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Deputy Minister and Chief Whip



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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John Griffiths AM
Chair of the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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2 April 2019

Dear John,

In your letter to me dated 18 December, 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 Act 2015.

I am very pleased to enclose the first of these updates from the National Advisers which covers the period December 2018 to March 2019.

Yours sincerely

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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 March 2019 update

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 March update from the National Advisers and covers the period December 2018 to March 2019.

Introduction

The National Advisers recognise that this is a cross-cutting area of work which demands commitment across Welsh Government departments, local authorities, the public sector, UK government organisations, the third sector and other relevant partners.

National Indicators

The closing date for the violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) National Indicator public consultation was 29 March 2019. Officials will be reviewing the responses and formulating a Welsh Government response within 12 weeks of the closing date. The aim is to publish a final set of National Indicators by July 2019.

We anticipate the indicators will bring complex data together into a format that is meaningful for people working in the field, policy makers and the general public. The indicators should inform and influence national, regional and local strategic policy and service delivery decisions in accordance with the purpose of the Act and will be based upon the three pillars of prevention, protection and support.

Local Strategies

Local Authorities and Health Boards published their strategies in May 2018. Officials will be writing to the chief executives to ensure that they produce reports on their progress for 2018-19 in achieving objectives specified in their local strategies. This is being monitored to ensure that these reports are published in a timely manner.

We have surveyed the published strategies and found them to be comprehensive and coherent. During 2019-20 we expect to draw good practice wherever possible to share widely with key stakeholders and partnerships.

Health

We have sought a meeting with the Minister and Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services to discuss issues within our Annual Plan for 2019-20 which are relevant to priorities within the health and social services ministerial portfolio.

Sustainable Funding Model

Welsh Government made a commitment in the National Strategy to publish statutory guidance for relevant authorities on the commissioning of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence services. We have laid our draft commissioning guidance before the Assembly and depending on any comments from Members, this guidance will become statutory at the end of April.

Different regions are at different points on the path to full regionalisation. We do not expect full statutory requirements to be achieved by April 2019 but will expect good progress during the coming financial year. We will allow a flexible approach during the initial year but will monitor the situation to ensure the momentum is maintained. As Chair of the Sustainable Funding Group, Yasmin Khan has chaired two meetings in the period covered by this update and agreed with partners to reach an agreed understanding and definition of what is meant by “specialist funding”. We will schedule our third meeting following acceptance of VAWDASV commissioning by the Assembly.

Funding Allocations

The number of victims requiring sexual violence services rises year-on-year. Increasing demand and limited resources have resulted in some areas in Wales having very long waiting lists to access services. Welsh Government officials have utilised money from the 2018-2019 VAWDASV grant underspend and Programme Development Fund to support the sexual violence sector with their counselling waiting lists. Officials will ascertain the impact of this intervention when claim reports are received and analysed at the end of April.

To support the VAWDASV communications and social media campaigns and aid awareness of the Live Fear Free (LFF) helpline telephone number, the Welsh Government invested in promotional merchandise. This has been shared with partners across Wales. This investment will aid the continued awareness of VAWDASV and the services that are available to support victims and survivors in Wales.

To support collaborative regional commissioning and to meet the requirements of the statutory commissioning guidance in 2019, an allocation has been provided to all regional partnerships to support work around young people in relation to perpetrator engagement, perpetrator support, and support to implement an integrated service pathway and further needs analysis.

We fully support the increase in allocations to meet with the demand of increase in referrals; our meetings with Rape and Sexual Abuse Centres (RASAC) and New

Pathways have highlighted the challenges specialist services experience with increasing demands. However, we also recognise the need for improved and integrated pathways whilst waiting lists continue to reduce the trauma experienced by victims. Last year, the former First Minister announced there would be two separate reviews – one for refuge provision and one for sexual violence services. The Welsh Government has recently commissioned the Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP) to conduct a review into refuge provision. This will look at international approaches and seek input from expert providers. WCPP have been asked to make recommendations to improve provision for both men and women fleeing abuse.

Statutory Guidance

Regional Commissioning Guidance

As noted above, members of the Sustainable Task and Finish Group contributed to drafting guidance on regional commissioning of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence services. Following consultation, this was laid before the Assembly on 21 February 2019. Subject to negative resolution, it will be published by the end of April and will become statutory the same day as publication.

National Training Framework

Statutory Guidance on the National Training Framework was published in March 2016. As of December 2018, 134,807 learners had completed the awareness raising E-Learning.

Training for specialist workers and their managers has commenced, with 24 learners completing the IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor) course and 24 learners currently undertaking services managers courses. Both groups were due to complete by end of March.

A public leadership conference took place at the end of March 2019. This conference was aimed at senior leaders and those with commissioning responsibilities in the Welsh public sector. It set out leadership responsibilities under the Act, made the case for creating a whole workforce approach to early identification and response, and advocated embedding violence against women prevention across every organisation's core business. Nazir Afzal spoke at the conference on "Roles and responsibilities of the public sector".

Ask and Act

Guidance on 'Ask and Act' training was published in November 2017. This was published as draft guidance in order to allow early implementers to feedback their experiences of implementing the guidance. Statutory guidance will follow by the end of 2019-20.

A new contract was awarded in December 2018 to Welsh Women's Aid to deliver Ask and Act training, which includes the requirement to revise the training in light of feedback received. The contract includes the development and delivery of two

distinct “train the trainer” courses and two training packages which are provided to the trained trainers for local roll-out.

Ask and Act continues to be delivered to the five early adopter/pilot sites and planning meetings have taken place for training to commence in 2019 priority areas, Mid and West Wales and North Wales for April.

Annual training reports are due to be submitted in May 2019 and analysis of learners will also be completed.

Our perception is that services have expressed concern about the delay. However, there is some clarity on the way forward and implementation.

Education

Work is continuing on the development of the Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning (AoLE) ready for the phased implementation of the new curriculum from 2021.

VAWDASV lead officials continue to engage with Education colleagues and other stakeholders to ensure that Sexuality and Relationship Education (SRE) is reflective of policy.

The current SRE Guidance has been redrafted and is currently out to public consultation. The publication date for the revised guidance has not been confirmed as yet.

A mapping exercise is underway to identify all current SRE resources and projects utilised within schools. The aim is to complete this exercise by the summer on the provision funding is approved. It is anticipated that officials will be better able to identify any gaps that may need to be addressed in order to support current delivery within the school setting.

Officials are meeting regularly with HEFCW to assist in the development of VAWDASV policies and guidance. The aim is to produce draft guidance by the end of this year.

We have arranged a meeting for 30 April with the Minister for Education to discuss issues within our Annual Plan for 2019-20 which are relevant to priorities within the education ministerial portfolio

Working with perpetrators

Practice sharing events were held in Llandudno and Cardiff over January. Events continue to be well received and heavily subscribed.

The Public Services Guidance consultation period closed in February and final publication is due in late spring.

The review of the DRIVE Project in Merthyr was conducted in early January and a report published.

Grant payment was allocated to Swansea University to support harassment research and training in collaboration with KESS II (Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarships) fund, part of the European Social Fund.

The Strategic Work stream group meeting was held in March and involved a problem-solving workshop. Members have identified issues in the commissioning process. Stakeholder engagement strategy for North Wales commenced in March – with a series of visits, meetings and telephone conferences completed mid-March, including a visit to the KIM project in Holywell.

Communications

Community communication engagement activities were designed to broaden the reach of all our campaigns. Funding has been awarded to Welsh Women's Aid, BAWSO, Survivors Trust and Cardiff University to take forward this activity. Activity has been focused on engagement with the following key groups; children and young people; male survivors of sexual abuse; those from a BME and asylum seeking, refugee background; universities and their students; survivors of domestic abuse. This community-focused activity has directly engaged with stakeholders across Wales and offers a more meaningful way through which issues of VAWDASV can be explored and awareness raised. Full evaluation of the activities is expected by the end of April 2019.

“This is not love. This is control” campaign was launched in January 2019. The campaign aimed to highlight the treacherous, cumulative nature of coercive control as well as its subtlety. The campaign films have been viewed more than 120,000 times on Facebook, Twitter and You Tube so far.

Planning for the next two phases of the “control” campaign also took place in March with specialist providers working in either the areas of sexual abuse/ violence or children and young people invited to workshops to help define the messages for the future campaigns as well as suggesting appropriate channels. We have attended all three campaign launches to date. The engagement of survivors and the manner in which they have shaped the campaigns have resulted in extremely positive feedback.

National Survivor Engagement Framework

Research and focus interviews were planned with survivors of under-represented groups throughout March and April. This work aims to address identified knowledge gaps and progress the commitment to ensuring a more representative group of survivors have a formal role in shaping Welsh Government policy. The outcomes of the pilot will be evaluated and will make recommendations for a long-term National Survivor Engagement Framework with formal links into national VAWDASV governance structures. A pilot national survivor panel is due to be convened September 2019.

Live Fear Free

An evaluability assessment has been undertaken to inform the design of the tender specification for the next contract for the Live Fear Free helpline. This is intended to

assist with decisions about options for future evaluations of the helpline service and its impact in Wales. The report will be published in 2019.

The Live Fear Free website hosts main campaign messages and resources, accepts emails from victims, service providers and concerned others, and has a live chat facility for those who are reluctant, or unable to engage in a telephone conversation.

FGM, Honour Based Violence (HBV) and Forced Marriage (FM)

Officials continue to co-chair the FGM/HBV/FM Leadership Group in Wales. The group is currently developing the 2019-2020 delivery plan. This will be implemented in April 2019.

We jointly attended and presented speeches at the Welsh Government and Home Office event, A Practical Guide to Forced Marriage and Female Mutilation Protection Orders, held on 6 March 2019. The roadshow was part of the consultation which sought views about whether it was necessary to introduce a new legal mandatory reporting duty relating to cases of forced marriage and, if it was, what such a reporting requirement would look like. We continue to work with specialist services to ensure the diverse range of issues affecting BAME groups across Wales is being addressed.

Conclusion

Our programme for the next quarter will focus on the National Indicators and working towards the objective of regionalisation to provide a more strategic approach to funding and commissioning services to improve sustainability. We are planning a National Conference later in the year which will involve VAWDASV partnerships, stakeholders and survivors to highlight progress achieved against the objectives of the VAWDASV Act 2015 and to identify specific priorities and gaps. This National conversation will provide the basis for providing a blueprint for better services across Wales, services which reflect identified need and survivor's voices.

National Advisers

March 2019