

**Grŵp Trawsbleidiol ar ar Fenywod & Drais yn erbyn Menywod a Phlant
Cross Party Group on Women & Violence Against Women and Children**

Friday 19th January, 10.00-11.00 (Via Teams)

Minutes

Attending	Apologies
<p>Siân Gwenllian MS Sioned Williams MS Jessica Laimann, WEN Jennifer Mills, Welsh Women's Aid Leah Reed, Cardiff University Victoria Vasey, WEN Maddie Darlington, WEN Alisa Stevens Andrea Cooper, Older People's Commissioner Sarah Thomas, NFWI-Wales Prof Jackie Jones, Women in Europe (Wales) Group Megan Evans, WEN Stephanie Grimshaw, WWA R Roberts Evelyn James, WEN Helen Churcher Patience Bentu, Future Generations Commissioner Race Equality First Steve Williams, Sport Wales Shivangi Jane Fenton-May, Wales Assembly of Women Rob Jones Alison Parken, Cardiff University Abigail Rees, Barnardos Andrew Belcher, Stori Cymru Bryn Hall, Clinks Johanna Robinson, National VAWDASV Advisor Tina Fahm, Bawso Megan Thomas, Disability Wales Hade Turkmen, Oxfam Cymru Victoria Pledger Kate Williams, USW Alison Parken, Cardiff University</p>	<p>Heledd Fychan MS Delyth Jewell MS Llyr Gruffydd MS Carmel Boston, Cardiff University Sara Kirkpatrick, Welsh Women's Aid Cllr Mary Ann Brocklesby, WEN Board Kate Jones, Thrive Women's Aid</p>

Item	Lead
<p>12:00-12:05 Welcome, introductions, and apologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcomes • Apologies • Reminder of translation and instructions provided • Run through of Agenda 	<p>Siân Gwenllian MS</p>

<p>Adoption of a Code of Conduct</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CPG on Women <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read out of code of conduct • Support noted from Disability Wales • Vote: support from members on CPG on Women 2. CPG on Violence against Women and Children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vote: support from members of CPG on violence against women and children 	<p>Jessica Laimann, WEN</p> <p>Jennifer Mills, WWA</p>
<p>Wales Women’s Experience in the Prison System</p> <p>Background:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary findings from PhD research exploring experiences of Welsh women in prison in England • UK Government in Westminster remains responsible for Wales and England. Wales continues to be subsumed by England in discourse related to the Criminal Justice System. • Due to the role of devolution, Wales is considered differently. Welsh Government duties don’t include policing and criminal justice but control over social policy is key to shaping the identity of Welsh devolution. • Welsh criminal justice system has comparatively poor outcomes. Rates of Welsh women’s imprisonment is second highest out of all measured regions, and UK Government projections expect these to continue to rise. Wales has third highest imprisonment rates out of all countries in Western Europe. • Despite these statistics, there is no prison for women in Wales. There are Welsh women in each of the prisons in England, will all women placed ‘out of region’ at an average of 101 miles from home. • Women are imprisoned largely for non-violent offences, with 23% imprisoned for 1 month or less. More than 77% of these women are imprisoned for less than 1 year. • Some empirical work has aimed to understand experiences of Welsh people in prison. These shows two forms of invisibility: Welsh women largely invisible in conversations and Wales overlooked generally. • Welsh women in HMP Eastwood Park face particular issues around child visitation and Welsh men have reported issues on access to Welsh language, identity, discrimination and distances from home. • This research applied for Ministry of Justice and National Research Council approval to interview Welsh women in prison but was declined due to ‘duplication of research’. • FOIs have been submitted but still waiting to hear back, this reliance is unsustainable. Real need for Wales-specific disaggregated data to be made available. • Ask from Leah for anyone who can help with access to data or those with lived experience. <p>Preliminary Research Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women experience significant loss before, during and after imprisonment, many of which are related to domestic abuse both presently and in childhood, mental ill-health, and substance misuse. Prison adds to these losses. 	<p>Leah Reed, PhD Researcher, Cardiff University School of Social Sciences</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Separate’ delivery of services during imprisonment and post-release affects the support available, particularly where HMPPS is at odds with devolved services. • Distance from home exacerbates problems associated with imprisonment e.g. mental health, lack of visitation from family and children and maintaining meaningful contact. 	
<p>Discussion and questions from attendees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SG: do you think the fact that we have the second highest imprisonment rates in Europe is caused in part by re-offending. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Unsure but levels of re-offending are significant. • JM: the sentencing bill contains presumption against short sentences, what do you think the implications will be and do you think there is anything else we can be calling for? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Feeling that this has been mentioned numerous times but the change never materialises. It has been promised but imprisonment rates are rising, so would be a case of wait and see • VV: is there any data from Welsh women held on remand and what are the effects of being held on remand far away from court? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Don’t think we have data on this. It is hard to interview women while in prison and harder to identify those on remand but there are case studies from this work where women do mention distance from court and the impacts of this. • BH: important to highlight difficulties of not having disaggregated data for Wales. Get in touch for help for support. • PB: feel there is no appetite for asking for women’s prisons in Wales, but while we have some of the highest rates of women in prison and the impact of that distance on women’s’ mental health, how can we address this challenge? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Need to be more creative and think bigger. Majority of these women are there for non-violent offences so is there a need from them to be in prison or could we look at effective community rehabilitation. • JR: the life course of women shows domestic abuse and sexual violence and the level of repetition of this is significant. Women are only able to engage with programs with longer time in prison and only then do some women feel able to engage with support and re-connect with their children. • JR raised sentencing council consultation on custodial and community sentences: https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/news/item/imposition-of-community-and-custodial-sentences-guideline-to-be-revised/ • JFM: call for better information-sharing across public services. Is the higher rate of imprisonment in Wales due to lack of funding for alternative programs of support in Wales? • KW: we can learn a lot from the way in which youth justice managed to reduce prison population in Wales. The Sentencing Council ought to be looking at Wales and setting different rules for women. We need viable alternatives that courts can have confidence in so they can stop using imprisonment. • SW: Equality & Social Justice Committee heard about lack of knowledge of Women’s Offending Blueprint among magistrates which contains many of the issues discussed today. Has your research touched on this or have you spoken to magistrates? 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SW: the issue on data points has been raised previously and they discussed a data unit observatory for criminal justice and the difference this would make if we had it in Wales, could you highlight why? • LR: the issue with magistrates does keep coming up within other academic research, there is often a lack of knowledge. Would be in favour of the observatory but pointed to Dr Rob Jones' work on this. • SG: should we write to 4 Welsh PCCs explaining why we need this data? • SG: we need to be devolving all of justice so should we send a letter to leaders of political parties to set out the arguments in favour and asking their views on this. 	<p>Action: letter</p> <p>Action: letter</p>
<p>Updates from the Women in Europe (Wales) Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belgian presidency of EU looking at first-generation human rights looking at democracy and human rights, looking at Hungary taking over presidency in July and concerns around women's rights. • EU Parliament adopted a report on prostitution going some way towards Nordic/Equality model looking toward EU Parliament elections in May. • Move towards East. Albania, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Moldova, Georgia, Montenegro, Northern Macedonia, Serbia, Ukraine & Turkey all applying for membership which will shift the emphasis. • GREVIO committee coming to examine Wales next week. 	<p>Professor Jackie Jones</p> <p>Action: JM to provide update on GREVIO to next CPG VAW</p>
<p>AOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has now been 100 days since the bombardment of Gaza began, we know there have been many atrocities perpetrated against women and children. SW proposed to draft letter to the UK Government calling for an immediate ceasefire. • The next scheduled meeting of the CPG on Women is 15th March 10:00-11:00 • The next scheduled meeting of the CPG on Violence Against Women and Children is 15th March 11:00-12:00 	<p>Action: SW to draft letter</p>