



**61 Cowbridge Rd East
CARDIFF
CF11 9AE
paul@fnf-bpm.org.uk**

P-05-798 – Male domestic violence victim support services to be independently run & funded

RESPONSE FROM FNF BOTH PARENTS MATTER CYMRU TO SAFER WALES SUBMISSION

We thank the Committee for their interest in these important and difficult issues for male victims of domestic violence and abuse.

We believe that male victims of domestic violence and abuse are being failed by Welsh Government, Local Authorities and service deliverers who adopt a perspective that marginalises or denies the experience of men and funds ‘support’ that is not grounded in the experience of men. Welsh Women’s Aid rightly campaign for services that are ‘by and for’ women – grounded in their experience and responsive to their needs as women.¹ We understand and support the need for women only services – primarily because evidence shows that this is what women experiencing abuse want. However, in relation to male victims the National Quality Service Standards for specialist Domestic Abuse Services (funded by Welsh Government) states that:

1.9. Services for male service users are tailored to their needs and are delivered safely, using a recognised assessment tool to review risk and needs, which is aligned with the Safer Wales Dyn Project assessment toolkit or ‘Respect Toolkit for work with male victims of domestic violence’ and associated standards for supporting male victims.

This is a different approach to that stipulated for female service users.

We note the response from Safer Wales – a member organisation of Welsh Women’s Aid²
The assessment process used by Safer Wales for men is fundamentally different to that used

¹ https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Welsh-Womens-Aid_Service-Standards-Final.pdf p7

² <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Annual-Membership-Report-2018-19-FINAL.pdf> p2 footnote



by themselves and other member organisations of Welsh Women's Aid with female service users presenting as victims of VAWDASV.

The Dyn Project assessment tool seeks to determine the extent to which an individual is a 'genuine' victim of abuse on a continuum from pure victim to pure abuser with bi-directional violence at the mid point. It does this by asking individuals accessing their service a series of around 40 questions about their experience. These questions include a set asking the caller to reflect upon the answers that their 'partner' or alleged abuser might give. We know of no assessment tool used with female victims that uses a similar approach.

Safer Wales do not explain to callers that their assessment tool is used to determine whether or not they are 'genuine' victims of domestic abuse. We believe therefore that any consent granted by callers to process their information is not a valid consent. It is our view that the Safer Wales Dyn Project assessment tool discriminates against men seeking help and support. The Safer Wales Dyn project is funded by Welsh Government to provide a service to male victims of domestic violence and abuse.

There is no external assessment or validation of the use of the assessment tool. This was confirmed by James Rowlands, who developed the tool, in an email recorded by Dr Sarah Wallace in her PhD thesis³

Mrs Anne O'Regan – Vice Chair of our charity raised the discriminatory practice of the Safer Wales Dyn Project assessment tool with the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Their initial response was:

'It is our view that the practice of screening men is unlikely to amount to direct discrimination because of sex.it is our view that there is a material difference in circumstances between a man and a woman seeking support from a similar helpline. Women constitute the overwhelming majority of victims of domestic abuse and it is not possible to rely on this statistical probability when dealing with complaints from men. In our view, it is not possible to make a 'like for like'

³ https://pure.southwales.ac.uk/files/2792531/Sarah_Wallace_PhD_theis_May18.pdf Appendix 39 p558



comparison in the context of the screening of male / female callers which will make it difficult to establish less favourable treatment because of sex.’⁴

This position was later overturned – with the assistance of Mark Drakeford AM – the constituency Member for Mrs O’Regan – following the EHRC decision to commission an external independent legal opinion.

In later correspondence from EHRC to Mark Drakeford AM it was stated:

‘The question we asked Counsel to consider is whether screening male, but not female, callers to domestic violence services constitutes direct discrimination.

I am writing to advise that we have now received that advice. Counsel’s advice is that screening male only callers to domestic violence helplines does constitute direct discrimination so we have revised our initial view about the legality of these policies and will be writing to the service provider.’⁵

We understand that the Safer Wales Dyn Project continues to use the discriminatory assessment tool with male callers relying on the fact that the service only engages with male callers and therefore cannot technically be in breach of s13 of the Equality Act 2010 because it does not provide an equivalent service to women. This is an important point and may indicate why in the response from Safer Wales they seek to point out to the Committee that:

‘Safer Wales does not currently deliver a dedicated Wales helpline and Independent Advisor Service to women.’

The purpose of this Petition was to draw into question the appropriateness of funding organisations grounded in a feminist perspective to provide support directly to male victims of abuse. The Welsh Government legislated in 2015 to Domestic Violence and abuse is a gendered issue. In that context it is difficult to understand why organisations grounded in a feminist perspective are felt to be appropriate as a service deliverer to male victims of domestic violence and abuse.

⁴ Extract from letter dated 5th April 2017 to Mark Drakeford AM from EHRC Wales

⁵ Letter from EHRC to Mark Drakeford AM dated 26th October 2017



In the delivery of our dedicated domestic violence support service for men – Aegis DV – we are increasingly seeing men being signposted or directed to feminist organisations for help and support. Two specific examples in the last week of May 2020 involve men being contacted by Welsh Women’s Aid member organisations – both of whom have attained the WWA Quality standard – following a referral from a statutory agency. Neither service explained that they were a member organisation of WWA nor that their ethos is feminist. Both have been awarded the WWA Quality Standard that requires that ***‘The organisation promotes a gendered understanding of domestic abuse as a cause and consequence of women’s inequality in all its publicity and promotional material.’***⁶

We therefore call on the Petitions Committee to hold the Welsh Government to account in the commissioning of services for men and women who experience domestic violence and abuse by ensuring that men are treated in an equal and appropriate way – based on the level of need - ensuring that funding to support male victims is only granted to organisations that can provide a service that is grounded in the experience of men and delivered by men. This is no more than any women should expect from services commissioned to support her.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Apreda".

NATIONAL MANAGER, BOTH PARENTS MATTER / IDVA, AEGIS DV

⁶ https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Welsh-Womens-Aid_Service-Standards-Final.pdf standard 7.2