

Jayne Bryant MS
Children, Young People and Education
Committee
By email only

From: Martyn Jones JP DL, Wales
Committee Interim Chair

Our ref: 20240307Bryant

Thursday 07 March 2024

Dear Jane Bryant,

Violence against women and girls

I am writing to bring your attention to our comprehensive report, published today, analysing the UK and Welsh Governments' performance upholding the Istanbul Convention. In particular, we would like to highlight some of its recommendations relevant to the Welsh Government. We have enclosed the report for your consideration.

The Istanbul Convention

As you know, the UK Government ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence ('the Istanbul Convention') in July 2022. We welcomed this important step. As such, the UK and Welsh Governments are now bound by international law to protect women and girls from violence. This includes prevention activities, prosecuting those responsible, and safeguarding survivors.

Our report has been submitted to support the Council of Europe experts on violence against women and girls' ('GREVIO') own evaluation of the

implementation of the Convention.

As an A-status National Human Rights Institution, we have provided our independent analysis on compliance with the Convention, and recommendations for change, to support GREVIO's assessment, including by meeting with the experts in January 2024. We are pleased to share our report with you today, which reflects this programme of work.

Based on our analysis, we welcome both governments' ambitious targets to improve women and girls' safety, and their focus on driving improvements. However, there still work to do to make these targets a reality for women and girls. We outline some of our recommendations here.

Measuring progress

To facilitate improvements on women and girls' safety, we recommend that the Welsh Government publish new indicators to measure progress implementing its current Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence strategy without delay. As the Welsh Government did not publish any comprehensive information on progress against its 2019 indicators, we consider it a priority that the Welsh Government adopts a greater focus on delivery and transparency.

Support for child victims of violence

Our report considers girls' experience of violence and expresses our concerns about the lack of specialist therapeutic support available to child victims of violence. We note the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA)'s



recommendation that the UK and Welsh governments introduce a guarantee that child victims of sexual abuse will be offered specialist and accredited therapeutic support. This has not been actioned, despite research showing that early interventions are effective at reducing the impact of child sexual abuse and preventing significant mental health problems in later life.

The role of schools

Our report also discusses the important role of schools and educational curricula in preventing violence against women and girls in Wales. It describes evidence of the impact of sexism and prejudicial attitudes in schools.

We welcome the Welsh Government's recently published peer-on-peer sexual harassment action plan but note that timeframes have not been allocated to actions.

We would be happy to meet to discuss these issues further, and invite you to consider our report, and its recommendations for change, carefully.

Yours sincerely,

Martyn Jones JP DL

Wales Committee Interim Chair

Equality and Human Rights Commission |

Arndale House, The Arndale Centre
Manchester, M4 3AQ

equalityhumanrights.com