Fear Free helpline</p>	x		

<p>Article 20 – General Support Services</p>	<p>1. Parties shall <b>take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that victims have access to services facilitating their recovery from violence.</b> These measures should include, when necessary, services such as legal and psychological counselling, financial assistance, housing, education, training and assistance in finding employment.</p> <p>2. Parties shall take the necessary <b>legislative or other measures to ensure that victims have access to health care and social services and that services are adequately resourced and professionals are trained to assist victims and refer them</b> to the appropriate services.</p> <p>While legislative measures are in place to promote effective commissioning of services with the aim of achieving equal access to support services and there is a commitment in the VAWDASV strategy, our State of the Sector annual analysis shows that not all victims have access to help and support where and when they need it. Services also lack secure and sustainable funding to deliver core crisis and long-term recovery, and do not have the capacity to meet demand. The National Training Framework ensures healthcare and other devolved agencies are able to support survivors, however women with NRPF are not always able to access those services.</p>		<p>X</p> <p>X</p>	
<p>Article 21 – Assistance in individual/collective complaints</p>	<p>Parties shall ensure that victims have information on and access to applicable regional and international individual/collective complaints mechanisms. Parties shall promote the provision of sensitive and knowledgeable assistance to victims in presenting any such complaints.</p> <p>Survivors have access to complaint mechanisms via the Super Complaints process regarding CJS concerns but this is at a UK level. There is therefore a gap at a Wales/regional level.</p>			<p>X</p>
<p>Article 22 – Specialist support services</p>	<p>1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to <b>provide or arrange for, in an adequate geographical distribution, immediate, short- and long-term specialist support services to any victim subjected to any of the acts of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.</b></p> <p>2. Parties shall provide or arrange for <b>specialist women’s support services to all women victims of violence and their children.</b></p>	<p></p>	<p>X</p> <p>X</p>	

	<p>There is a network of services across Wales, however members have reported to us that geographical factors, such as rurality are not always considered by commissioners. In addition, long-term specialist support services are not readily available. Finally, specific support for children is not always available or particular cohorts of women, Women's Aid Save Refuges, Save Lives report found there are not enough refuges per population and on one day 155 women and 103 children were turned away from the first refuge they approached.</p>			
Article 23 - Shelters	<p>Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to <b>provide for the setting-up of appropriate, easily accessible shelters in sufficient numbers to provide safe accommodation for and to reach out pro-actively to victims, especially women and their children</b></p> <p>Accessible refuges are available across Wales however there are not enough bed spaces to meet the needs of all women and children seeking refuge. Refuges become less accessible for women with additional support needs, either due to a disability or multiple disadvantage, those with large families or teenage sons.</p>		x	
Article 24 – Telephone helplines	<p>Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to set up state-wide round-the-clock (24/7) telephone helplines free of charge to provide advice to callers, confidentially or with due regard for their anonymity, in relation to all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.</p> <p>The Live Fear Free helpline is available 24/7</p>	x		
Article 25 – Support for victims of sexual violence	<p>Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to provide for the setting up of appropriate, easily accessible rape crisis or sexual violence referral centres for victims in sufficient numbers to provide for medical and forensic examination, trauma support and counselling for victims.</p> <p>There is not enough fully resourced services for sexual violence survivors. Funding is fraught, members highlight concerns about funding uncertainty, with limited funding coming from devolved areas such as health, local authority or Welsh Government funding streams. Members have reported that they have never been fully funded and rely on self-</p>		x	

	generating funding streams. In addition, there are excessive waiting lists Our State of the Sector report found 292 survivors of sexual violence were waiting for support, due to demand exceeding capacity, this represents 26% of referrals.			
Article 26 – Protection and support for child witnesses	<p>1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that <b>in the provision of protection and support services to victims, due account is taken of the rights and needs of child witnesses of all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.</b></p> <p>2. Measures taken pursuant to this article shall include <b>age-appropriate psychosocial counselling for child witnesses of all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention and shall give due regard to the best interests of the child.</b></p> <p>As stated, there is limited resources to support children in their own right. If children are subject to a child protection register, they should be entitled to an advocate. Additionally, children in the care system (perhaps because of witnessing/being subjected to violence and abuse) are also given the option of an advocate.</p>		x	
Article 27 - Reporting	<p>Parties shall take the necessary measures to <b>encourage any person witness to the commission of acts of violence</b> covered by the scope of this Convention or who has reasonable grounds to believe that such an act may be committed, or that further acts of violence are to be expected, <b>to report this to the competent organisations or authorities.</b></p> <p>This is supported by Welsh Government’s Don’t Be Bystander campaign and some funding has been provided to WWA to develop and roll out to universities. We are unaware of any work to date on 3<sup>rd</sup> party reporting.</p>	x		
Article 28 – Reporting by Professionals	Parties shall take the necessary measures to ensure that the confidentiality rules imposed by internal law on certain professionals do not constitute an obstacle to the possibility, under appropriate conditions, of their reporting to the competent organisations or authorities if they have reasonable grounds to believe that a serious act of violence covered by the scope of this Convention, has been committed and further serious acts of violence are to be expected.	x		

	There are a number of protocols in place to ensure confidentiality when information sharing. We are concerned that GDPR could impact some monitoring			
<b>Substantive law</b>				
Article 29 – Civil lawsuits and remedies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to provide victims with adequate civil remedies against the perpetrator.</li> <li>Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to provide victims, in accordance with the general principles of international law, with adequate civil remedies against State authorities that have failed in their duty to take the necessary preventive or protective measures within the scope of their powers.</li> </ol> <p>The Renting Homes Act will make it easier to target the perpetrator for evictions, but it is not in law yet. There are measures in place for survivors to challenge state failures which is at a UK level, which we would encourage devolved monitoring of e.g. by the Advisors.</p>		x	
Article 30 – Compensation	Criminal injuries compensation is non-devolved			
Article 31 – Custody, visitation rights and safety	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that, in the determination of custody and visitation rights of children, incidents of violence covered by the scope of this Convention are taken into account.</li> <li>Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the exercise of any visitation or custody rights does not jeopardise the rights and safety of the victim or children</li> </ol> <p>In terms of visitation for children, guidance and training is being developed but this is an area that has a lot of progress to make. We are also concerned that domestic abuse is not considered a good enough reason not to grant access to children. There is also a lack of nationally available supervised contact facilities available, particularly in rural areas.</p>		x x	
Article 32 – Civil consequences of forced marriage	Parties shall take the necessary legislative <b>or other measures to ensure that marriages concluded under force may be voidable, annulled or dissolved without undue financial or administrative burden</b> placed on the victim.			



	Non – devolved			
Article 33 – psychological violence	<p>Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the intentional conduct of seriously impairing a person’s psychological integrity through coercion or threats is criminalised.</p> <p>This is covered in the Serious Crime Act and is reserved</p>			
Article 34 - Stalking	<p>Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the intentional conduct of repeatedly engaging in threatening conduct directed at another person, causing her or him to fear for her or his safety, is criminalised</p> <p>Non-devolved but criminalised by UK Government</p>			
Article 35 – Physical violence	<p>Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the intentional conduct of committing acts of physical violence against another person is criminalised</p> <p>Non-devolved but criminalised by UK Government</p>			
Article 36 – sexual violence including rape	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the following intentional conducts are criminalised: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A) engaging in non-consensual vaginal, anal or oral penetration of a sexual nature of the body of another person with any bodily part or object;</li> <li>B) engaging in other non-consensual acts of a sexual nature with a person;</li> <li>C) causing another person to engage in non-consensual acts of a sexual nature with a third person.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Consent must be given voluntarily as the result of the person’s free will assessed in the context of the surrounding circumstances.</li> <li>3. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the provisions of paragraph 1 also apply to acts committed against former or current spouses or partners as recognised by internal law.</li> </ol> <p>Non-devolved but criminalised by UK Government</p>			

Article 37 – Forced marriage	<p>1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the intentional conduct of forcing an adult or a child to enter into a marriage is criminalised.</p> <p>2. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the intentional conduct of luring an adult or a child to the territory of a Party or State other than the one she or he resides in with the purpose of forcing this adult or child to enter into a marriage is criminalised</p> <p>Non-devolved but criminalised by UK Government</p>			
Article 38 – Female Genital Mutilation	<p>1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the following intentional conducts are criminalised:</p> <p>A) excising, infibulating or performing any other mutilation to the whole or any part of a woman’s labia majora, labia minora or clitoris;</p> <p>B) coercing or procuring a woman to undergo any of the acts listed in point a;</p> <p>C) inciting, coercing or procuring a girl to undergo any of the acts listed in point a</p> <p>Non-devolved but Welsh Government have done a lot of work around awareness raising and taking strategic leadership</p>			
Article 39 – forced abortion and forced sterilisation	<p>1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the following intentional conducts are criminalised:</p> <p>A) Performing an abortion on a woman without her prior and informed consent;</p> <p>B) Performing surgery which has the purpose or effect of terminating a woman’s capacity to naturally reproduce without her prior and informed consent or understanding of the procedure.</p> <p>Non-devolved but criminalised by UK Government</p>			
Article 40 – sexual harassment	Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment, is subject to criminal or other legal sanction.		x	

	This is a non-devolved criminal offence but enforcement is not always strong. Welsh Government could also do more at a community safety level to change social attitudes to women and harassment.			
Article 41 – Aiding and abetting and attempt	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to establish as an offence, when committed intentionally, aiding or abetting the commission of the offences established in accordance with Articles 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38.a and 39 of this Convention.</li> <li>Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to establish as offences, when committed intentionally, attempts to commit the offences established in accordance with Articles 35, 36, 37, 38.a and 39 of this Convention.</li> </ol> <p>Non-devolved but criminalised by UK Government</p>			
Article 42 – Unacceptable justifications for crimes, including crimes committed in the name of so-called honour	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parties shall take the necessary legislative <b>or other measures to ensure that, in criminal proceedings initiated</b> following the commission of any of the acts of violence covered by the scope of this Convention, <b>culture, custom, religion, tradition or so-called “honour” shall not be regarded as justification for such acts. This covers, in particular, claims that the victim has transgressed cultural, religious, social or traditional norms or customs of appropriate behaviour.</b></li> <li>Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that incitement by any person of a child to commit any of the acts referred to in paragraph 1 shall not diminish the criminal liability of that person for the acts committed.</li> </ol> <p>Non-devolved. There is a strategic leadership group in Welsh Government but more could be done on community safety, social attitudes and increasing funding for specialist by and for BME services.</p>		x	
Article 43 – Application of criminal offences	<p>The offences established in accordance with this Convention shall apply irrespective of the nature of the relationship between victim and perpetrator.</p> <p>Non devolved, however the VAWDASV Act includes no time limit on the length of relationship, it will still recognise that violence and abuse has been experienced in the context of VAWDASV.</p>			
Article 44 - Jurisdiction	This is likely at a UK level and will be covered under the DA bill			

Article 45 – Sanctions and measures	Non-devolved			
Article 46 – Aggravating circumstances	Non-devolved			
Article 47 – Sentences passed by another party	Non-devolved			
Article 48 – Prohibition of mandatory alternative dispute resolution processes or sentencing	Non-devolved			
Article 49 – Investigation, prosecution, procedural law and protective measures	Non-devolved			
Article 50 – immediate response, prevention and protection	Non-devolved			
Article 51 – Risk assessment and risk management	1 2  Welsh Government part funded the development of the priority perp intervention tool. In addition the DASH RIC is used by specialist services and the Live Fear Free helpline	x	x	
Article 52 – Emergency barring orders	Non-devolved, however the Renting Homes Act will include guidance on removing perpetrators from joint tenancies			

Article 53 – Restraining or protection orders	Non-devolved however Welsh Government could fulfil a monitoring function on the use of these in Wales			
Article 54 – Investigations and evidence	Evidence relating to the sexual history of victims is a non-devolved			
Article 55 – Ex Parte and ex officio proceedings	A case being wholly dependent on the complainant of a victim is a non-devolved matter. In regards to support for victims in the court process, Welsh Government should ensure there are more co-located court IDVAs			
Article 56 – Measures of protection	Non-devolved however the use of special measures in courts are not currently standard but need to be requested. In order to better comply special measures in courts must be standardised.			
Article 57 – legal aid	Non-devolved – but many barriers in place to access			
Article 58 – Statute of limitations	Non-devolved			
Article 59 – Residence Status	Non-devolved, however Welsh Government could do more to ensure the funding of specialist services to enable women who are on a spousal visa, to go through the process.			
Article 60 – Gender based asylum claims	Welsh Government should ensure a gender responsive reception for refugees and consider the gender sensitive nature of the dispersal areas			
Article 61 – non-refoulement	Non-devolved			
Article 62 – General principals	Non-devolved			
Article 63 – measures relating to persons at risk	Non-devolved			
Article 64 – Information	Non-devolved			
Article 65 – Data protection	We assume Welsh Government is compliant	x		

## **Articles 66 – 81**

The remaining articles of the convention are concerned with the monitoring mechanisms used by the 'Group of experts on action against violence against women and domestic violence (GREVIO) and the implementation of the convention by Welsh Government. Articles are concerned with; who will make up the group of experts, the procedures for monitoring, such as submitting a report. It also includes details on the process for amendments to the conventions and that the convention should not prevent the introduction of laws which would further benefit people impacted by violence against women. The articles also explain that the convention can be denounced and the process for doing that.

Archwilydd Cyffredinol Cymru  
Auditor General for Wales

## Progress in implementing the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act



WALES AUDIT OFFICE  
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

This report has been prepared for presentation to the National Assembly under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004

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**Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.**



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# Summary

## Victims and survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence are often let down by an inconsistent, complex and fragmented system

- 1 Domestic violence occurs in all social classes and is equally prevalent in both rural and urban Wales. In the majority of incidences, the attacker is not a stranger but is known to the victim and is likely to have, or have had, an intimate relationship with them. Whether it be sexual assault, rape, physical assault or emotional abuse, women are at greater risk from husbands, boyfriends, male relatives and acquaintances than from strangers. Violent attacks of this nature are rarely one-off occurrences but are likely to be persistent and frequent with the objective of perpetuating power and control over victims. Victims can be from across the whole spectrum of society, including older people, all ethnicities, religions and beliefs, people with disabilities and people from the Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community.

### Exhibit 1: defining domestic violence and abuse

The Welsh Government definition of domestic violence and abuse is: 'any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can be psychological; physical; sexual; financial; and emotional.'

The other components of VAWDASV are:

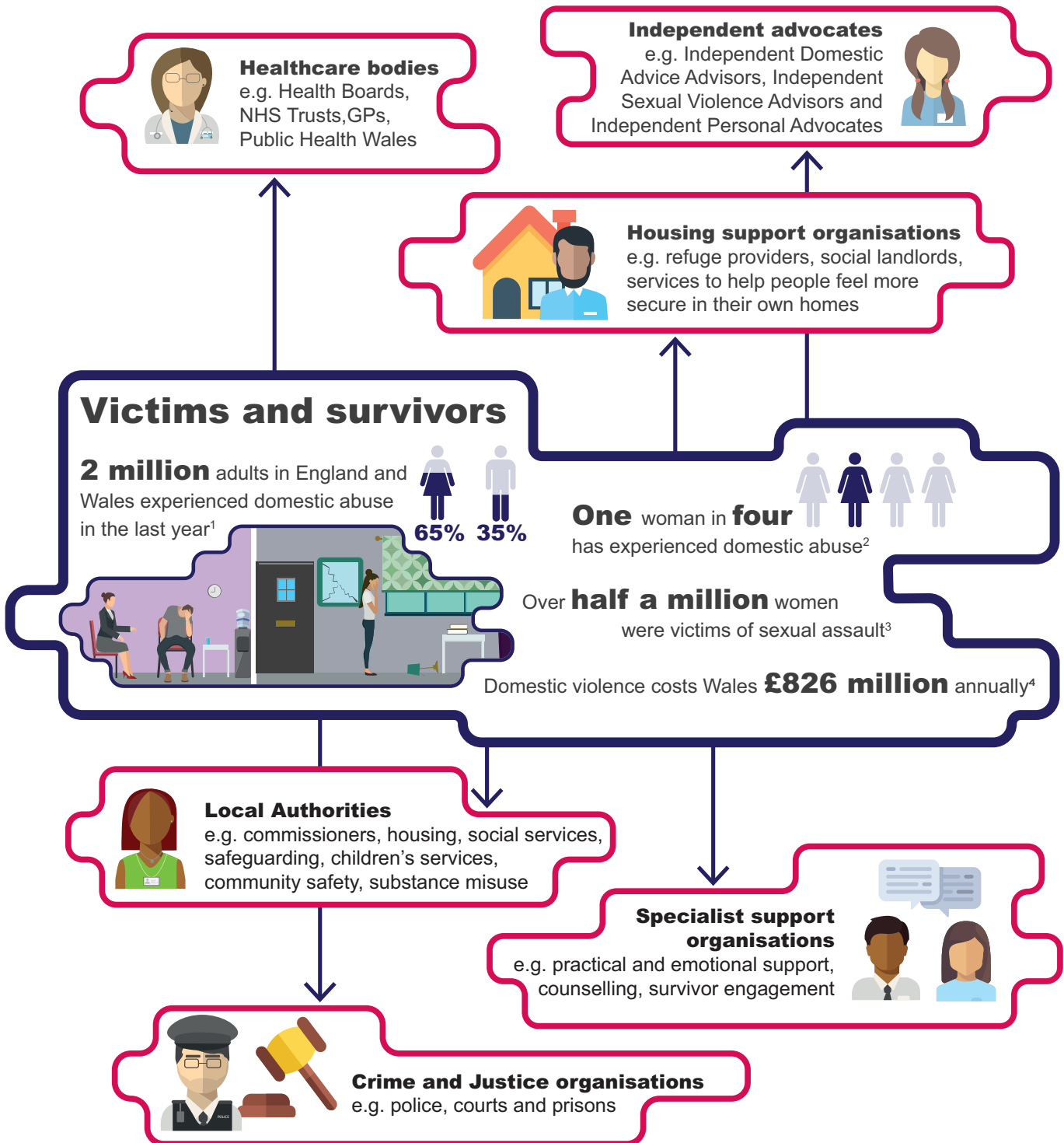
- Rape and sexual violence
- Forced marriage
- Sexual harassment
- Female genital mutilation (FGM)
- So-called 'honour-based violence'
- Sexual exploitation through the sex industry/prostitution
- Stalking
- Trafficking

- 2 Information on the prevalence of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence in Wales is not collated consistently or centrally and there is no clear picture of its extent. Similarly, there is also a gap in data about the extent to which victims, survivors and perpetrators use public services and what services are made available. One of the best sources of Welsh specific information on demand for domestic abuse and violence services come from Welsh Women's Aid members' data returns<sup>1</sup> which show that 12,166 survivors were supported by specialist services during the year. However, 431 survivors referred to refuges were unable to be supported because of resources and capacity limitations, and at the end of March 2018 there was a waiting list of roughly 300 survivors of sexual violence waiting for help in dealing with their experience(s) of sexual violence and abuse. Research estimates that domestic violence costs Wales £826 million annually: £202.6 million in service costs, £100.9 million to lost economic output and £522.9 million in human and emotional costs<sup>2</sup>.
- 3 There are numerous bodies with responsibilities for helping victims and survivors of domestic abuse and violence. These include local authorities, the police, local health and NHS bodies and housing organisations. In addition, there is a strong and long history of third sector organisations working with and supporting victims and survivors. Effective collaboration and joint working are therefore essential to ensure services are efficient and as effective as possible, particularly given the multiple routes into services across and within public bodies. This is not easy because no single agency has responsibility for all aspects of services to victims and survivors.

1 [Welsh Women's Aid overview report on specialist VAWDASV services in Wales in 2018.](#)

2 [Welsh Women's Aid overview report on specialist VAWDASV services in Wales in 2017.](#)

Exhibit 2 – there are a wide range of public bodies with responsibilities to victims and survivors



Notes:

- 1 Source: Domestic Abuse in England and Wales, 2018, ONS.
- 2 Source: VAWDASV National Advisors' Report 2018.
- 3 Source: Sexual offences in England and Wales: year ending March 2017, ONS.
- 4 Source: Welsh Women's Aid State of the Sector 2017.

Source: Wales Audit Office.

- 4 Given these challenges, the National Assembly for Wales passed the [Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence \(Wales\) Act](#) (the 'Act') in April 2015. The overarching objectives of the Act are to: improve the public sector response to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence; provide a strategic focus on these issues; and ensure consistent consideration of preventative, protective and supportive mechanisms in the delivery of services. Although the prevalence and severity of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence disproportionately affects women, the Act recognises men and children can also be affected.
- 5 On behalf of the Auditor General for Wales, we have examined how the new duties and responsibilities of the Act are being rolled out and delivered. [\*\*Appendix 1\*\*](#) sets out our audit methods. Overall, we have concluded that **victims and survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence are often let down by an inconsistent, complex and fragmented system.**
- 6 In [\*\*Part One\*\*](#) of the report, we look at how public sector bodies work together to understand which services are needed in their local area to prevent VAWDASV and protect and support victims and survivors. We found that local authorities and their partners do not have a complete picture of VAWDASV services, nor of the demand for these services, despite being directed in guidance to undertake a comprehensive mapping of services. Support provided by the Welsh Government to these public bodies has not always been helpful and timely. Overall, services provided to victims and survivors of VAWDASV are fragmented, with some areas of overlap but also many gaps in provision.
- 7 [\*\*Part Two\*\*](#) focuses on public bodies' prevention of VAWDASV. We found that roll-out of training under the National Training Framework is having some success in improving public sector workers' awareness of the issues around VAWDASV. In general, social housing landlords are working well to support victims and survivors. The Act is helping to drive the transformation of VAWDASV services. Collaboration is working well in some parts of the country; however, too many barriers such as data-sharing require further work. Work with perpetrators remains the most challenging and weakest area of prevention activity.
- 8 Finally, in [\*\*Part Three\*\*](#) we consider how public bodies fund and commission VAWDASV services. Funding of VAWDASV services is generally fragmented, complex and short term, and commissioning is too inconsistent to ensure public bodies are always getting value for money. Many public bodies find it difficult to evaluate performance and judge the impact of their VAWDASV services because of weaknesses in their performance management arrangements.

## Recommendations

Our recommendations are intended to help bodies who support and have responsibility to assist victims and survivors.

Recommendations	
<b>R1</b>	<b>Part 1 of the report highlights that despite public bodies having an increasing understanding of, and demand for, VAWDASV services, significant gaps remain and engagement with survivors and victims in reviewing and developing services is inconsistent.</b> To address this, we recommend that needs assessment and mapping of service provision by public bodies are revisited and involvement widened and enhanced to include all relevant stakeholders to build a more accurate picture of current service provision and identify gaps.
<b>R2</b>	<b>Part 1 of the report describes how victims and survivors of VAWDASV often find it difficult to navigate a fragmented system of service delivery.</b> To support victims and survivors to access and use services we recommend that public bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• produce comprehensive and relevant information in a variety of media on the full range of services available to protect and support victims and survivors; and</li><li>• create a joint pathway to access services and support for both victims and professionals and advertise access arrangements widely.</li></ul>
<b>R3</b>	<b>Part 2 of the report notes that whilst it is important that organisations comply with relevant data protection legislation, they also need to share data with partners to better meet the needs of victims and survivors. We recommend that authorities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ensure staff who are likely to come into contact with victims and survivors have appropriate VAWDASV training;</li><li>• provide refresher training to service managers to ensure they know when and what data they can and cannot share; and</li><li>• review and update data sharing protocols to ensure they support services to deliver their data sharing responsibilities.</li></ul>
<b>R4</b>	<b>Part 2 of the report highlights that while some good progress has been made with regional working, there are not always appropriate levers in place to support service transformation in line with VAWDASV legislation.</b> To ensure the benefits of regionalisation are realised, we recommend that delivery agencies (local authorities, health bodies, the police, fire and rescue authorities and the third sector) review their approach to regional working to better integrate services and maximise the positive impact they can make on victims and survivors.

## Recommendations

- R5 Part 3 of the report highlights that the complex and short-term funding mechanisms, lack of data and insufficient consultation with stakeholders, are not supporting sustainable commissioning of VAWDASV services.** To address this, we recommend that local authorities review their commissioning arrangements to:
- remove duplication and overlap between different approaches within the authority and with partners;
  - rationalise administration arrangements to improve efficiency and value for money;
  - streamline and standardise commissioning arrangements to reduce the burden of administration on all parties; and
  - set appropriate performance measures, targets and benchmarks to judge the impact and outcome of commissioned services.



## Part 1

Because no single agency has responsibility, victims of VAWDASV find it difficult to navigate the fragmented system



1.1 In this part of the report we look at how well public bodies are working to identify the services that are available and also needed to help victims and survivors. We look at the overlap and gaps in information and responsibilities and consider the support provided by the Welsh Government.

### What we would expect to see

The Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 and the VAWDASV National Strategy (2016) set out a vision of how to improve prevention, protection, and provision of support for those experiencing, or who have experienced, VAWDASV.

Statutory partners are required to produce local strategies which demonstrate how partnership working and collaboration will improve services for victims and survivors. To support this, they are expected to assess the needs of their local population, understand the services already in place and identify gaps to inform commissioning plans and improve sustainability. Meaningful and inclusive involvement of survivors should underpin all this.

Due to the multi-faceted nature of VAWDASV, those who experience it require a multi-disciplinary, holistic response, necessitating the effective collaboration of many different agencies including local authorities, the police, GPs, mental health professionals and voluntary sector support organisations.

Planning should be supported by clear, evidence-based guidance from the Welsh Government, provided on a timely basis.

**Local authorities and their partners do not always have a complete picture of VAWDASV services in their area, nor the demand they need to meet**

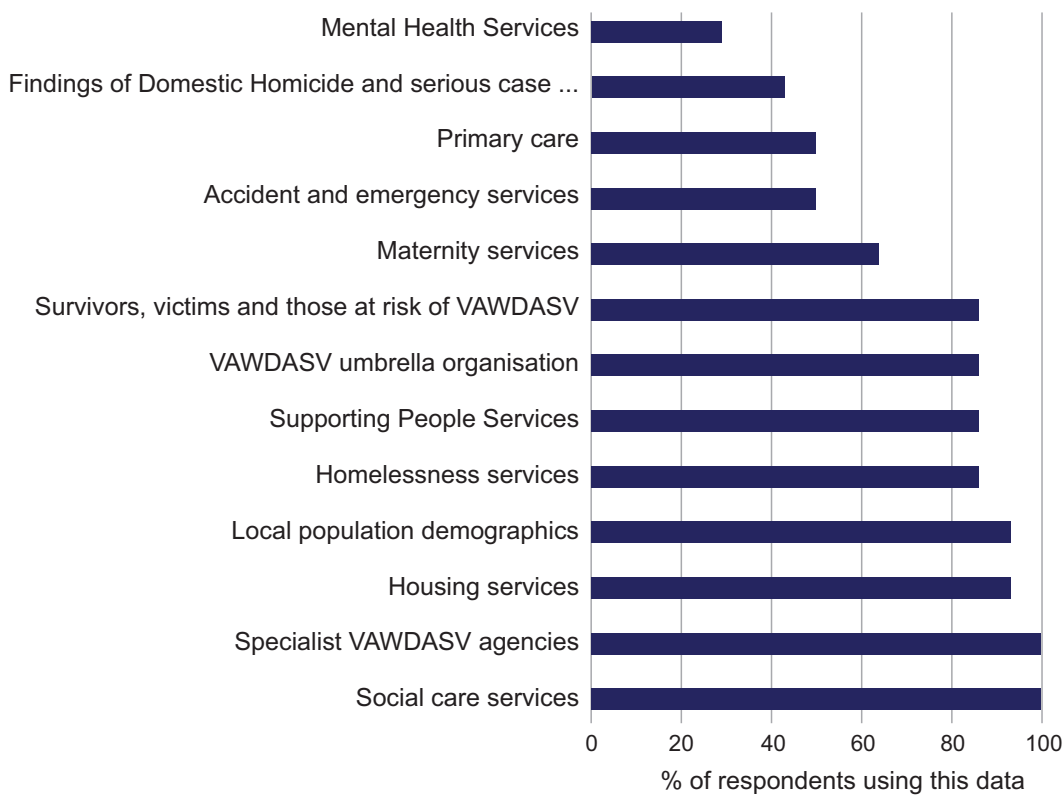
1.2 As noted above, establishing a comprehensive picture of the extent and impact of domestic abuse and violence remains a challenge. It is often a hidden issue and criminologists<sup>3</sup> now estimate that domestic abuse statistics are 140% higher than those stated in the official data and the [British Crime Survey](#). Despite this, getting a good understanding of needs is essential if public bodies are to develop informed responses that underpin service choices to both protect and safeguard victims and survivors, but also prevent future domestic abuse and violence occurring.

3 [Loughborough University research on the prevalence of victims of crime being subject to repeat incidences.](#)

- 1.3 Responses to our survey indicate that, while public bodies have sought to map out and assess need and demand for VAWDASV services, there is significant variation in the range, scope and coverage of the data used. Almost all organisations (95%) mapped VAWDASV services in the course of preparing their local strategies. However, only 5% of organisations responding to our survey stated that their mapping provided a complete picture of services with no gaps; all other respondents acknowledged that there are some limitations in their assessments.
- 1.4 **Exhibit 3** below highlights that whilst all draw on social care data and information from specialist VAWDASV providers, other key sources of evidence are often overlooked and not used, particularly data collated by health bodies. This is important because VAWDASV is such a cross cutting issue; it is linked to many different services and organisations and consequently requires a multi-agency and cross service response.

**Exhibit 3: survey responses on the source of data used to complete VAWDASV needs assessments and commissioning plans**

Public bodies are not always drawing on a comprehensive evidence base when assessing needs and deciding on priorities.

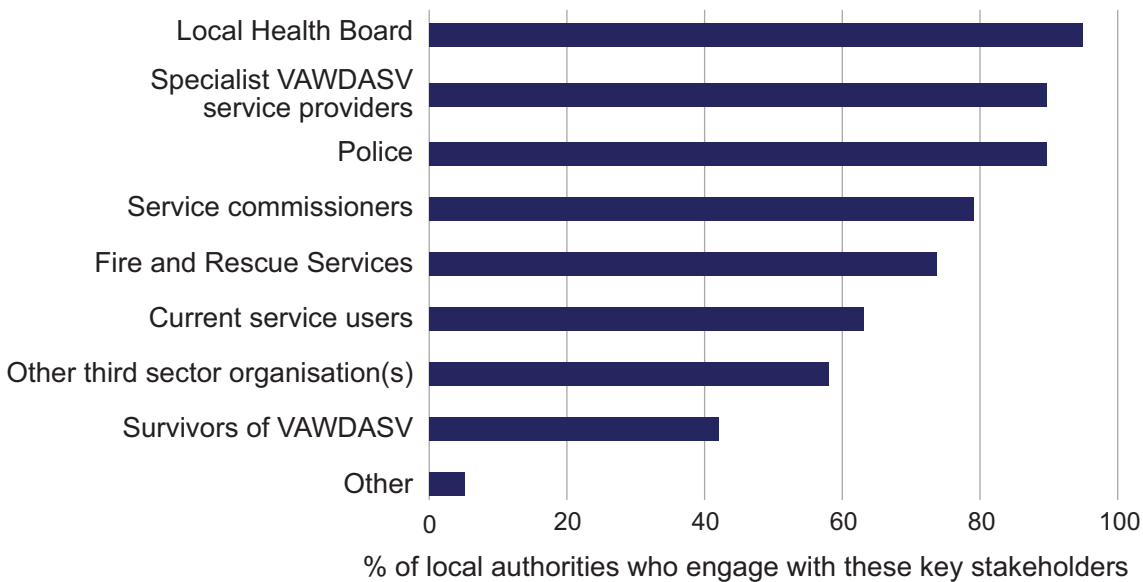


Source: Wales Audit Office Survey of Public Bodies Commissioning VAWDASV services, May 2019.

1.5 How statutory partners engage with and involve key stakeholders – survivors, victims and specialist service providers – remains an ongoing challenge. When asked who they consulted while developing their strategy, only 42% of organisations responded that they consulted survivors of VAWDASV, while 37% of organisations did not consult current users of their VAWDASV services – **Exhibit 4**.

**Exhibit 4: survey responses on which organisations local authorities involved in the development of their VAWDASV Strategy**

Local authorities are not always engaging with and drawing on relevant expertise from the full range of key stakeholders when developing their plans.



Source: Wales Audit Office Survey of Public Bodies providing VAWDASV services, May 2019.

1.6 Whilst some organisations draw on the experiences of victims and survivors in the review and design of their services, there is scope for strengthening this involvement. For example, our interviews with specialist support organisations and VAWDASV survivors themselves overwhelmingly flagged concerns with the effectiveness and impact of current activity, especially in reviewing and designing services. One survivor we spoke to told us ‘Every time we inform, we ask ourselves, why are we giving up our time if nothing is taken on board?’

## Services to victims and survivors of VAWDASV can overlap, but there are also gaps in provision and information

- 1.7 There are a wide range of agencies and organisations who are responsible for identifying need, planning services and providing support to survivors of VAWDASV. And, while some good progress has been made against the objectives of the 2015 Act and the 2016 National Strategy, our evidence paints a picture of a fragmented system of services with pockets of good practice but also gaps. Our research found considerable confusion on the part of those interviewed as to exactly which organisation is providing what support, to whom and where. The participants in the study, even amongst the professionals, said that there is considerable overlap in terms of support for survivors, but simultaneously very apparent gaps in service provision and victim support.
- 1.8 Many of the VAWDASV survivors we spoke to felt ‘overwhelmed’ by the myriad of agencies and support organisations they need to engage with or are referred to. In addition, some survivors reported being given conflicting advice by different agencies. Those identified at high risk, through the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) process, are able to access a range of support from statutory providers and third-sector providers, but those assessed as medium or standard risk do not have the same opportunities available to them. There is also a post-code lottery of provision as to exactly which organisation is providing what support, to whom and where. In particular, gaps in suitable VAWDASV services for men and members of the LGBT community.
- 1.9 Feedback to us also frequently flagged concerns about the lack of clear information on services across some parts of Wales, and confusion between public bodies as to what is actually available and where. Professionals we interviewed were often vague or unsure about exactly what each organisation was providing, and what support was available in their area or in the wider region in general. Most of our study participants discussed a lack of clear information about what services are available in their area and a lack of information-sharing between organisations. Often, victims and survivors felt that information was ad hoc and based on feedback from survivors themselves, or on hearsay and rumour rather than on clear knowledge and information.

- 1.10 The highest risk victims are often supported by Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs)<sup>4</sup>, whose role is to ‘support and work over the short- to medium-term to put [the highest risk victims] on the path to long-term safety.’<sup>5</sup> However the survivors we spoke to commented on both good and bad experiences of IDVA services. In addition, many victims described receiving some positive support from specialist support agencies, with many having completed the Freedom Programme<sup>6</sup> or equivalent. However, some victims report feeling ‘a bit lost, and unsure what to do next’ after such assistance. The majority of survivors told us that access to NHS mental health support was particularly poor with long waiting lists and often inaccessible or unsuitable services. For example, the sessions offered did not fit with working hours or allow for childcare provision.
- 1.11 Perpetrators of VAWDASV can have a significant impact on many different aspects of a victim’s life. Survivors we spoke to told us that children can be used as a ‘weapon’ by perpetrators of domestic abuse. For example, more than one person we spoke to told us that the perpetrator threatened that if the victim left him, social services would take the children away. Some survivors described how perpetrators controlled all the finances in their relationship, meaning they lost the ability to flee from the abusive household, nor could they continue to live in the home. Ongoing financial disputes post-separation are often used by perpetrators to continue their abuse and control of victims. Public bodies therefore need to join up their work to ensure they provide a safety net to support and protect victims and survivors in such circumstances.

## Public bodies do not always find support and guidance from the Welsh Government to be helpful and timely

- 1.12 All organisations which responded to our survey state that they have seen some of the Welsh Government VAWDASV guidance. However, whilst many believe that the guidance is easy to understand, evidence based, comprehensive and relevant, 55% of respondents noted that it was produced too late to be of use to them. For example, the guidance on development of local strategies, originally due in May 2016, was delayed and eventually published almost two years late in March 2018. A small number of respondents (15%) also felt it was not based on effective consultation with relevant stakeholders and did not provide a sufficiently long-term direction of travel.

4 IDVAs help to address the safety of victims at high risk of harm from intimate partners, ex-partners or family members to secure their safety and the safety of their children. IDVAs normally work with their clients from the point of crisis to assess the level of risk, discuss the range of suitable options and develop safety plans.

5 [Explanation of what an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor does.](#)

6 The ‘Freedom Programme’ is an 11 or 12-week domestic violence programme primarily designed for women as victims of domestic violence. The Programme examines the roles played by attitudes and beliefs on the actions of abusers and the responses of victims and survivors.

- 1.13 Many local authorities also commented that they receive limited support from the Welsh Government, partly because the Welsh Government VAWDASV team is small and has experienced significant turnover. One interviewee emphasised this point, that ‘due to the nuanced and complex nature of VAWDASV, it takes time to get people up to speed with the issues. Hence the Welsh Government team has not yet been well-placed to offer support’. Another interviewee noted that ‘Support and guidance has been ‘patchy’ from Welsh Government. Lots of scope for different interpretations within the Act on implementation, so it means unpicking all of this on a regional level whereas national guidance could have sorted it and saved a lot of time and effort’. Indeed, one interviewee concluded that whilst the ‘Welsh Government feel they are delivering against the act as they publish guidance..... they haven’t yet achieved cohesive thinking in terms of what they could do.’
- 1.14 Those delivering services to victims and survivors recognise that the Act is also one of a recent number of pieces of legislation that shapes how they respond to meeting people’s needs. Since 2014, the National Assembly for Wales has passed four other major pieces of legislation in addition to the Act, all of which complement the new specific VAWDASV duties – **Exhibit 5.**

**Exhibit 5: Recent National Assembly for Wales legislation which impacts on public bodies providing services to victims and survivors**



Source: Wales Audit Office.



1.15 Taken together these five pieces of legislation have created new responsibilities and duties for public bodies which are stretching capacity. A number of people we interviewed highlighted that public bodies often duplicate activity by, for example, completing separate needs analyses and plans or strategies. And often the requirements of the different pieces of legislation are not aligned which is limiting the potential for integration and collaboration of services and is helping to perpetuate the fragmented nature of delivery. One interviewee concluded that the 'biggest challenge is the demands placed on public bodies to deliver the expectations of different pieces of legislation and their core responsibility. The lack of co-terminus between guidance, policy and legislation is creating operational challenges with separate and disjointed groups to plan and deliver services. All have different focus but often cover the same territory with the same persons servicing all these fora. This is neither efficient or effective. Too often the same people are dealing with this work and are not doing the day job.'



## Part 2

Public bodies have not fully shifted from reactive services to a preventative model which balances the short and long-term needs of victims and survivors



2.1 In Part Two of this report, we examine how public bodies are shifting services from acute to preventative approaches in line with the expectations of the Act. We look at the roll-out of training and how organisations are working together to integrate service responses. Finally, we consider the effectiveness of data sharing arrangements.

### What we would expect to see

Prevention of VAWDASV is one of the key principles of both the 2015 Act, and the 2016 National Strategy. Public bodies are required to shift the emphasis of their response to VAWDASV from an acute, reactive service to one that is preventative. They are expected to understand and mitigate any risks associated with this shift, balancing the needs of the short term with consideration of sustainability in the long term.

To support prevention, the 2016 Strategy set out how the Welsh Government would fully implement the National Training Framework (NTF) ensuring that professionals across all relevant authorities (including health, local government, NHS Trusts and Fire and Rescue Services) are supported to increase their understanding and knowledge of VAWDASV to raise general awareness, to better identify potential perpetrators and signpost victims to relevant services. Under the NTF, 100% of employees in the relevant authorities are expected to receive a basic level of training.

Given the central role of social housing landlords in supporting victims of VAWDASV and using their powers to help tackle perpetrators, we would expect to see positive work in identifying victims of VAWDASV within their properties and taking appropriate steps to keep them safe. We would also expect to see Social Housing Landlords identifying perpetrators within their properties and taking steps to remove them and/or support their rehabilitation.

Agencies are expected to collaborate to provide integrated VAWDASV services with clear pathways and eliminate any duplication. This requires effective information and data sharing within and between partners, and local and regional leadership which understands the benefits of joint working and drives collaboration accordingly.

We would also expect to see local authorities and their partners identifying and targeting work on perpetrators of VAWDASV, including those who have not been prosecuted. These perpetrators should be encouraged to take part in evidence-based rehabilitation programmes.

## Roll-out of training is beginning to increase awareness

- 2.2 It is essential that identifying and responding to VAWDASV issues becomes ‘everyone’s business’ and to do this requires frontline workers, in as wide a range of services as possible, to be able to identify and respond to cues and clues that the person they are speaking to is being abused or is a perpetrator of abuse. Training should equip workers to be able to provide some useful guidance themselves, signpost to sources of information or refer to people or organisations with more specialist expertise. Therefore, ensuring relevant officers are trained and confident in dealing with potential issues is an essential element of the Act. Consequently, the Welsh Government has set a mandatory requirement, through the National Training Framework, for all professionals working within Welsh public services to undertake training<sup>7</sup>.
- 2.3 Overall, we found that there has been a significant roll-out with increasing numbers provided with training. Data provided by the Welsh Government notes that at July 2019, 158,500 people working in the public sector have accessed training under the National Training Framework, and this training is having some success in making VAWDASV ‘everyone’s business’. For example, through ‘Home Safety’ visits, South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority have equipped their staff to identify the early warning signs of domestic violence. Similarly, housing officers who regularly visit tenants and families in their home are better able to identify abuse and violence within the home. Embedding training is being reinforced through national campaigns such as the White Ribbon UK campaign<sup>8</sup> which helps to raise awareness to make domestic abuse and violence everyone’s business.

7 The Framework is made up of six levels ranging from e-learning to training for public service leaders with a minimum training requirement per group. For local authorities the target was for e-learning training to be completed by March 2018.

8 White Ribbon provides a framework for organisations to marshal their resources to challenge gender-based violence and make a difference – [whiteribbon.org.uk](http://whiteribbon.org.uk). A growing number of Welsh public bodies have signed up to the campaign and become accredited bodies, including Carmarthenshire County Council, Cardiff Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner’s Office for North Wales, South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, and the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

- 2.4 Our fieldwork and survey findings also indicate a number of shortcomings with training. Whilst training is largely viewed positively, people we interviewed and survey respondents frequently note opportunities to improve coverage, take up and impact. These include, for instance, training being too prescriptive and not aligned or integrated with core learning and development within different services, in particular training rolled out under the Social Services and Well-being Act, safeguarding and Protection of Vulnerable Adults. Feedback from third sector staff on their experience of the effectiveness of public bodies' training programmes also raises concerns that too often it is a 'tick box' exercise and is not effective at equipping frontline staff with the confidence and skills to identify and respond to potential cases of harm or abuse. A number of survey respondents also flagged poor promotion as a major problem with the initial roll-out of training as well as the ongoing management and co-ordination challenge of ensuring all relevant frontline workers are provided with relevant training and refresher information.
- 2.5 Many organisations also recognise that public bodies alone cannot prevent VAWDASV, and it is communities themselves that have to take a leading role in making it socially unacceptable. Welsh Women's Aid's Change That Lasts programme<sup>9</sup> aims to create change in communities, services and systems across Wales for survivors of all forms of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence and deliver earlier intervention with perpetrators. For example, the Welsh Women's Aid 'Ask Me' scheme encourages people to become Community Ambassadors who, through training sessions, are equipped with an understanding of domestic abuse and sexual violence, and how to respond to and help survivors. By promoting and demonstrating how to access help and support for survivors of VAWDASV, survivors can be reassured that communities understand about abuse and that organisations are taking their responsibilities seriously.
- 2.6 From our survey of public bodies, 95% of organisations stated that they are good at signposting people who are experiencing VAWDASV to services that can help them. However, whilst 85% of organisations stated that they encourage people to report VAWDASV issues, only 20% felt that they are good at promoting awareness of VAWDASV amongst key partners and acknowledge there is still more to do.

<sup>9</sup> [Change that Lasts is a strengths-based, needs-led approach that supports survivors of all forms of violence against women, and their children, to build resilience, and leads to independence provided by Welsh Women's Aid.](#)

## The Act is helping to drive the transformation of VAWDASV services

2.7 We found that many local authorities recognise they need to improve services to victims and survivors, with buy-in from senior leaders to transform services. And the Act is seen as having been critical in driving change, with three-quarters of survey respondents noting that it has driven substantial improvements in services to prevent, protect and support those experiencing VAWDASV. Positively, all respondents have a VAWDASV workplace policy and a local strategy to address VAWDASV that is either adopted (95%) or in draft (5%), with most strategies adopted within the Welsh Government's target date. The majority (95%) also have a delivery plan focused on addressing areas of underperformance. Three-quarters of respondents have also set strategic equality objectives for addressing VAWDASV in line with the public sector equality duty. Our review of local strategies found that most public bodies have set a clear strategic direction for VAWDASV focussing on awareness raising, prevention and regionalisation.

## Collaboration is well established in some parts of Wales, but integration lags behind

2.8 VAWDASV is a cross cutting issue and effective management is reliant on maintaining a strong partnership approach because people experiencing VAWDASV often have complex needs and require assistance from a wide range of services to help manage and address their problems. Survivors and victims can be homeless or living in insecure and unsafe accommodation, be involved in the Criminal Justice system, are often under the threat or risk of violence and physical harm and can experience substance misuse and mental health problems.

2.9 There is historically strong collaboration on VAWDASV in many areas of Wales; most notably in Cwm Taf, North Wales and Gwent where joint working and regional planning are well established. We found that overwhelmingly organisations believe that they have positive and effective working relationships amongst themselves and with key partners such as housing associations and the third sector. For instance, 90% of public bodies responding to our survey believe they and their partners are effectively collaborating to deliver services and 70% that they effectively integrate their work.

- 2.10 However, we also identified some significant barriers to integrating services. In particular a lack of funding; limitations in sharing and using data; poor and inconsistent leadership; insufficient capacity; and a lack of time. In particular, local authorities cited difficulties engaging with operational health workers and especially GPs whose knowledge and willingness to work constructively with other public bodies to tackle VAWDASV was at best 'hit or miss'. Even where local authorities work well together, the progress made on collaborating and integrating services can still be limited. For example, the five local authorities in Gwent have produced a joint VAWDASV strategy but do not yet jointly fund and commission VAWDASV services. And this is despite Gwent being a regional pilot for strategic co-ordination of VAWDASV services.
- 2.11 Given the importance of ensuring wide engagement and coverage from regional, local and community level organisations in identifying and helping to support victims and survivors, partnership and collaboration work needs to be broad and all encompassing. However, we found that the range of organisations covered by regional partnerships varies widely, and key community level organisations are often not effectively involved – **Exhibit 6.**



## Exhibit 6: survey responses on which organisations are members of regional partnerships

Regional partnerships do not include all relevant partners who support planning and delivery of VAWDASV services.

<b>Body</b>	<b>Included (%)</b>	<b>Not included (%)</b>	<b>Do not know/Not considered applicable (%)</b>
Local authority housing	83	6	11
Local authority education	59	35	6
Local authority social services	100	0	0
Local authority leisure	0	31	69
Other local authority services	87	0	13
Health board	100	0	0
Local housing association(s)	65	24	11
Fire and rescue authority	100	0	0
Police	100	0	0
County voluntary council	0	53	47
Third sector organisation(s)	100	0	0
National park authorities	0	53	47
Town and community council	7	73	20

Source: Wales Audit Office Survey of Public Bodies providing VAWDASV services, May 2019.

- 2.12 Third sector staff we interviewed consistently flag concerns over the shift to regional working centralising planning, commissioning and service delivery to the detriment of work at very local and community levels. Whilst regional working supports public bodies to pool resources and reduce duplication, it needs effective co-ordination and leadership if it is to be successful. This can be challenging because drive and leadership at a regional level can often be missing.
- 2.13 For instance, we found that co-ordinating and progressing the regional VAWDASV agenda often fall to Regional Advisors, simply because there is no one else to take on this role. As one third sector interviewee summed it up, 'Regional advisors [are] doing amazingly, but they are team manager level, they haven't got the authority to lead.' This was echoed in our interviews with a number of Regional Advisors who flagged their lack of influence to drive the regional agenda forward.
- 2.14 We recognise that regionalisation is relatively new and partnerships need time to mature. Developing regional solutions is also challenging in the current period of prolonged austerity, because organisations are having to balance budgets, reduce staff and reorganise to sustain services. The findings of our fieldwork interviews and surveys point to a reduction in capacity in recent years and difficulties in maintaining and developing services in line with the expectations of the Act.

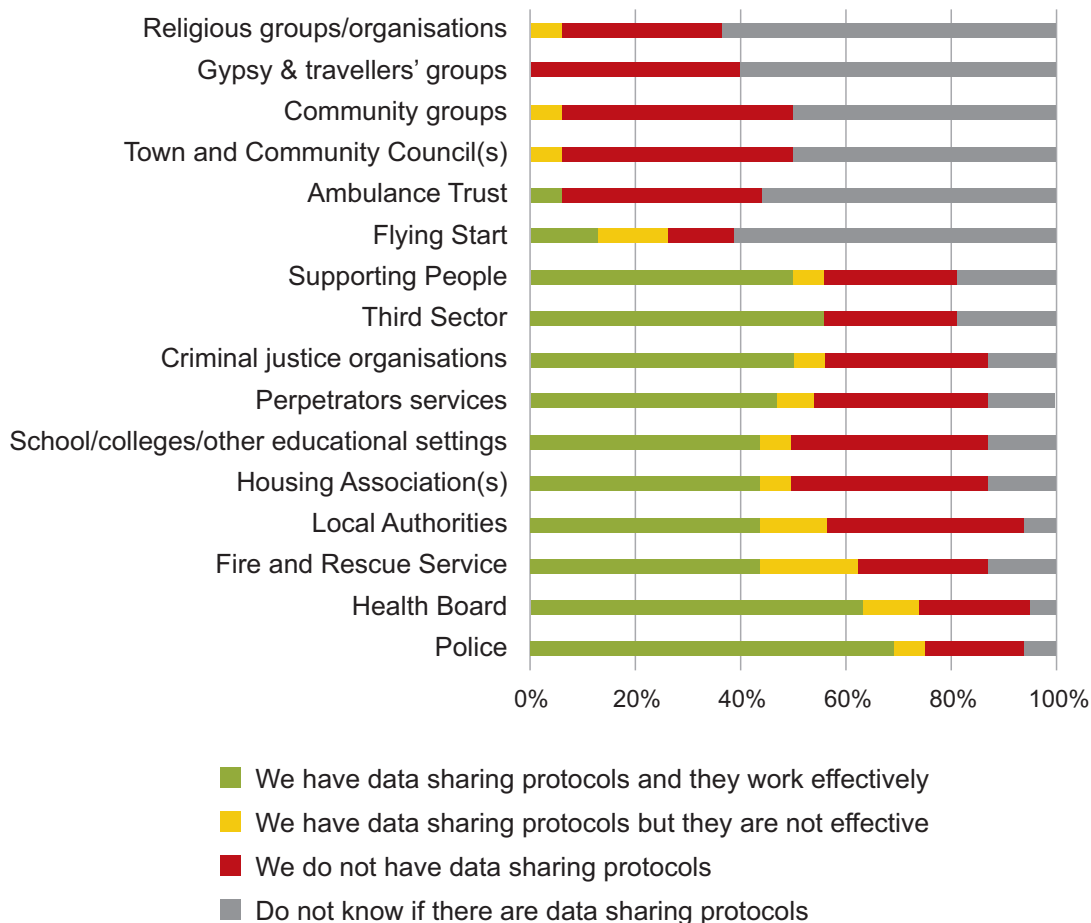
## Weaknesses in data sharing remain a barrier

- 2.15 Public bodies often hold very personal and very sensitive information that can help them ensure services to victims and survivors are focussed on addressing and meeting need. However, using data in the public sector is a delicate balancing act. Personal information must be protected from data misuse, but in a way that maximises its usefulness and does not suffocate innovation. As a result, many public sector organisations wrestle with the benefits and risks of sharing information with partners.
- 2.16 Our evidence suggests that, currently, sharing information remains a barrier to improving local and regional collaboration. In particular, the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in May 2018 has brought these tensions into even greater focus and is seen by some as a barrier to planning, integration and collaboration. One commentator noted that staff 'are scared to share information because of GDPR and this is a big issue. Cross departmental sharing is not happening – social workers refuse to share phone numbers for domestic abuse victims internally.' Consequently, the establishment and effectiveness of data sharing protocols vary widely, and key agencies are often not party to agreements, as identified in our surveys – [Exhibit 7](#).



## Exhibit 7: survey responses on which organisations have data sharing protocols for VAWDASV services

There are limitations in data sharing protocols between some public bodies and partners.



Source: Wales Audit Office Survey of Public Bodies providing VAWDASV services, May 2019.

2.17 Despite these challenges, there are some positive examples of how public bodies work collectively together to share and use data to protect victims and survivors. A Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC<sup>10</sup>) is a victim focused, information-sharing and risk management meeting attended by all key agencies, where high risk cases are identified and discussed. Despite being overwhelmingly positive on the value of MARAC meetings, some of the organisations commented that it can be very resource-intensive, particularly when capacity is stretched. Nonetheless, MARAC meetings are recognised as critical to enabling partners to share data and manage high risk cases.

<sup>10</sup> The MARAC combines up to date risk information with a timely assessment of a victim's needs and links those directly to the provision of appropriate services for all those involved in a domestic abuse case: victim, children and perpetrator.

## Services are slowly shifting to focus on prevention

- 2.18 Shifting services from responding to problems, to preventing them from occurring, has become a growing focus for public services, particularly as funding has reduced and demand continues to rise. Implicit within this is the recognition that VAWDASV services, in their current configuration, are unsustainable and focussing on prevention will help reduce demand for high-intensity, high-cost services as well as providing a better outcome for victims and survivors.
- 2.19 We found that despite public bodies recognising the importance of developing preventative services, they have not yet made an effective shift from an acute, reactive service. Front-line staff we interviewed across all bodies recognise the importance of prevention but acknowledge that they lack the time and resources to make this shift in focus and emphasis a reality because transitioning services needs to be resourced and public bodies do not have the funds available to support this shift. People we interviewed told us that there is no designated money for prevention and in order to free up money they would have to cut existing services, something they do not feel they can justify at this time.
- 2.20 For example, one interviewee noted that ‘historic domestic abuse cases are increasing, which are often more difficult and complex, and take longer to deal with than new acute cases. Prevention work is seen as important, but the reality is that we cannot rebalance work away from dealing with historical and new cases to focus on preventative services.’ Similarly, another commented that ‘We want to be able to spend more time on awareness and preventative work but unless more funding is made available, we cannot see that happening.’
- 2.21 Despite resourcing challenges, and the ongoing impact of austerity, preventative work is progressing in key areas and making a real difference for victims and survivors. The positive partnership approach of Swansea’s Domestic Abuse Hub<sup>11</sup> (set up and funded by the city council and the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner) brings together Swansea Council services with health, police and the third sector to help children and families experiencing domestic abuse or escalating relationship problems. A range of specialist services is available, and the co-location of services has enabled public bodies to co-ordinate and integrate activity as a single gateway for VAWDASV services.

11 [The Swansea Domestic Abuse Hub brings together Swansea Council and its partners in health, police and the third sector to help children and families experiencing domestic abuse or escalating relationship problems.](#)

- 2.22 Likewise, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's 'Resilient Families' programme draws together a range of strategic work streams and priorities to provide a single pathway for early intervention services for families. It takes the form of a 'short, sharp' six-week programme of interventions which can be extended up to 12 weeks if there is a need. The Council is developing 'Vulnerability Profiling' to identify families at risk of crisis and pre-empt the risk escalating to the point that requires statutory intervention.
- 2.23 Local authorities recognise the importance of perpetrator rehabilitation, but the provision of evidence-based programmes across Wales is highly variable. For instance, perpetrator work is often focussed on short-term interventions, is restricted to specific geographical areas, has limited capacity, and tends to focus on men only without recognising that women can be perpetrators. One commentator noted that 'there is a strong need for a (national) perpetrator programme' given the variability of current provision. From our survey of public bodies, we found that whilst 75% of organisations felt that they identify potential perpetrators, only 20% are able to provide appropriate services for perpetrators and only 20% that they are effectively promoting and encouraging the awareness and importance of services for perpetrators.

## Social housing landlords are supporting victims of VAWDASV and acting against perpetrators

- 2.24 Findings from our national interviews and surveys show that social housing landlords are well placed to identify victims and perpetrators of VAWDASV, and to protect and support victims who live in their property. For instance, all landlords responding to our survey provide enhanced security measures in and around the home to support and safeguard victims<sup>12</sup> and this positive work is well established and working effectively across the country. Just under two-thirds of survey respondents also support people experiencing VAWDASV with rent arrears to transfer to alternative housing. Importantly, landlords shape their response and solution on discussions with victims and wherever possible they seek to agree their action with them.

<sup>12</sup> 'Target Hardening' allows landlords to strengthen the security of a home to protect occupants in the event of attack from perpetrators of domestic violence.

- 2.25 In addition, three-quarters of survey respondents also identify and act against perpetrators of VAWDASV living in their homes. Recent legislation is seen as having equipped landlords be able to terminate joint tenancies and provide victims with a new sole tenancy in the existing home; and support victims to apply for an occupation order<sup>13</sup>, protection order or another form of injunction to maintain the tenancy. The vast majority of landlords also offer victims and survivors alternative housing from within their own stock and terminate the existing tenancy, and just under 60% refer the victim to another landlord for housing and terminate the existing tenancy once they have been rehoused.
- 2.26 However, we also identified options for improvement. Less than half of survey respondents felt they had a good understanding on the extent of VAWDASV issues amongst tenants. Less than half of respondents stated that they have a VAWDASV policy for employees and only 22% of landlords note that they had provided training to all their staff to support them to recognise the signs of VAWDASV among tenants. Whilst 44% stated that most staff had been provided with training, 35% noted that only front-line staff who regularly come into contact with tenants such as support workers, housing officers or building surveyors receive training.

13 Occupation and protection orders are made by the court and protect someone who is being abused by their partner or another close relative, requires orders them to do, or not to do, something.

## Part 3

The complexities of VAWDASV funding do not allow public bodies to assess value for money in service provision and transform services



3.1 In this part of the report, we examine how services are commissioned and consider the complexities of the different grant regimes and impact of the changes in the allocation and award of grants on commissioning approaches. We summarise how partners are overseeing and monitoring performance and use data to help make smart commissioning choices and judge the impact of services on victims and survivors.

### What we would expect to see

We would expect local authorities and their partners to have taken steps to understand the demand for VAWDASV services in their area; to have a clear picture of existing services in their local/regional area(s) and to have consulted appropriately, including with survivors and specialist service providers, when formulating their local and regional VAWDASV strategies.

Based on this, local authorities and their partners should have a good understanding of what they spend on VAWDASV services and should be able to assess the value for money they are getting from this expenditure. Local authorities and their partners should also regularly assess survivors' experiences of VAWDASV services and use this information to drive improvements in quality.

We would also expect that local authorities and their partners are able to effectively manage the performance of their VAWDASV services and use this information to drive improvements in commissioning. Commissioners should drive improvements in service delivery by setting out comprehensive and relevant criteria for awarding funding and by setting appropriate performance measures in contracts with providers and have rigorous systems to evaluate performance and judge impact.



## Funding of VAWDASV services is generally fragmented, complex and short term

- 3.2 VAWDASV funding is fragmented, with services resourced from an array of non-devolved and devolved budgets and grants, with changing levels and considerable uncertainty over future income. For instance, both the Home Office and the Welsh Government fund Independent Domestic Abuse Advisors (IDVAs) and Sexual Abuse Referral Centres (SARCS<sup>14</sup>), are funded by the police, health boards, the third sector or a combination of all three. The Welsh Government also funds a variety of VAWDASV services under different programmes, including refuge accommodation via Supporting People, the regional Domestic Abuse Services Grants as well as directly funding local authorities to commission other services for victims and survivors.
- 3.3 We found that the amount spent on VAWDASV services varies widely. From our survey, we found that in 2018-19 each of the six authorities in the North Wales contributes to a regional budget of roughly £420,000. The largest regional budget was in Cwm Taf (excluding Bridgend County Borough Council) with a combined budget of approximately £2.2 million, and Cardiff Council has the largest individual local authority budget of £1.726 million. However, we did not receive detailed breakdowns from all local authorities, mainly because respondents noted that they had not created separate budgets for VAWDASV projects and were unable to accurately identify how much they were spending on services.
- 3.4 The money spent on VAWDASV by local authorities is a mix of core revenue funding and grants. For instance, in 2018-19 Swansea Council identified 18 different VAWDASV projects funded by five different sources of funding. Project awards ranged from £4,000 to £469,000 with the overall budget for VAWDASV services totalling £1.696 million – **Exhibit 8**.

14 SARCS are specialist medical and forensic services for anyone who has been raped or sexually assaulted. SARCS provide services to victims/survivors of rape or sexual assault regardless of whether the survivor/victim chooses to report the offence to the police or not. They are multi-functional, providing private space for interviews and forensic examinations, and some also offer sexual health and counselling services.

## Exhibit 8: Swansea Council analysis of VAWDASV funded services

Range of funding	Number of grants	Organisations funded	Source of funding
£0 – £25,000	4	Swansea Women's Aid, BAWSO and Safety and Security Scheme	Swansea Council Core, Funds Swansea Council Compact Funds and Supporting People
£25,000 – £50,000	4	BAWSO, Women's Aid and Response Alarms	Swansea Council Core Funds and Supporting People
£50,000 – £75,000	4	Hafan Cymru, Women's Aid and BAWSO Domestic Abuse Hub	Supporting People and Welsh Government Families First
£75,000 – £100,000	1	Cross Borders	Supporting People
£100,000 – £150,000	2	IDVA Service and BAWSO	Welsh Government Domestic Abuse Service Grant and Supporting People
£150,000 – £200,000	0	–	–
£200,000 – £250,000	2	Hafan Cymru and Women's Aid	Supporting People
£250,000+	1	Domestic Abuse Hub	Swansea Council Core Funds

Source: Swansea Council, November 2018.

3.5 We also found that funding of VAWDASV services is not consistent or always effective because projects are often funded and co-ordinated separately between organisations, and by different teams within a single public body. For instance, whilst services are often bespoke, there can be overlap between projects. As well as local authority funding, 10% of bodies we surveyed also receive funding from their police and crime commissioner, often for similar or the same projects. And, because services are funded under different grants programmes, they can operate on different timeframes, with separate agreements, targets and monitoring requirements.

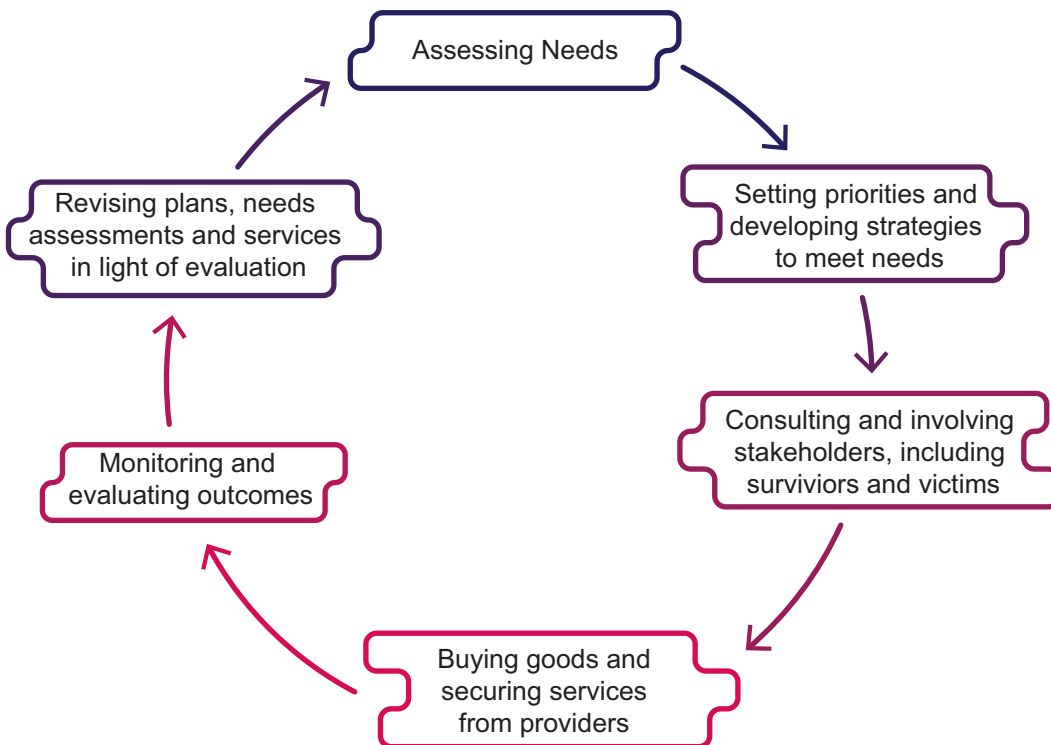


3.6 In particular, the short-term nature of VAWDASV funding limits planning for the long term and can create a variety of problems for third sector organisations. Annual funding can result in bodies having to spend disproportionate time on developing and submitting applications for funds rather than delivering services, and difficulties in optimising performance when there is a great degree of uncertainty. Sustainable funding is essential to third sector organisations to ensure they can develop and retain suitably qualified and experienced staff, but current arrangements are not always supporting this. For instance, 70% of organisations we surveyed stated that the current range of grants for funding VAWDASV services is ineffective and at the time of our survey less than half of respondents (47%) knew their budget for 2019-20.

**The quality of commissioning of VAWDASV services is too inconsistent to ensure public bodies are getting value for money**

3.7 Whilst commissioning models vary, most definitions of commissioning identify some core inter-connected stages and involve putting the individual at the centre of the process of identifying needs and helping them make choices about how they are supported to live their lives – **Exhibit 9.**

**Exhibit 9: the ‘Commissioning Cycle’**

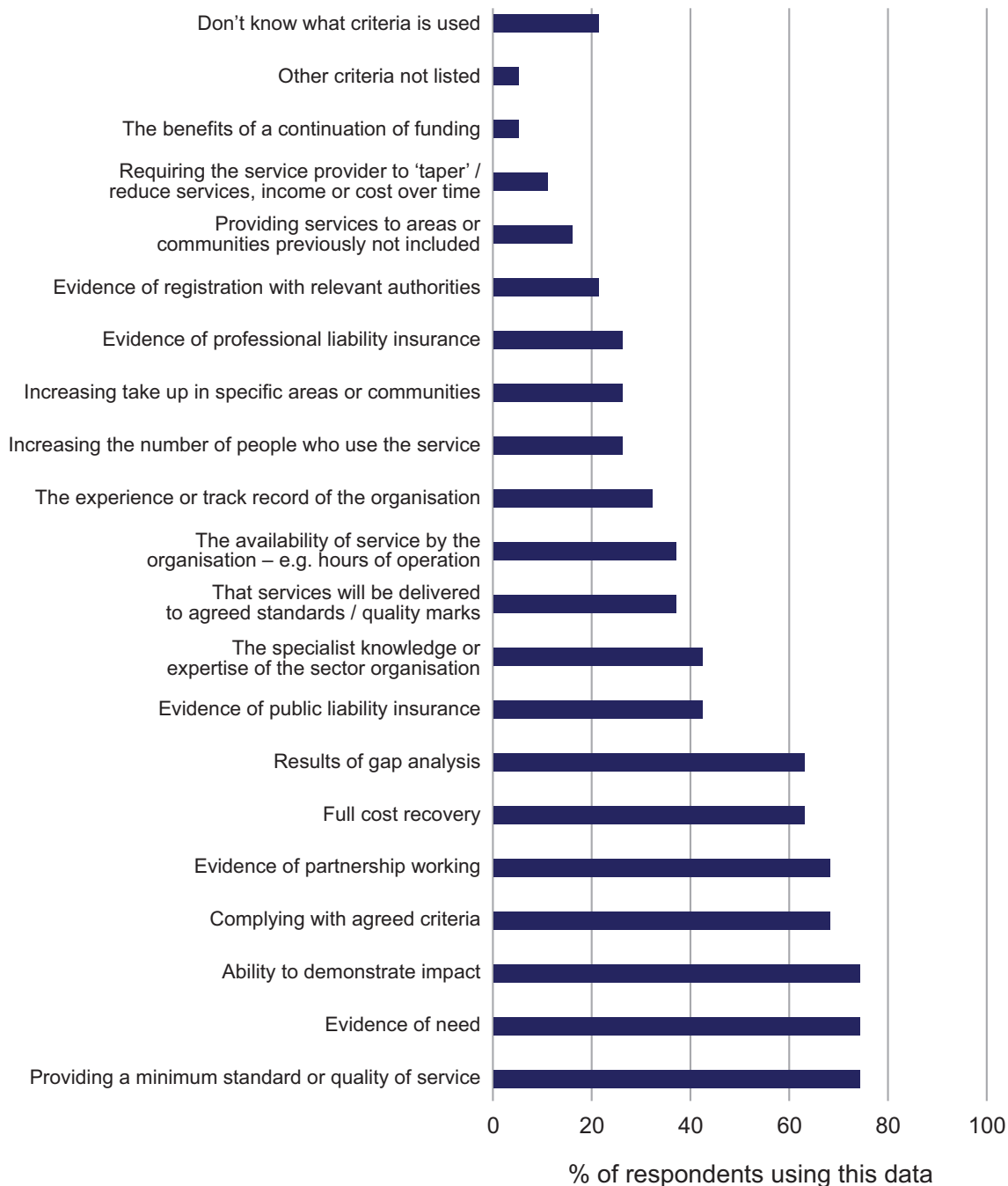


Source: Wales Audit Office.

- 3.8 People we interviewed highlighted concerns that some commissioners are not using good quality information to understand demand for VAWDASV services. Whilst 95% of those who responded to our survey stated that they had mapped existing services provided to people experiencing domestic or sexual violence to help prepare their local strategy, just over half of respondents acknowledged that this exercise only provided them with a partial picture of services and there were many gaps in their data. Even where authorities have completed needs assessments, they are often very broad and lack data at a community level, which is often the critical information for effective commissioning. These survey findings were echoed by third sector bodies we interviewed who noted discrepancies and weaknesses from their experience in the data used by commissioners to drive activity.
- 3.9 Generally, 70% of local authorities believe they are commissioning effectively and are helping to improve the quality of life of VAWDASV survivors and victims. In addition, 65% of respondents have confidence that they have adequate measures in place to be able to judge the value for money of commissioned services. Whilst 55% stated that they work effectively with partners to commission services, they did flag concerns with the complexity and short-term nature of funding and poor data sharing as key blockages to improvement. Whilst just over half also felt the commissioning guidance provided by the Welsh Government was helpful, many commented that it duplicated other commissioning guidance and fell short in key areas.
- 3.10 Whilst a focus on delivering outcomes is becoming more important in strategic funding decisions, the cost effectiveness of services remains the key driver and price comparisons – usually unit costs – are often used as the main basis to determine who to award contracts to. This is drawn out in our survey of third sector bodies set out in [Exhibit 10](#).

**Exhibit 10: key issues considered by public bodies in awarding funds to third sector organisations to run VAWDASV services**

Public bodies are not using a comprehensive list of criteria to judge and award VAWDASV services.



Source: Wales Audit Office Survey of Third Sector organisations providing VAWDASV services, May 2019.

- 3.11 **Exhibit 10** lists the potential criteria that local authorities can use to award funding to third sector organisations. Taken together, these represent key drivers for local authorities to use in balancing cost, risk, impact, quality and support to organisations. For all options, very few third sector bodies believe that local authorities use a sufficiently wide range of criteria to decide on funding awards and these findings suggest that local authorities need to undertake further work to develop their basis for awarding monies. Whilst cost is undoubtedly an important consideration, local authorities also need to ensure this is balanced with, and does not outweigh, other considerations if they are to deliver value for money from their strategic funding decisions.
- 3.12 It is also important that local authorities' arrangements for funding third sector organisations are efficient and effective, as the choices made by authorities are crucial to the achievement of value for money. Done badly, the funding processes can impose heavy burdens on the third sector with organisations having to invest resources to comply with systems which can often be onerous. Poor funding arrangements can also increase the risk of third sector organisations being unable to deliver what they are being paid to do and consequently result in public monies being wasted or a service failing.
- 3.13 From our review, we consider a single comprehensive approach bringing all VAWDASV funding together into a single budget to commission services to be the most effective. A single approach to commissioning VAWDASV services helps to ensure third sector organisations and public bodies have familiarity and understanding on arrangements, and when consistently used this can help streamline and reduce the burden of administration for all parties. This is the approach recently introduced by Cardiff Council and we highlight this as good practice.

## Cardiff Council Commissioning of VAWDASV Services

Cardiff rationalised its funding of VAWDASV services to increase project sustainability and create a medium-term programme of funding. Prior to recommissioning, the Authority had 11 grant agreements covering 16 different services provided by four different third sector bodies on annual contracts. The Authority identified that they had also created six different monitoring and reporting mechanisms to evaluate these projects with no consistency between them. Following discussions between commissioners, service providers and survivors, the Authority has brought all sources of funding together, and created a single central commissioning process which has enabled the Authority to procure a single 'front-door' one-stop shop service on a fixed three-year term with the option to extend for up to a further four years. This approach allows the Authority to clearly specify its requirements and reduces the duplication inherent in the previous system of different services commissioning independently of each other.

- 3.14 As well as seeing single commissioning systems within organisations, public bodies in some areas of Wales are also developing regional commissioning of VAWDASV services, in line with Welsh Government guidance<sup>15</sup>. The roll-out of regional funding under the Welsh Government's VAWDASV Services Grant began in April 2018, although 2018-19 was a transitional year as public bodies developed their new approaches. While regional funding ostensibly began on 1 April 2018, many organisations are still dividing up grants between local authorities with each following their own commissioning strategy.

<sup>15</sup> The March 2018 guidance for local strategies states that 'it is anticipated that a move to a regional approach will improve the alignment of funding with policy direction, including the Act; ensure greater focus on the delivery of services; and facilitate greater value for money and flexibility of regionally funded services to meet local need'.

- 3.15 Despite this, some organisations believe that the move to regional funding has been hugely beneficial, particularly in supporting operational and academic research in the area of VAWDASV. Dyfed Powys Police have worked with the regional VAWDASV board and have jointly commissioned two research projects which they anticipate will have local, regional, national and international benefits. The research projects are being undertaken on a collaborative basis with Swansea University and Cardiff University respectively and have also been co-funded by the European Social Fund (European Union). The research projects focus on two key areas; 1. The effectiveness of DASH in practice – Quality and effectiveness of Police Risk assessments relating to Domestic Abuse, and 2. Identification of commonality between psychopathy and serial domestic abuse perpetrators. This research project will also have an equal focus on the urban and rural challenges of tackling domestic abuse within Welsh communities and the challenges in providing support to both victims and perpetrators.
- 3.16 A single or regional approach can also present some risks. For example, Welsh Women's Aid highlighted that in some cases contracts can often be awarded to generic service providers rather than specialist providers because of lower competitive-tender prices, commissioners' lack of understanding about what 'VAWDASV specialist services' are or because they do not always apply national quality service standards for domestic and sexual abuse services when commissioning services. One survey respondent noted that Their 'service which had a really good reputation in [county] for the work it does in high risk and holistic support for Domestic Abuse was devastated via regional funding. We lost three of our main trained workers'. Whilst it is legitimate for local authorities to secure the best price for a service, it should not be the only driver. Quality, impact, coverage and take-up are also important, particularly in specialist services which, by their very nature, often provide better value for money even though they may be more expensive.

## Evaluating performance and impact of VAWDASV services is difficult because of weaknesses in arrangements

- 3.17 To get the best from funding decisions and strategic choices, local authorities need to ensure they have the right arrangements and systems in place to manage, evaluate, measure and scrutinise performance. Effectively assessing performance will also help all parties to improve management of third sector funding, wider accountability for performance and expenditure, and policy development. Setting poor indicators makes it difficult to therefore judge the true value of VAWDASV services. Key to the effective scrutiny of performance is having robust but streamlined processes that strike the right balance between collecting ‘everything’ and ‘nothing’.
- 3.18 From our fieldwork we found that organisations find it difficult to measure performance effectively, particularly with respect to long-term outcomes that help judge the positive impact of services on victims and survivors. For instance, only 60% of organisations responding to our survey believe that they have put in place appropriate performance measures, targets and benchmarks for VAWDASV. Whilst just over half of respondents (55%) believe that these cover all VAWDASV services, only 25% of respondents stated that their performance management system allows them to assess the value for money of services.
- 3.19 In terms of services making a positive impact on victims and survivors, only 70% of respondents stated that they measure performance against appropriate outcomes and slightly fewer (65%) assess victims and survivor’s satisfaction with the services they access and use. However, less than a third have set baselines which enable them to judge change and improvement over time. Likewise, only a third note that their evaluation systems are effective in identifying and addressing gaps in provision. Self-reflection and learning is similarly variable with just over half of public bodies responding to our survey stating that they have created arrangements to learn from case reviews. However, only 45% stated that they use these processes to shape service priorities and inform their future strategy and planning.

3.20 Survey respondents identified the main blockages to creating an effective framework to evaluate performance as limitations in the data they collect; poor leadership at all levels; weaknesses in data management – for instance, difficulties in interrogating information and integrating data – and the quality and timeliness of Welsh Government guidance. Whilst this latter point has partly been addressed with the recent publication of the [National Indicators for Wales](#), a number of interviewees expressed concerns about the slow progress to date in drafting the measures<sup>16</sup> and their limited coverage as not enabling public bodies to measure what difference services are making to victims and survivors. At present, weaknesses in current arrangements mean that it is difficult for public bodies to consistently know what is working and why.

<sup>16</sup> The June 2019 VAWDASV National Indicators are the second set of National Indicators published by the Welsh Government following the first consultation published in December 2017. The Welsh Government aims to produce the final set by mid-2020.



# Appendix 1 – Review methodology

## Review of literature and web-based information

We reviewed a range of documents including Welsh Government guidance and codes of practice, local authority and other public bodies service plans, strategies and monitoring information.

## Data and statistical analysis

We analysed authorities' performance using data submitted to the Welsh Government and published on [StatsWales](#) and the [Local Government Data Unit Benchmarking Hub](#). We also used national data provided by [Office of National Statistics](#).

## Local and national fieldwork

We undertook detailed fieldwork in Conwy County Borough Council, Flintshire Council, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, Swansea Council, South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority and Dyfed Powys Police. This involved interviewing officers and elected members, partners and focus groups with third sector frontline workers. We interviewed representatives from Welsh Women's Aid, Welsh Government, the Welsh Local Government Association, the Welsh Government appointed VAWDASV National Advisors (current and former), Independent Domestic Violence Advisors and chief executives of third sector organisations. We augmented our outlook and understanding by interviewing elected members and officers in Newcastle City Council.

## Interviews with survivors

We interviewed a number of survivors who provided us with detailed information on their experiences on how public bodies have responded to their needs.

## Surveys

We surveyed local authorities, health boards, fire and rescue authorities, the police and police and crime commissioners on their strategic approach to VAWDASV and the effectiveness of current operational arrangements. We also surveyed all major social housing providers in Wales and third sector providers of specialist VAWDASV services.

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# Agenda Item 5

## Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee

6 February 2020 – papers to note cover sheet

Paper no.	Issue	From	Action point
ELGC(5)-05-20 Paper 3	Post legislative inquiry into the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015	Welsh Government	To note
ELGC(5)-05-20 Paper 4	Post legislative inquiry into the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015	NSPCC Wales	To note
ELGC(5)-05-20 Paper 5	Post legislative inquiry into the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015	Gwent VAWDASV Partnership Board	To note
ELGC(5)-05-20 Paper 6	Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill	Welsh Government	To note

**Jane Hutt AC/AM**  
**Y Dirprwy Weinidog a'r Prif Chwip**  
**Deputy Minister and Chief Whip**

Papur 3 – Llywodraeth Cymru  
Paper 3 – Welsh Government

Ein cyf / Our ref: MA-P-JH-5811-19

**John Griffiths AM**  
Chair of the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

24 January 2020

Dear John,

In your letter to me dated 18 December 2018, you requested periodic updates every three months from the National Advisers to provide reassurance on the pace of implementation of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015.

I am very pleased to enclose the fourth of these updates from the National Advisers which covers the period October to December 2019.

Yours sincerely,



**Jane Hutt AC/AC**  
**Y Dirprwy Weinidog a'r Prif Chwip**  
**Deputy Minister and Chief Whip**

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

## **National Advisers' Report to the Equality, Local Government and Communities (ELGC) Committee December 2019 update**

### **1. Purpose**

In his letter dated 18 December 2018 to the Deputy Minister and Chief Whip, John Griffiths, AM Chair of the ELGC Committee, requested periodic updates from the National Advisers to provide reassurance on the pace of implementation of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015.

This is the fourth update from the National Advisers and covers the period October 2019 to December 2019 inclusive.

The sub headings below, "National Advisers" and "Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials," indicate ownership of actions described in the respective sections.

### **2. Introduction**

#### National Advisers:

This quarter we finalised the approach, membership and work streams of the newly established Expert Stakeholder Group on VAWDASV which met for the first time during September 2019. We have drawn four specific themes for the group which include identifying improvements for VAWDASV regional collaboration amongst delivery agencies; reviewing the needs of children and young people who are victims of domestic abuse and making recommendations for enhanced provision; reviewing the needs of asylum seekers and refugees who suffer domestic abuse and cultural harms; and identifying the interface between devolved and non- devolved processes and making recommendations for more effective alignment.

We had a meeting with the Permanent Secretary in December. The main discussion points included training and awareness of VAWDASV within Welsh Government, particularly senior leadership teams. An action of this meeting will lead to a specific blog by the Permanent Secretary. We have been pleased by the extent of cross government working taking place in Welsh Government and commended the Permanent Secretary on the support and encouragement given by senior levels of the organisation.

### **3. National Indicators**

#### Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

The National Indicator Working Group continues to review the published national VAWDASV indicators, proposed measures and data sources with a view to agreeing any amendments by the summer of 2020. Three workshops now remain which are scheduled between January and March, after which officials will make recommendations for updates to the National Indicators, measures and data sources.

#### National Advisers:

We have chaired certain National Indicator workshops. We were encouraged by the contributions of providers and partners.

### **4. Local Strategies**

#### National Advisers:

We are pleased to report receipt of all requested local strategies. We are starting to screen these to ensure we can provide feedback and where possible identify good practice which we can share. Recently, we have been made aware of specific areas including children and young people and BME groups require specific actions, we will carefully consider any areas of improvement where relevant.

### **5. Statutory Guidance**

#### Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

##### *National Training Framework (NTF)*

As of September 2019, 167,500 people in Wales have accessed training under the National Training Framework.

The Welsh Government is working with services to continue to increase the percentage of their workforce completing the Group 1 eLearning module (basic awareness training). Officials are also working with colleagues to enable access to the VAWDASV eLearning module to over 25,000 public sector employees in education settings via the Hwb portal.

Public sector professionals continue to be trained through our early intervention and prevention training 'Ask & Act' (group 2 & 3), where identifying and responding to VAWDASV is a key aspect. At the beginning of October 2019, 4,343 public sector workers were trained. Ask and Act training is now available across Gwent, Cwm Taf, North Wales, Mid and West Wales, Fire and Rescue Services, Welsh Ambulance Service Trust as well as Health Boards and Trusts. The full roll out of Ask & Act will be completed during 2020-21. Implementation meetings have commenced within Bridgend and Swansea Western Bay as well as Cardiff and the Vale.

A fully funded Welsh Government specialist course and service manager course for groups 4 and 5 of the framework (those whose specialism is in the field of VAWDASV) is currently being delivered and is due to end in March 2020, and regional workshops for group 6 leaders (includes those with commissioning and planning responsibilities) are also underway. Further meetings are planned for the new year.

Welsh Government officials, in partnership with the National Assembly Wales, are arranging for Ask and Act training to be made available for all Assembly Members and their support staff. A planning meeting is scheduled for January 2020. The training will be useful in their roles working in constituency areas. It allows Assembly Members to pro-actively engage at the earliest opportunity with those who are vulnerable and experiencing violence and abuse, and to signpost them to relevant support services.

There is a commitment within the NTF for the Ask and Act guidance to be made statutory. Therefore, Welsh Government officials are working together with Knowledge and Analytical Services to independently evaluate the Ask and Act programme early in 2020 prior to making the Ask and Act guidance statutory.

## **6. Health**

### Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

In December, officials were invited to a presentation with Public Health Wales colleagues on the key themes that recur in domestic homicide reviews. The aim was to ensure that all core roles are receiving training in line with these key themes.

### National Advisers:

We have been working with the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales Police to explore and challenge current thinking in favour of a public health approach framework for VAWDASV. We feel this area of work and the workshop we participated in this quarter will help with the better alignment with the sustainable development principle within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The aim of this joint working is to identify approaches for a public health approach and to gain an understanding of the existing VAWDASV landscape across Wales.

## **7. Education**

### Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

The development of the new curriculum for statutory education (3 -16yrs) continues as described in the previous update.

Officials are working with the WJEC to design and pilot a Health and Wellbeing Peer Mentoring challenge for the Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate, which will also promote the *White Ribbon youth advocate programme*.

Welsh Government has commissioned workshops, starting in December 2019, to be delivered through the whole of Wales to provide front line professionals such as school counsellors and youth workers with greater insight, knowledge and practical tools to use when supporting young people.

Officials worked with HEFCW to develop guidance aimed at Higher Education Institutions and directly funded further education institutions in Wales on tackling VAWDASV. The draft guidance was issued for consultation in October and has since closed. HEFCW is currently working through the consultation feedback and will meet with officials to discuss the final draft in January 2020. The aim is to publish the guidance by the end of March 2020.

#### National Advisers:

We continue to be involved in the delivery of the new curriculum, both with the Welsh Government and key community networks. Specifically, to understand the tensions and concerns of diverse groups. One of the National Advisers is involved with mediation for the education sector within West Midlands. We are providing expert advice to the sector in Wales to allow professionals the flexibility to identify potential tensions and approaches to engage a wider range of community groups, including women from diverse backgrounds.

### **8. FGM, Honour Based Abuse (HBA) and Forced Marriage (FM)**

#### Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials

The All Wales Honour-Based Abuse Group met on 9 December 2019. The amendments proposed at the last meeting to the terms of reference were agreed. There was a detailed discussion about the purpose and function of the group and it was agreed that it should have strategic responsibility for activity taking place at a regional and local level. The existing delivery plan was updated in the light of this. The next meeting is scheduled for 5 March 2020.

#### National Advisers:

We attended the All Wales Honour-Based Abuse Group meeting on 9 December 2019 to share our expertise on how best to develop practice and pathways which are relevant to Welsh Authorities. Our findings highlight the need for improvements within multi-agency working in identifying multiple vulnerabilities. At the meeting, we provided information about the journey of the victim, specifically disclosures, how they are classified and how risks are managed.

### **9. Sustainable Funding Model**

#### Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

This area of work is proving challenging, however the Chair of the Sustainable Funding Group has asked the members of the group to come together and present their proposals for a sustainable funding model for discussion and sign up of the group.



Three members of the Sustainable Funding Group came together to produce a paper outlining their proposals for discussion. This paper will be discussed in the January 2020 meeting.

#### National Advisers:

Regional boards and partnerships have been given the opportunity to present their experiences of effective joint-commissioning at future Sustainable Funding Group meetings. This invitation will encourage learning from different approaches as well as facilitate open feedback and challenge to each approach

### **10. Funding Allocations**

#### Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

##### *Revenue Funding*

Welsh Government continues to provide revenue funding to Regional Partnerships and third sector organisations on an annual basis.

Officials are continuing to monitor delivery against stakeholders' delivery plans via quarterly claim cycles which include monitoring meetings.

##### *Capital Funding*

16 proposals totalling £1,431,605 were submitted for the 2019-2020 Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Capital grant. Two of these were not viable. Funding of £1,063,854 was allocated to the remaining 14 applications.

##### *Budget for 2020-21*

The VAWDASV indicative revenue budget for 2020-2021 is £5.25 million, which includes additional non-recurrent funding of £250,000.

The non-recurrent revenue funding will be allocated to various priority areas, such as:

- Additional training related to harmful cultural practice, including BME training for IDVAs and / or training for staff in refuges in Wales to support families with substance misuse and mental health issues;
- Reducing waiting lists for counselling following sexual violence;
- Increasing funding to the regions for delivering perpetrator services;
- Evaluation of Ask and Act; and
- Awareness-raising for children and young people's services.

The VAWDASV indicative capital budget for 2020-2021 is £2.169 million, which includes additional non recurrent funding of £1,200,000.

The non-recurrent capital funding will be allocated to VAWDASV Refuge/Move On Accommodation

This funding will support third sector providers to buy dispersed community-based units with flexibility to meet the needs of families which cannot be met by refuges (including disability access or those with older dependents), or to enable move on from refuges. Women are more likely to be affected by domestic abuse than men and more likely to flee their homes. As women are predominately the care-givers in society they are more likely to flee with children. In addition, there may also be a requirement for men fleeing domestic abuse, particularly as they are less likely to seek or accept refuge accommodation and may feel more secure in dispersed units.

## **11. Working with Perpetrators**

### Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

The Good Practice Guidance for non-specialist public services on working with adult perpetrators' was published in November.

A total of £120,000 has been made available by the Welsh Government as grants to the seven regions in order to support them in improving the provision of perpetrator services in their areas. The Welsh Government is also offering further support and expertise to aid in the delivery of these projects.

The Welsh Government is providing support and supervision for a number of Master's degree projects in Forensic Psychology at Cardiff Metropolitan University, which involve master's students providing an evaluation for perpetrator services as a part of their academic programme. Two of these projects are nearing completion, one is ongoing and three more are currently being initiated.

Practice sharing events were held in Cardiff and Llandudno Junction in November. These events were well-attended and included presentations from Barnardo's, the Trauma-Informed Prison Project and a sexual harassment researcher.

The VAWDASV work stream of the 'framework to support positive change for those at risk of offending in Wales' met in November. Three task and finish groups reporting to the work stream are underway, focusing on perpetrator service commissioning, service standards and service user engagement.

The Welsh Government is providing ongoing support and supervision for the Swansea University harassment research study, which the Welsh Government funded in collaboration with KESS II (Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarships), part of the European Social Fund.

## **12. National Survivor Engagement Framework**

### Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

Further to the last update the pilot panels have now come to an end. Three panels were held with a mixed group of survivors during September, October and

November. The panel facilitated survivors to review the objectives in the current National Strategy on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence and what has changed, and to share their knowledge and lived experience to influence the development of the next National Strategy on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.

A theory of change model has been developed and the pilot project is currently being evaluated by the Welsh Government's research programme. Evaluation meetings will take place throughout January and February 2020 with those who engaged and will be combined with other findings from the pilot work to establish whether it is the best approach and whether the survivor voices and experiences have made a difference. This will inform the final report which will influence a sustainable survivor engagement framework which we anticipate will include multiple ways of engaging with survivors across Wales. An initial finding report is expected by the end of March 2020 with a full evaluation due spring 2020.

#### National Advisers:

Survivor engagement remains key in shaping and influencing real change. We intend to work with BME survivors of historic sexual abuse as part of our newly formed Learning Panel. This meeting will provide meaningful engagement with diverse groups and help provide key actions for Welsh Government and strategic partners to address any inequalities which may currently exist.

### **13. Live Fear Free**

#### Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

In the absence of applications to carry out an evaluability study of the helpline during our previous procurement exercise, we will be directly contacting relevant organisations to invite them to tender for this important work to inform future contracts for the delivery of the Live Fear Free helpline.

Since the last report, the helpline received a total of 8,595 contacts; 8,224 incoming calls, 46 contacts by email, 311 contacts via the webchat service and 14 texts, 7.5% calls were abandoned prior to speaking to a helpline Support Worker.

To fully demonstrate the helpline's productivity the volume of outgoing calls should also be considered. There were 1,850 outgoing calls made with the main reasons detailed are as follows: messages to groups - problems in refuge etc.; enquiries regarding refuge space or referral; calls to police; calls to agencies; Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (RASASC) /Stepping Stones Holding service; other.

### **14. Communications**

#### Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

Since the last report we have successfully launched the third phase of our 'This is not love. This is control' campaign. This phase focuses on the particular experiences of young people. It highlights the challenges young people face as they develop

relationships and a sense of individual identity. We launched this phase in 2 stages, the first to coincide with Fresher's week and the typical experiences of 19-21 year olds when they access further education. Full campaign packs were sent to universities across Wales. More recently, in October, we worked with a group of young people in the Rhondda Valley to target younger people aged 16-19. A short video clip was created with BBC News, sharing experiences of young people. A brief animation has also been created and distributed to VAWDASV networks for parents and concerned others, encouraging them to pick up on the signs of control and to access information and support.

Welsh Government officials have engaged closely with the Expert Stakeholder Communications Group, key stakeholders whose specialism is within the sexual violence field as well as survivors, to develop messaging and imagery for the phases due to launch in February 2020. Phase 4 of the 'This is not love. This is control' will continue to explore and highlight the exploitation, grooming, manipulation and fear that coercive control involves when perpetrated within families, intimate relationships and of a sexual violence nature.

To broaden the reach of the communications campaigns, community communications activities are being delivered in four areas of Wales to raise awareness of VAWDASV. This period of activities (October to March) are focusing on "This is not Love. This is Control". Activities are being led by survivors of abuse in partnership with specialist stakeholders. Events this year, during October to December have included development of a survivor led podcast, presentations, a conference in south West Wales, development of resources for working with survivors of VAWDASV with additional needs and a community event engaging with young advocates.

Following White Ribbon Day and activities marking the 16 days of activism, 7 new White Ribbon ambassadors have been recruited within Welsh Government. During this period we have continued to share mini campaigns on Live Fear Free social media channels highlighting our achievements over the last year, sharing with our wider network what support is available to victims, regions, commissioners and professionals across Wales.

#### National Advisers:

This year's International Day for the elimination of violence against women and White Ribbon Day was marked by both an event organised in conjunction with the Women's Institute of Wales. Nazir Afzal spoke at the afternoon event at the Senedd and later participated in a touching vigil for the victims of such violence. This was as usual followed by 16 days of action and we were pleased to see the involvement of the Welsh Government at the highest level throughout the whole period. This period needs to grow in prominence in years ahead.

Nazir Afzal gave oral evidence on the Domestic Abuse Bill to the Bill Committee during a previous UK Government parliamentary session. We also engaged with the Bill sponsors to ensure the Bill reflects the wishes of the sector in Wales, particularly survivors. The relationship with the designated Domestic Abuse Commissioner was reinforced through regular communication which respects the devolved areas in Wales but explores opportunities for collaboration especially research.

## **15. Conclusion**

### National Advisers:

The National Advisers will continue to work with key stakeholders, the public sector, UK Government, the third sector and other relevant partners, to ensure there is a strong commitment to achieving the provisions outlined in the VAWDASV Act (Wales) 2015.

The National Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2016-2021 commits to establishing a Learning Panel to consider and disseminate learning and good practice. We have established this group and will focus on specific themes. Our first theme will explore harmful practices such as Honour Based Abuse and historical sexual abuse within Black and Minority Ethnic communities.

To improve collaboration across England & Wales we have met the recently appointed Domestic Abuse Commissioner. The role of Domestic Abuse Commissioner will lead on driving improvements on the response to domestic abuse in the UK, championing victims and making recommendations on what more should be done to better protect victims and bring more offenders to justice. We will work with the Commissioner to ensure cross-border working is achieved.

VAWDASV National Advisers

December 2019

## The Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act – Barriers to implementation briefing

### Presented to Equalities, Local Government and Communities Committee

NSPCC is leading the fight against child abuse in the UK and Channel Islands. We help children who've been abused to rebuild their lives, we protect children at risk, and we find the best ways of preventing child abuse from ever happening. Learning about what works in the fight against abuse and neglect is central to what we do. We are committed to carrying out research and evaluation to make sure the approaches we're taking are the right ones and we share what we have learnt with partners. Abuse ruins childhood, but it can be prevented. That's why we're here. That's what drives all our work, and that's why – as long as there's abuse – we will fight for every childhood

#### Introduction

NSPCC Cymru/Wales feels a major barrier to successful implementation of the VAWDASV Act is the absence of children and young people from much of the work. While both the Act and accompanying national strategy specifically name children as directly impacted by VAWDASV, this is not realised in practice. NSPCC has found 1 in 5 children have been exposed to domestic abuse<sup>1</sup> and 130,000 children and young people in the UK are living with high risk domestic abuse<sup>2</sup>. It is therefore imperative that a child's right to protection and recovery from abuse is realised.

In the evidence provided by NSPCC Cymru/Wales to the Equalities, Local Government and Communities Committee in 2016 we highlighted our concern about the harassment and violence experienced by children and young people, the need for mandatory RSE within a whole school approach and the provision of specialist services for children and young people impacted by abuse.

Progress against these concerns have been limited; An inquiry into harassment experienced by children and young people has not happened to date. However, progress has been made towards mandatory RSE and we strongly welcomed this in our response to Welsh Government's [consultation](#). However, we feel a more comprehensive guidance about the expected content of the resource is needed, specifically the importance of keeping safe, healthy bodies and healthy relationships and the upskilling of teachers to ensure important and difficult subjects are covered. Additionally, we continue to call for an RSE curriculum co-produced with children and young people *'young people should be regularly consulted on the issues they're most impacted by and what kind of language and expression is most useful for supporting them to navigate current dilemmas in their daily lives. They should be given the opportunity to identify their needs, comment on any policies and contribute to curriculum*

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/domestic-abuse/>

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

planning. This information should be gathered at a school level and used to inform the design of RSE provision<sup>3</sup>.

## Specialist Services

A report considering the proposed 'Ending Violence Against Women and Domestic Abuse (Wales) Bill' in 2012 stated '*delivery of services is patchy with no consistent, strategic oversight of the issue*'<sup>4</sup>. Almost eight years later and five years after implementation of the VAWDASV Act, the resources for and availability of services is still inconsistent across Wales.

In 2016, we highlighted our concern that provision of support for children impacted by domestic abuse across Wales was patchy. At the time, professionals told us; '*there are not enough therapeutic services such as counselling, CBT and attachment based therapies*'.

In early 2019 NSPCC Cymru/Wales produced a [briefing](#) with Children in Wales and Welsh Women's Aid on the impact of domestic abuse on children. The briefing highlighted that while both the VAWDASV Act and National Strategy specifically name children as direct victims and not 'passive witnesses' there remains a gap between the policy intent of the act/national strategy and the provision of services for child survivors across Wales. Using data from Welsh Women's Aid membership of specialist services the briefing highlighted that many of these services do not have dedicated provision for children and young people. Despite a commitment from Welsh Government to invest in prevention work with children and the intent of the Act to move towards a preventative model, dedicated services for children are not consistently available across Wales.

We feel our concern is compounded by children being absent from conversations about VAWDASV. The Wales Audit Office report for example, highlights the short term and inconsistent nature of funding for specialist services, but there is no mention of the chronic lack of provision for child survivors. It therefore suggests a mapping of services across Wales to understand current provision and gaps, but does not reference the importance of mapping the gaps in provision for children – this can be done by utilising the work done by NSPCC Cymru/Wales and Welsh Women's Aid.

In terms of the data used to complete local authority needs assessments the Wales Audit Office report notes public bodies are not always drawing on a comprehensive evidence base to fully assess local need. The data sources listed would indicate a gap in terms of the impact of VAWDASV on children, with data from maternity services and social care noted but no mention of other public bodies who work for or come into contact with, children.

Children's voices are missing from VAWDASV strategies, the report highlighted that survivors' voices were not consistently heard by local authorities when consulting with stakeholders. In local strategies children's voices are not discussed separately from adult survivors, so we can only assume their voices went unheard in much of the evidence gathering. A review of local VAWDASV strategies by NSPCC Cymru/Wales noted that only three of the eight strategies recognised children as victims of domestic

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/consultation-responses/nspcc-cymru-wales-response-to-draft-curriculum-for-wales-2022.pdf> page 23

<sup>4</sup> Robinson A, et al, The Welsh Government's proposed 'Ending Violence Against Women and Domestic Abuse (Wales) Bill': Recommendations from the Task and Finish Group <http://orca.cf.ac.uk/64054/1/Robinson%20et%20al%20%282012%29%20Task%20and%20Finish%20Group%20Report.pdf>, page 18

abuse and only two strategies were prioritising early intervention and work in schools. However, no children were consulted in the development of the strategies and none specifically prioritised developing or establishing support services for children.

Any prevention work on VAWDASV must have work with children as front and centre, however the Wales Audit Office report makes little mention of CYP when considering prevention work. Health, local authorities, Fire and Rescue and registered social landlords are mentioned as key players in preventing VAWDASV and of course they will engage with children, but schools and other public bodies working directly with children and whose primary responsibility is to the child must also play a pivotal role in prevention and early identification.

It appears the shift to prevention and awareness raising is slow, with funding presenting a challenge, this is compounded by commissioners not using good quality information to understand demand for VAWDASV services. There is no mention of demand for and the gap in children's services within the Wales Audit Office report. While services have been mapped, the report acknowledge there are gaps in this data and the failure to mention children speaks for itself.

It appears that slow implementation, a lack of resource and an inconsistent availability of specialist services for children recovering from abuse is preventing the Act from having a transformative impact on children and young people. For children already impacted by VAWDASV they need their own intensive, specialist, therapeutic support to help mitigate the impact of the abuse. In addition, work with children to spot the signs of abuse at an earlier stage or to educate them before it happens at all, is key to eradicating VAWDASDV for future generations.

### **What we are calling for;**

We reiterate the calls made in our joint briefing with Children in Wales and Welsh Women's Aid.

#### **1. Dedicated services for children and young people who experience domestic abuse**

We want the Welsh Government VAWDASV Sustainable Funding Group to work with local authorities, cross government departments and the specialist sector to identify funding for the following;

- Dedicated children workers in both refuge and community services as standard to provide play and therapeutic work while the family is in crisis.
- Specialist services in each region of Wales staffed with appropriately trained professionals to provide therapeutic services for children and young people to enable them to recover from their experiences and develop healthy relationships in the future.
- The Wales Centre for Public Policy to ensure children and young people services are included in the review of refuge provision

#### **2. Local VAWDASV strategies**

We want to see:

- All local plans to recognise children and young people are directly impacted by abuse and commit to consult child survivors about the protection and support they need
- Local strategies to prioritise the development of specialist service provision for children and young people in every region of Wales



- Close working between safeguarding Children Boards and partnerships and agencies working to end domestic abuse to ensure effective protection and support of child victims.

**3. Prevention, Early Intervention and Cultural Change**

- Relationship and Sexuality Education within the new school curriculum must be mandatory
- The whole-education approach to be implemented across all education institutions to promote learning and challenge unhealthy relationships.

# Agenda Item 5.3

Map 5 – Health Partnership Trais yn erbyn Menywod, Cam-drin Domestig a Thrais Rhywiol Gwent  
Paper 5 – Gwent VAWDASV Partnership Board

Bore da

Please see a short update on the implementation of the Act compiled from responses by the Gwent VAWDASV Partnership Board.

Members agreed the report raises some very valid points. There are some areas which are not as clear such as praising Gwent for its joint working approach by all agencies and then referring to a concern about commissioning in Gwent.

In relation to additional points members felt that there needs to be more of an emphasis on the Act and requirements within. One example is in relation to the commissioning process and whether there is a way to ensure Local Authorities and Partnerships fulfil their duties effectively.

In relation to additional progress within the Region, the partnership has joint funded a MARAC coordinator to support this aspect of the work. Gwent Police are delivering SafeLives DA Matters training in March to 800 first responders to aid awareness with those officers. A new Regional Officer starts with the team on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January to progress the commissioning work within the area with a completion date of the agreement by 31 March 2020. Ask and Act training continues to be rolled out across the Region with a decision made at the beginning of this financial year to enable local delivery.

Another learning point, and often a barrier, is the need to emphasise the connections with the VAWDASV Act and other legislation such as the Social Services and Wellbeing Act, not all partners identify the connection and understand the importance of the VAWDASV Act alongside all other Acts – this seems to be echoed at all levels across Wales.

I hope this helps and please get back to us if you require any additional information.

Kind regards

Janice Dent (on behalf of the Gwent VAWDASV Partnership Board)

**Y Gwir Anrh/Rt Hon Mark Drakeford AC/AM**  
**Prif Weinidog Cymru/First Minister of Wales**

Papur 6 – Llywodraeth Cymru  
Paper 6 – Welsh Government



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref MA-L-JJ-0731-19

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21 January 2020

*Annwyl Elin,*

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ELECTIONS (WALES) BILL**

On 18 October 2019, I submitted, for your consideration, the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill, so as to determine whether it is within the competence of the National Assembly.

There are provisions within the Bill, which require the consent of the relevant Ministers of the Crown under Schedule 7B to the Government of Wales Act 2006. These relate to the functions of electoral registration officers and the removal of the Welsh Ministers' powers to make regulations enabling a local authority to make an application to a magistrates' court to have a council tax debtor imprisoned. At the time of submission, these consents had not been received.

The Secretary of State for Wales has now written to the Minister for Housing and Local Government providing consent in respect of the provisions removing the Welsh Ministers' powers to make regulations enabling a local authority to make an application to a magistrates' court to have a council tax debtor imprisoned.

In addition, the Government of Wales Act 2006 (Amendment) Order 2019, made by the Privy Council at its 17 December meeting, has removed the competence issue in respect of the functions of electoral registration officers.

*In gywir,  
Mark.*

**MARK DRAKEFORD**

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.