

Cross Party Group on Violence Against Women and Children

Tuesday 4th October 2022, 12.15-13.15 (Via Teams)

Attendance	Apologies
<p>Sioned Williams MS (Chair) Jane Hutt MS, Minister for Social Justice Dafydd Llywelyn, OPCC Dyfed Powys Sara Kirkpatrick, CEO; WWA Jen Mills, Policy Officer; WWA (Secretariat) Amy Bainton, Barnardo's Elinor Crouch-Puzy, NSPCC Simon Borja, Safer Wales Sam Lewis, Llamau Michelle Whelan, Calan DVS Johanna Robinson, National VAWDASV Advisor Sue Ashcroft, VAWDASV Blueprint Programme Implementation Manager Carol Harris, Hafan Cymru Colleen Bennett, CarmDAS Daisy Williams, Stop It Now Georgia Cottell, Cardiff University Jackie Buxton, WWDAS Moiria Hutton, Calan DVS Bethan Phillips, Welsh Gov Kate Jones, Thrive Women's Aid Coleen Jones, WWA Emily Watson, WWA (Minute Taker)</p>	<p>Berni Durham-Jones – Stepping Stones North Wales</p>

Item	Lead
<p>Welcome, Introductions & Apologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sioned Williams MS, Chair, thanked everyone for attending, introduced the agenda topics and highlighted housekeeping for the meeting. 	<p>Sioned Williams MS</p>
<p>Visions and aims of the National VAWDASV Advisors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thanks for the welcome & I am very pleased to be here. I believe that the purpose & aims of the advisor roles will evolve over time and I am hoping to meet with as many of you as possible My background is 3rd sector work which has encompassed London, overseas and Wales, including work with the PCC in Gwent and, most recently, as Operations Director for Llamau I feel it is very important to note that I am the first appointment to this role to openly identify as a survivor and I hope this will help to send the message that we are professionals and supporters, but also people. Sometimes survivors are discussed as experts by experience, but it is still thought that they cannot cope in a professional capacity. I aim to put their voices at the heart of everything we do I applied as I feel this is an exciting time as we have the new strategy & blueprint approach, as well as the national partnership board, none of which we have had before. Yesterday, we had initial conversations about the governance around that & now we need to look at how we put that out at regional & local levels This is 3rd cycle of the National Advisor role, and it is important to acknowledge there hasn't been enough progress & there have been significant failings in our aim for Wales to be the safest place to be a woman We want the support to be clear to those that need it but also the focus on the preventative agenda as so many women still do not come forward and we need to look at why 	<p>Johanna Robinson</p>

- The purpose of the advisor role is challenging and bringing a critical opinion and I must keep in touch with the services who work daily with survivors & perpetrators, as we do need to be including more men in work around this. This is how we will change cultural attitudes the way that we need to do
- We will be providing an expert perspective, working with public services to ensure best practice and ensuring we bring in expert voices for scrutiny, as well as making sure there is a strategic local approach feeding up to the national level
- We need to ensure people have a safe space to say what worked for them & didn't and why they did or didn't come forward and what their experience of that was, good or bad, in order to learn from that
- We also must be responsive the cost-of-living crisis and what challenges that presents for survivors in the here & now and I am focused on how we can best be responsive to those emerging issues as well as delivering on the strategy
- My focus is that survivor voice is central to the delivery of the strategy and that we recognise the intersectionality of experiences
- We are currently writing our annual plan now, which will be published by Nov 30th – Please do send any feedback you have to johanna.robinson@gov.wales
- I am also very keen to meet with as many of you as possible, especially in person I am based in Cardiff & happy to visit offices. Please do make contact via email.

SW thanked JR & opened the floor for questions or comments:

- SW: I am interested in the regional focus. How are you planning to prioritise that?
 - JR: We are hoping to invest in those early doors, we do have regional structures and they do have to have throughput to national level. Whilst I am happy to go to regional meetings, and will do when I can, we should have the structures in place to assure that even if I am not there, we have the reporting structures for me to shine a light on great things happening at those levels and we shouldn't have to dig for any gaps in provision
- DL: Just as a word to support - In relation to governance structure, service delivery & survivor voice which are central to all that is going on at strategy level

An overview of the set up and progress of the VAWDASV Blueprint

- The national VAWDASV strategy was published in May following extensive consultation – Thanks to all who were involved, we received 125 responses to the consultation, which are published on the Welsh Government website
- We are establishing shared governance arrangements to ensure accountability in getting them right as well as ensuring the pooling of resources and availability of funding to provide joint leadership
- We are taking a blueprint approach forward, building on that previously used for female offending
- We have established the partnership board this year which provides a space to develop common & complementary approaches
- There will be accountability to all partners as members of the board, which will support the work of the regional boards. We have support from policing in Wales, specialist sector & PHW to name a few
- There is also the programme board, which sits under the partnership board and will ensure the milestones set by the partnership board are being delivered by the workstreams on a quarterly reporting basis
- The Minister has mentioned workstreams which are in process of being established, they will be accountable for delivering what was set out in the strategy
- A high-level plan will be developed & published, based on the need for the blueprint to evolve and be progressive
- There will be six main workstreams:
 1. Street harassment and safety in public places

Jane Hutt
MS

PCC Dafydd
Llywelyn

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Workplace harassment 3. Tackling perpetration 4. Sustainable commissioning 5. Older People's needs 6. Children and Young People's needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The workstreams acknowledge the critical areas where we know more work needs to be done • Survivor voices are essential and must be central to our work, which is why we are developing an involvement panel who will scrutinise the work of the workstreams & provide national recommendations. This will be essential to ensuring we deliver at pace & have a positive impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This will be formed of existing survivor networks and will ensure the right level of support is provided to them • Alongside the support from PCCs this gives us an opportunity to develop a whole systems approach to ensure we protect victims & survivors in Wales • The blueprint approach provides the true support & collab that VAWDASV is everyone's business & want to make Wales will be the safest place in Europe to be a woman. Wales will not be a bystander to abuse. <p>SW thanked the Minister & DL and opened up the floor for questions or comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECP: Great to hear about the inclusion of survivor voices, are there any plans to raise the voices of CYP as well (in an appropriate way) to ensure they feed in too? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ JH: We have made it very clear that we should have separate workstream on CYP as a response to the consultation. Within Welsh and local government, we must see a lateral policy link to young people and curriculum development. The police also have a national schools programme which is well recognised ○ DL: Within that workstream there will be opportunity to provide further detail. We have developed the young people's forums, many of which exist across Wales. It would be wise for the workstream to seek to interact with those forums as this is how we will link with different policy areas. We have a consistent curriculum within Wales regarding healthy relationships and having the difficult conversations. Their voice will be heard but we are still to nail down, how, where & when in the workstream ○ JH: Both national advisors are also keen to ensure we are hearing all those voices, but also to reach out to those who may not appear as part of established groups, to make sure everyone has a space to tell us of their experiences 	
<p>An update from the All-Wales Operational Group on Sexually Exploited Women</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's important to note that the experiences of adults being sexually exploited are almost always co-exists with complex needs such as trauma, domestic abuse, substance misuse, mental ill health. In the absence of a statutory definition, the group have established a working definition which draws many parallels with the statutory definition of CSE. • The group uses the term exploitation rather than prostitution – this is to acknowledge the exploitation and lack of choice that these women face. Sex work is obviously any sexual act that is transactional in nature. • Whilst the term sexual exploitation is immediately and rightly associated with trafficking, modern slavery, county lines, OCG's – the group are aiming to broaden the understanding and recognition of sexual exploitation in its other forms • What underpins the work of the group is the acknowledgement that the grooming and exploitation of women into commercial SE is undoubtedly a form of GBV • There are several timely things taking place across the UK and specifically Wales which are relevant to ASE, particularly those experiencing Street based ASE. 	<p>Coleen Jones, Welsh Women's Aid</p>

- The pandemic had a significant impact on sexually exploited women, changing the nature of sexual exploitation, it has become more hidden they had to change the way that they work – this is concerning as it is leaving these women increasingly more vulnerable and isolated.
- Wales is a super sponsor for those displaced from Ukraine and this has really highlighted the issue of ASE within the media, as well as raising questions about how to deal with ASE that is outside of a modern slavery/trafficking context
- The SEREDA report further highlighted the GBV and ASE experienced by forced migrants. The Women's budget group have already stated that the increased cost of living is going to exacerbate economic gender inequality – disproportionately affecting women, and particularly those in the disabled and BME communities
- The VAWDASV strategy states that the understanding of VAWDASV is still too narrow as just domestic violence – The group were really pleased to see this commitment to this broader understanding of how VAWDASV can manifest and an explicit reference to SE as a form of VAWG and feel this is a significant step forward.
- What would a whole society approach to ASE look like?
 - The starting point needs to be awareness raising – both with the public to challenge the current narrative, reduce stigma and encourage that active bystander approach – but also among professionals
 - The group have submitted a series of FOIs to PCC's offices, local authorities, health boards etc, which are indicating there is no cohesive recognition or response in place for ASE. This is a significant gap and raises questions about the safeguarding and victims being missed, as well as the support available for victims of CSE when they enter adulthood.
 - The VAWDASV strategy recognises the importance of early intervention and prevention - A consistent understanding of ASE needs to be embedded across numerous areas of policy development - providing person-centred, trauma informed support is often complex and requires effective partnership working and multiple issues being addressed simultaneously.
 - To provide all victims with equal access to appropriately resourced, high-quality support as per the VAWDASV strategy, there needs to be a financial investment in support services for CSE. Currently most of these projects rely on volunteers, and very short-term funding sources for a multi-faceted and complex issue. We would really like to see provisions for ASE being part and parcel of core funding for as opposed to being considered additional projects.
 - It's crucial to centre survivor voices as they are the experts by lived experience, but also important to note, especially when talking about ASE to consider whose voices you are reaching and that it is representative, those experiencing street-based exploitation are often quite transient and have no access to phones, etc
- The workplan for the next year, agreed by the group, this focused on the following strategic objectives:
 1. Improve Wales-Specific Data collection, analysis and sharing
 2. Increase awareness and knowledge around Sexual Exploitation of Women in the Sex Industry
 3. Develop Wales Wide Good Practice.
- Members highlighted that there is still a lack of Wales-wide data in relation to Sexual Exploitation, particularly within more rural regions such as RCT/North Wales: There is a lack of pan Wales data re: the nature and prevalence of sexual exploitation, prostitution – which makes it difficult to define and advocate effectively for the issue, and also leads agencies to falsely believe there is a lack of prevalence in their area– so there's no accountability
 - No data = no statutory definition, which means no statutory duty to tackle this issue and that shows in the figures

SW thanked CJ & noted there was unfortunately no time remaining for questions, but they can be sent through to: ColeenJones@welshwomensaid.org.uk

AOB

- The next scheduled meeting is 21st March 2023; 12.15-13.15, however if there are any issues you would like to raise in a meeting prior to that, please contact JenMills@welshwomensaid.org.uk