

Cross Party Group Violence Against Women and Children / Grŵp Trawsbleidiol ar Drais yn Erbyn Menywod a Phlant

15th March 2024/15 Mawrth 2024

Chaired by/Cadeiriwyd gan: Sioned Williams MS/AS
Secretariat/Ysgrifenyddiaeth: Welsh Women's Aid / Cymorth i Ferched Cymru

Attending	Apologies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sioned Williams MS (Chair) • Jennifer Mills, WWA (Secretariat) • Andrea Cooper (Older People's Commissioner's Office, Speaker) • Sara Kirkpatrick, WWA (Speaker) • Rhys Morgan (Interpreter) • Stephanie Grimshaw, WWA • Joanna Parry, Cyfannol • Louise Dobbs, Stori Cymru • Necia Lewis • Abigail Rees, barnardos • Louise Dobbs • Victoria Vasey, WEN • Jo Robinson, National VAWDASV Advisor • Sam Lewis, Llamau • Debbie Beadle • Simon Borja • Jennifer Hodrien, DASU • Mark Isherwood, MS • Sarah Thomas, New Pathways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Susan Roberts, Stepping Stones North Wales • Andrew Belcher & Emma Rushton, Stori Cymru • Melissa Wood, We Stand

Minutes

Welcome, introductions, and apologies	<p>Introductions, housekeeping, and apologies</p> <p>Housekeeping:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A quick reminder that language interpretation is available for this meeting. Click More actions.. then choose Language interpretation and from the drop-down menu, click the language you want to hear then click Confirm. 	Sioned Williams MS, Chair
Matters Arising	<p>Updates on All-Party Letter regarding Sexual Harassment in the Workplace</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response received from Welsh Conservatives stating they take harassment in the workplace seriously and they have processes in place as set out by the central party. • Response from Plaid Cymru which has been circulated. They will be recommending to the party's Chief Executive and governing bodies that they adopt the toolkit. • No response from the Liberal Democrats or Labour. Would the group like JM to write to the new labour leader once appointed? 	<p>Jennifer Mills, WWA</p> <p>Action: JM to write to new leader.</p>

	<p>Letter to UK Government calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response received from the Minister of State for the Middle East outlining their position on conflict-related sexual violence. They also detail their approach to achieving a sustainable ceasefire, what the UK Government is providing in terms of aid, and how they are trying to resolve the crisis with other representatives. • Response received from the Minister for Social Justice stating there must be a renewed sense of urgency among the international community to deliver a full and permanent ceasefire. They also discuss what Welsh Government is doing here including tackling islamophobia and anti-semitism and ensuring peace among all communities. 	
Approval of Code of Conduct	Re-approval of the code of conduct to add the word 'ageism' in based on feedback at the last meeting.	Jennifer Mills, WWA
Update on GREVIO/UN Special Rapporteur on VAWG	<p>Two different visits: GREVIO & UN Special Rapporteur. These happened very close to each other across January and February. Both workshops attended by a broad range of frontline organisations and campaigning organisations. These were specifically for NGOs.</p> <p>GREVIO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22nd Jan 2024 • Independent body of experts monitoring the implementation of the Istanbul convention • Two roundtables • First: DA, police, children, stalking, family courts & compulsory mediation, digital forms of VAWG, sexual violence • Second: focus on intersectionality, ensuring women with disabilities, elderly women, black and minoritised ethnic women, LGBTQ+ women, women who have experienced substance use were being considered. Also in-depth discussions on the situation for migrant women, asylum-seeking women and so-called honour based abuse • Both meetings required to be confidential • General themes: need for connection, situation for migrant women and asylum seekers • Report will be due in November • Many organisations have submitted reports to the body in advance of the meeting and it was clear they had read them • Real focus on women in the group and the provision of services <p>UN Special Rapporteur:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reem Alsalem, current UN Special Rapporteur • In UK for 10 days • Two roundtables attended by a mixture of frontline VAWG services and campaigning organisations • WWA arranged the meetings to ensure a diverse list of contributors 	Sara Kirkpatrick, WWA

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings were hybrid to ensure there were representatives from all over Wales • No themes for the meetings in order to allow organisations to highlight what they felt were the most important issues • WWA provided the opportunity for them to meet with regional advisors as this is a role that is unique to Wales and they bring a level of coherence to the public sector response • They also met with representatives from the Live Fear Free Helpline • Lots of focus on funding, housing issues, and disaggregated data for Wales particularly • An interim report has already been published here with a full report expected at end of June 	
<p>The work of the Older People's Commissioner to stop the abuse of older people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older people's commissioner has a number of priorities, one of which is stopping the abuse of older people in Wales • Awareness can be too low • 1 in 5 older people experience some form of abuse and they may be at an increased risk of abuse due to health e.g. dementia, loneliness, isolation. These increase levels of risk. • Many older people don't disclose the abuse they have experienced. They may not recognise it as abusive behaviour or may be reluctant to report e.g. threat to their relationships, concerns about entering institutional care. Some may rely on their perpetrators for their care needs • Tackling abuse has been a long-term priority of both the current and the previous commissioner. Became a particular concern when covid hit due to social isolation. • Action Group set up a strategy with 6 priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Raising public awareness ▪ Support and services ▪ Research and data ▪ Voices of older people ▪ Training and support ▪ Policy and legislation • Raising public awareness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There is a general lack of awareness that older people can experience abuse. ○ Gap in knowledge and understanding which makes it less likely to recognise signs and get involve in intervention. ○ Produced Get help stay safe leaflet, over 15,000 hard copies have been distributed. Email Andrea if you would like copies of this. ○ Website aimed at practitioners where they can put in their postcode and get info about local services. • Support and services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A number of research projects have mapped the services available. They also also looked at the accommodation and support and services available to older people across wales. 	<p>Andrea Cooper, Safeguarding Lead for the Older People's Commissioner</p>

- People from certain communities e.g. lgbtq+ and black and minoritised ethnic communities can face further barriers to support.
- Older men experiencing domestic abuse:
 - Likelihood of men experience DA increase with age.
 - Unsure of reasons why, could be related to care needs.
 - This was being raised consistently by members of the action group.
 - Several barriers identified e.g. felt guilty and ashamed which prevented them seeking support.
- Policy & legislation:
 - Involved in the new VAWDASV strategy.
 - Sit on VAWDASV blueprint (Older People's Needs workstream) focusing on making sure people are aware of services and can access them. In particular they are looking at DASH risk assessment and Ask and Act and making sure they are suitable to older people's needs.
 - Influencing Welsh Government's new National Action Plan to Prevent the Abuse of Older People which can be found [here](#).

Two main current pieces of work:

- Financial abuse & scams:
 - one of the most prevalent forms of abuse affecting older people.
 - Affects around 6.8% of people over 60 but many don't seek help as they are embarrassed so statistics are an underestimation.
 - Roundtable attended by stop loan sharks, four police forces and others.
 - Looking at all contributory factors e.g. the pandemic, different types of fraud, need for awareness raising in ways meaningful to older people.
 - Working to review resources and develop guidelines for organisations when developing these to make them accessible. No matter how glossy or colourful they are, many older people won't look at them as they are nervous about them.
- Ageism:
 - Stereotyping, prejudice and/or discrimination based on age or perceived age.
 - Can be seen as harmless but can be very damaging particularly with regards to mental health and can prevent older people from seeking support.
 - Ageism can be internalised by older people limiting their behaviour and opportunities, causing further social isolation.
 - The World Health Organisation estimates that 1 in 2 people hold ageist views and attitudes and they identified ageism as a 'major risk factor' in the abuse of older people.
 - Ageism as identified as a major contributory factor in the abuse of older people.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ageism can also lead to a higher tolerance of abuse towards older people. ○ Ageism can affect the ways practitioners respond to abuse: sometimes the same questions aren't asked e.g. injuries attributed to falling. Assumptions made on the causes of abuse. ○ Older people have very limited access to criminal justice due to assumptions about trauma so not offered same options. ○ Small task and finish group looking at developing a training package for organisations/practitioners to use to challenge assumptions on older people. ○ Aims to consider and raise awareness of ageism and its relationship to the abuse of older people. 	
<p>Discussion & questions</p>	<p>JM: lack of data a huge issue, are there any asks we can support? AC: data could be better, older people not featuring. Categories also not helpful (e.g. 60+ too broad) and don't capture diversity of the group. More data and more granular data is needed. SW: The Equality and Social Justice Committee are looking at this. New equality data unit has been set up and the committee are looking at how the data is being used and informing plans. Ask for group members to raise any thoughts on the impact/lack of impact with Equality & Social Justice committee. ST: Sara – were new pathways invited to the GREVIO/UN roundtables? SKP: to UN roundtables that WWA organised – yes. Invites for GREVIO managed by themselves. ST: Andrea – resources really useful, get them to frontline practitioners. Health responses unhelpful and often make assumptions and this data puts this into perspective. VV: criminal justice response terrifying, where does the idea they don't want to pursue criminal justice from, anecdotal or data-driven? AC: a bit of both. The response is often 'welfarised' which may be appropriate for some people but the numbers of people that engage with CJS is very small. It is related to assumptions e.g. that pursuing criminal justice will be too traumatic. Dewis choice project – longitudinal data showing many older people do want to engage with CJS but they are not asked. VV: so this isn't lack of progress by the police but more it not even getting that far. AC: yes – absence of special measures. Older people's experiences often not positive but many don't even get there</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Any other business</p>	<p>Budget:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JM: Housing Support Grant (HSG) uplift is welcome but is not sufficient so more is needed as well as longer-term, sustainable funding models rather than one-off payments. • SB: payment in arrears, often waiting 6 months for payments. 	<p>Sioned Williams MS, Chair</p>

