

MEWL evidence

How prevention work relating to GBV is aligned with the new Curriculum, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) and the training, resources and support for teachers etc.

Developing a high-quality education profession supported through professional learning is central to the realisation of our vision for education in Wales and is one of the objectives in 'Our national mission High Standards and aspiration for all'.

The Welsh Government's Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) strategy runs alongside the new Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Code and statutory guidance and underpins learners' rights to enjoy fulfilling, healthy and safe relationships throughout their lives.

RSE Code

The mandatory learning within the RSE Code includes from age 11: *'Recognising harmful, abusive or coercive behaviour in personal relationships including control, violence and sexual violence and how to respond and seek help for self and others'*. The RSE Code explicitly requires learning about violence on the basis of sex and gender, recognising that violence can be gendered and includes explicit reference to *"sexual violence and gender-based violence in a range of contexts"*.

Within the RSE Statutory guidance it is clear that the approach to RSE should be positive, protective and preventative, considering how learners might need to be supported to *'have the knowledge to recognise all forms of discrimination, violence, abuse and neglect, including violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence'*. A [toolkit of Welsh Government VAWDASV resources](#) to support schools and settings has been developed on this important issue and has been published within the RSE Statutory guidance.

Peer on Peer Sexual Harassment Action Plan

We are also working with a range of stakeholders, including the Police to develop a multi-agency action plan. The action plan will outline the actions to be taken by Welsh Government and partners to tackle peer-on-peer sexual harassment in education settings. Actions will reflect the different experiences of sexual harassment and the needs of different groups, for example the impact of characteristics such as sexuality, gender identity, race, disability and ethnicity, as well as the challenges of intersectionality.

A key pillar of the action plan will be professional learning. It is important that all staff and governors in education settings are informed about the impact of peer-on-peer sexual harassment, can recognise unacceptable behaviour, and are confident to challenge it and to model appropriate behaviours.

We have commissioned a range of external experts and partners, to develop bespoke professional learning to support practitioners to realise new curriculum requirements. Work continues in a range of other priority areas, including relationships and sexuality education, children's rights and religion, values and ethics. All new professional learning resources are accessible via [Hwb](#).

Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)

The Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 puts a requirement on Welsh Ministers to prepare and publish a National Strategy to prevent gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence (section 3(1)).

The revised strategy for 2022-26 was published in May 2022 following consultation with the sector and survivors of VAWDASV. There are six objectives within the strategy:

1. Challenge the public attitude to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence across the Welsh population through awareness raising and space for public discussion with the aim to decrease its occurrence.
2. Increase awareness in children, young people and adults of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships and empowering them to make positive personal choices.
3. Increase the focus on holding those who commit abuse to account and supporting those who may carry out abusive or violent behaviour to change their behaviour and avoid offending.
4. Make early intervention and prevention a priority.
5. Relevant professionals are trained to provide effective, timely and appropriate responses to victims and survivors.
6. Provide all victims with equal access to appropriately resourced, high quality, needs-led, strength-based, inter-sectional and responsive services across Wales.

The National Strategy is key to delivering Programme for Government commitments including:

- Strengthen the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy to include a focus on violence against women in the street and workplace as well as the home;
- Expand the 'Ask and Act' and 'Don't be a Bystander' training and awareness campaigns;
- Make Wales the safest place in Europe to be a woman.

Prevention is at the core of the strategy. Whilst support for survivors and system change to improve outcomes for survivors remain key ambitions in Wales, we are also shifting our focus from symptom to cause through a public health approach. This does not mean that survivors will expect any less from our existing methods,

rather we will evolve the impact of what we do to ensure that survivors as individuals are supported holistically. This will be done through a whole system approach, and through the whole of society to help reduce the chances that they would experience VAWDASV in the first place.

Delivery of the strategy is being undertaken through a Blueprint approach which brings together devolved and non-devolved organisations. The VAWDASV team is leading the delivery for Welsh Government in partnership with the police service in Wales, but, in order to be a success, the strategy requires joint working with other departments including education, health, housing and crime. Adopting this Blueprint approach has enabled the establishment of new shared governance structure reflecting the joint ownership of this shared priority, tackling VAWDASV. Adopting a Public Health approach to our work will ensure that we remain focused. The underlying principles that guide our collective efforts are:

- to challenge public attitudes
- to increase awareness in children
- increased accountability for those who perpetrate violence and abuse
- prioritise and focus on prevention
- confident and informed workforce
- provision of inclusive and accessible services that are trauma informed and needs led

The Blueprint workstreams will deliver the objectives set out in the VAWDASV National Strategy, as well as identifying other priorities when drawing upon wider evidence/learning relevant to the VAWDASV agenda which must be in agreement with the National Programme Board. These Workstreams may change over time as progress is made and priorities develop. However, initially these will address:

- gender-based harassment in all public spaces
- workplace harassment
- tackling perpetration
- whole system approach to sustainability
- older people's needs
- children and young people's needs

Progress made to implement the VAWDASV Blueprint Programme up to 31 March 2023

- National Partnership Board established.
- National Programme Board established.
- Six Workstreams established.
- Survivor Voice Scrutiny and Involvement panel recruitment commenced.
- The jointly funded Blueprint Programme delivery team recruited.
- [High Level Blueprint Action Plan](#) published.

Key actions to underpin the programme of work

- The Welsh Government will review the National Indicators to ensure that they reflect this strategy, can be used to measure our progress in delivering our aims and objectives and establish a pattern of reporting on progress against National indicators.
- Develop a Theory of Change model which will illustrate the priorities, activities and outcomes of the Blueprint Programme.
- In line with the Well-Being of Future Generations Act we will continue with a collaborative approach to implementing this Strategy to involve all relevant stakeholders and service users.
- Build upon lessons learnt and best practice to focus on what actions we need to prioritise to develop our approach further.

Tackling male violence, and the misogyny and gender inequality that lie behind it, are how we will break the cycle and address the root causes of VAWDASV. We must challenge attitudes and change behaviours of those who behave abusively. It is not for women to modify their behaviour, it is for abusers to change theirs.