

## **Submission to the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee regarding the 'Gender-based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Bill'**

GBV 88

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Gender-based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Bill: Stage 1

Response from: Welsh Women's Aid

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<b>These are the views of:</b>	<i>A service provider and membership organisation representing the views of 26 member services across Wales (Third Sector)</i>

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Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Welsh Women's Aid (WWA) would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to provide evidence towards the inquiry into the general principles of the 'Gender-based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Bill' (henceforth referred to as the Bill), which we applaud as a positive initiative on behalf of the Welsh Government.
- 1.2 As the lead organisation campaigning to end violence against women (VAW) in Wales, WWA represents 26 specialist domestic abuse services providing frontline services across Wales. Our evidence for this inquiry focuses on the general principles, barriers to implementation and any unintended consequences arising from the Bill, and in particular, how this legislation will affect survivors, service users, services, and local communities, and will impact on our shared aim of preventing violence against women.

## 2 About Welsh Women's Aid

- 2.1 WWA is the lead national organisation in Wales, providing the voice of local services, service users and survivors to government as well as campaigning, influencing policy and practice, and innovating to end domestic abuse and violence against women across Wales and the UK. WWA is a membership organisation for 26 independent, specialist violence against women services in Wales which provide a range of support, advocacy and prevention services for women, children and families affected by domestic abuse.
- 2.2 WWA also delivers essential national and local services and projects across Wales, including the *All Wales Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Helpline* – a 24 hour helpline for victims, concerned others and professionals; *the Children Matter Project* – to improve support for children and young people across Wales who are affected by domestic abuse; running an *Accredited Training Centre* - WWA is an Agored Cymru centre, developing and delivering training in domestic abuse accredited qualifications for member organisations and external agencies; and delivering services for women and children in North Wales (Wrexham and Conway) by providing refuges, outreach and community advocacy and support for women and children affected by domestic abuse.

## 3 Violence against women in Wales

- 3.1 Wales was noted as a leader in violence against women prevention earlier this year when the UN Special Rapporteur for Violence Against Women visited Cardiff.<sup>1</sup> Despite progress that has been made, research studies continue to find alarming and persistently high levels of violence against women and girls in the UK in general and in Wales:
  - In Wales in 2013/14, there were **6,325** prosecutions of violence against women and girls offences, with a conviction rate of 76.7%. Of these, **5,637** were cases of domestic abuse; **257** cases of rape, and **431** cases of sexual offences.

<sup>1</sup> 'Special Rapporteur on violence against women finalizes country mission to the United Kingdom and calls for urgent action to address the accountability deficit and also the adverse impacts of changes in funding and services' (April 2014): [http://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/images/Final\\_press\\_statment\\_UK\\_15\\_Apr\\_VAW.pdf](http://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/images/Final_press_statment_UK_15_Apr_VAW.pdf)

- Welsh Women's Aid's members supported **9,337** women in 2013/14, with **2,263** women entering refuge;
- The All Wales Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Helpline (managed by Welsh Women's Aid) supported **27,972** callers in 2013/14.

#### **4 Welsh Women's Aid's original priorities for the Bill**

- 4.1 During the white paper consultation stage for the Bill, WWA consulted extensively with our member organisations to develop the following six priorities for the Bill:
- a) Reduction in the prevalence of all forms of violence against women, and support for women who experience such violence;
  - b) Guaranteed access to adequate and sufficient services for women in Wales;
  - c) Compulsory initiatives in schools and other educational settings to prevent VAW before it starts, and for supporting pupils affected by such violence;
  - d) Appropriate and timely referrals and signposting occur as a result of improved health responses to VAW;
  - e) Employers know how to help female employees affected by VAW;
  - f) All women affected by VAW have equal access to specialist support services, regardless of their location.

#### **5 General principles and purpose of the Bill: removal of 'violence against women'**

- 5.1 The original title of this legislation proposed within the white paper consultation and other written documentation leading up to the introduction of the Bill on July 1<sup>st</sup>, was the 'Ending Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Bill'. As domestic and sexual abuse are only two of a number of violence against women crime types, WWA was initially concerned that this title listed 'domestic abuse' and 'sexual violence' separately to 'violence against women'. This is due to the fact that both forms of abuse are included within the internationally accepted understanding of what constitutes 'violence against women' along with other forms of violence and abuse which disproportionately affect women, such as female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, crimes committed in the name of 'honour', human slavery, stalking and harassment.
- 5.2 The current internationally accepted definition of 'violence against women' used by the United Nations, World Health Organisation, Crown Prosecution Service, UK Government and other international governments is:

*'Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.'*<sup>2</sup>

This definition is particularly significant as it firmly places violence against women as a violation of women's human rights.

- 5.3 We understand that this change in wording was taken for unspecified legal reasons in order to ensure the Bill did not exclude male victims. WWA never understood this to be the intension or effect of the legislation as proposed in the white paper, but to primarily address the fact that

<sup>2</sup> United Nations: 'Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women', General Assembly  
<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm>

women suffer disproportionately from these types of violence. Although 'violence against women' has been removed from the face of the Bill, this disproportionate suffering is still made strongly throughout the Bill's supporting documentation - within the Explanatory Memorandum and guidance, but we would argue that it also needs to be returned to the face of the Bill in the form of 'violence against women' instead of 'gender-based violence'. WWA remains concerned by this shift in terminology away from the internationally accepted standard as we believe understanding and recognition of violence against women will be lost through the change in terminology to gender-based violence.

- 5.4 Although WWA can appreciate the reasoning behind the Welsh Government's decision, we strongly disagree with the legal advice in this area and would offer evidence in regards to the international examples of gender specific wording in legislation in use in India (Protection of Women From Domestic Violence Act, 2005), and Costa Rica (Criminalization of Violence Against Women Law (2007) of Costa Rica).<sup>3</sup>
- 5.5 The CPS have offered the following justification for their continued use of the term 'violence against women' in the longstanding 'Violence Against Women and Girls Crime Report' issued annually:

*'In recognising these forms of violence against women and girls, the CPS does not neglect abuse directed towards men or perpetrated by women. Male victims will receive the same access to protection and legal redress and the gender of the perpetrator does not make any difference to the CPS approach to bringing offenders to justice.'*<sup>4</sup>

- 5.6 Along with other bodies such as the CPS, WWA also believes that the term 'violence against women' does not exclude men and boys as it refers to a crime type rather than a particular class of victim. There is an inherent acknowledgment that they can also be victims of domestic abuse, sexual violence and other crime types, but that 'violence against women' is a specific crime type separate and encompassing of these individual crimes for which women's suffering is disproportionate.<sup>5</sup> As women and girls are the overwhelming majority of victims of these types of violence and abuse, and 95% of perpetrators have been found to be men,<sup>6</sup> the benefit of retaining this term within the Bill far outweighs any initial confusion that may be caused in regards to coverage.
- 5.7 With the loss of the term 'violence against women' from the title and content of the Bill, we have effectively lost the Bill's association with this international framework of understanding and evidence-base, which is founded on an understanding that the overwhelming majority of victims of these crime types are women and the vast majority of perpetrators of these crime types are men. Alongside the loss of any wide-ranging public behaviour change campaign, this is a significant barrier to achieving the aims of the Bill.
- 5.8 The consequence of this is that the Bill's implementation will be placed at risk if local services do not name violence against women crime types, understand the connections between violence against women crime types, and do not deliver a coordinated and strategic approach to preventing such crime types, whether they be experienced by men or women. Using the

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Women: 'Gender-Specific Language in Domestic Violence Laws'

<http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/1677-lenguaje-de-genero-en-las-leyes-de-violencia-domestica.html>

<sup>4</sup> CPS definition of violence against women: <http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/equality/vaw/index.html>

<sup>5</sup> 'Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment on the CPS Violence Against Women Strategy and Action Plan: Analysis of evidence - April 2008' [http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/equality/vaw/vaw\\_eia.html](http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/equality/vaw/vaw_eia.html)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

term 'gender-based violence' widens the scope so significantly that implementation will become confused, subject to misinterpretation, and fail to achieve the Bill's intended outcomes:

- All violence and its associated behaviours are inherently gender-based, e.g. violence between men who are strangers or in a group is gendered because it is associated with a particular type of masculinity. By focussing on 'gender-based violence' instead of violence against women crime types, it could conceivably be argued that violence at sports matches, in gangs or between two men in a bar, could fall under the scope of this Bill, which we believe is an unintended consequence. Defining 'gender-based violence' in the Bill as violence, threats or harassment arising from values/beliefs relating to sexuality will also introduce hate crime informed by homophobia/bi-phobia into the scope of this Bill;
- The less common or well understood forms of 'violence against women' crime types such as FGM, sexual harassment and stalking will lose priority and fail to be considered within a violence against women prevention framework.

5.9 As outlined in the written evidence presented to this enquiry by Professor Jackie Jones, University of the West of England (Sep 2014), the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has criticised states that have moved to the gender-neutral approach.<sup>7</sup> Professor Jones also covers the international examples that support returning violence against women to the Bill and states:

*The Istanbul Convention came into force on 1 August 2014. [...] The UK signed it on 8.6.2012. Under international law, the fact the UK has signed the Convention means that it has made a commitment to do nothing in contravention of its terms. [...] The Convention does not exclude men (e.g., Preamble) but makes it clear that because of the vast numbers of victims of gender-based violence in Europe, the focus has to be women and girls. Member states are required to 'establish a comprehensive and co-ordinated policy addressing all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention and offering a holistic response to violence against women.' [...] The Convention provides one of the legal bases for doing so.<sup>8</sup>*

5.10 We also support the statement submitted in written evidence to this inquiry by our member group Safer Wales who manage the male domestic abuse service, the Dyn Project:

*'Safer Wales would strongly recommend against 'gender neutral' services, which in our experience do not always meet the needs of either women or men.'*

5.11 *The Equality Act (2010)* Schedule 3, part 7, paragraphs 26 & 27 delivers the legal protection for providing single-sex services as 'a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim' which bears comparison with the aims of this Bill.<sup>9</sup>

5.12 WWA calls on the Welsh Government to reconsider their amendment to the title and wording of the Bill to return to 'Violence Against Women' instead of 'Gender-based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence' in line with the United Nations 'Handbook for Legislation on Violence Against Women'<sup>10</sup>. WWA would also encourage the order of 'he or she' or 'him or her'

<sup>7</sup> See reports of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, for example, CEDAW/C/NLD/CO/4; CEDAW/C/POL/CO/6; CEDAW/C/FIN/CO/6; CEDAW/C/UK/CO/6.

<sup>8</sup> Written evidence presented by Professor Jackie Jones, University of the West of England, Chair, Wales Assembly of Women, September 2014, GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE BILL.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/schedule/3>

<sup>10</sup> United Nations 'Handbook for Legislation on Violence Against Women', p15.

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/handbook/Handbook%20for%20legislation%20on%20violence%20against%20women.pdf>



used within the Bill when referring to victims of the various types of violence and abuse, to be reversed to reflect the fact that women will be the highest proportion affected. This would be a small technical change that would have a significant impact towards the aims of the Bill. Thirdly, WWA would recommend that provision for campaigning for public behaviour change also be returned to the Bill to ensure maximum impact and effectiveness.

## 6 General principles and purpose of the Bill: definitions of 'abuse' and 'domestic abuse'

- 6.1 WWA believes that the definitions used in this Bill are extremely important to ensure a targeted and consistent approach to addressing its aims, and are currently very broad and missing essential elements.
- 6.2 Currently there are a number of definitions of 'domestic abuse' in use across the UK, and also within Welsh Government including in the 'Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act' (2014),<sup>11</sup> the 'Housing (Wales) Act' (2014),<sup>12</sup> 'The Right to Be Safe Strategy', '10'000 Safer Lives', and within various draft documents such as the 'Council Tax (Chargeable Dwellings) (Amendment) (Wales) Order' (2014).<sup>13</sup> For the Bill to achieve its purpose of improving prevention, protection and support for victims of these crime types, it must provide a definitive cross-portfolio definition which adequately communicates this distinct type of abuse.
- 6.3 'Abuse' - Although 'psychological' abuse is included, the definition used within the Bill does not explicitly state the recognised definition of 'coercive control' adopted by public, private and criminal justice agencies in Wales (via the Home Office definition). The use of the term 'coercive control' is particularly important as it describes the particular pattern of controlling behaviour that this covers, including emotional, financial and other psychological abuse. This insidious type of abuse is a very common feature of domestic abuse and violence against women, but is often not identified by victims with the seriousness it deserves. Inclusion in the Bill definition would help to combat this. The term 'coercive control' is also a feature of the Home Office definition of 'domestic violence' which is widely used across services in Wales including the police, CPS, other criminal justice services and the voluntary and community sector. This Home Office definition will likely soon be formalised into UK legislation with the recent announcement of a consultation on this issue.<sup>14</sup>

*Coercive control must be included as its one of the major forms of abuse we see, if it's not clearly highlighted our concern is women will go back to thinking that "it's not really abuse".*  
– Newport Women's Aid

- 6.4 'Domestic Abuse' – This definition is very broad and does not specifically include 'coercive control', or mention of a specific age range of 16 years or over, which are both features of the current criminal justice definition, for monitoring purposes. WWA also believes that the omission of an age range is due to the intention of the definition to include all regardless of age, which is welcomed by WWA so long as this younger age group of 16-18 year olds continue to be represented on implementation. This is particularly important as there is

<sup>11</sup> Definition of 'well-being' and 'abuse' within the 'Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act' (2014), sections 2.2 and 197.1.

<sup>12</sup> Definition of 'abuse' and 'sexual abuse' in the 'Housing (Wales) Act' (2014), section 58.1.

<sup>13</sup> Definition of 'refuge' in the 'Council Tax (Chargeable Dwellings) (Amendment) (Wales) Order' (2014), section a.iv.

<sup>14</sup> Home Office consultation: 'Strengthening the law on domestic abuse'  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-the-law-on-domestic-abuse>

evidence of significant perpetration of domestic abuse amongst teenage intimate partner relationships as evidence has found that many young people view violence as a normal part of intimate relationships.<sup>15</sup> As the definition is so broad and also includes abuse between all relatives and family members, it conceivably also includes child abuse which has a different statutory framework. WWA is concerned this will conflate understanding and work to address 'domestic abuse' with other separate and distinct abuse such as Protection of Vulnerable Adults and child abuse. This conflation of all forms of abuse will also cause problems with monitoring arrangements and significantly increase the scope of the proposed needs assessments.

- 6.5 This widening of the Bill's remit to all abuse has already been a feature of some discussions involving the Committee and the Minister. WWA agree that it is indeed imperative that all victims of domestic abuse and violence against women are helped and supported appropriately at all times, but it is vital for the focus of this Bill to remain specifically on addressing the disproportionate suffering of those who experience violence against women crime types, rather than looking to include all wider forms of violence and abuse which are currently catered for in other laws and initiatives.
- 6.6 As stated by Professor Jackie Jones, University of the West of England to this inquiry, we contend that the current 'Domestic Abuse' definition 'is far too wide to become meaningful in law'.<sup>16</sup>

6.7 WWA calls on the Welsh Government to realign their definition of 'domestic abuse' in the Bill with the current Home Office definition to ensure the definitions for domestic abuse used within the Bill are specific enough to enable targeted action on the specific issues and concerns regarding domestic abuse and violence against women. WWA would recommend amending the definition of 'abuse' on the face of the Bill (section 21.1) to include specific mention of 'coercive control' to align with other UK policy and sector practice to ensure the Bill achieves the targeted impact desired. WWA also calls on the Welsh Government to amend the definition of 'domestic abuse' within the Bill to ensure the remit of the Bill is not widened into other forms of abuse by removing the following: 'they live or have lived in the same household (if the person normally lives with the other person as a member of his or her family, or the person might reasonably be expected to live with that other person), they are relatives'.

## **7 General principles and purpose of the Bill: role of the Advisor**

- 7.1 WWA would strongly suggest that the proposed Advisor role needs to be independent of government and sufficiently resourced, in order to hold parties to account and provide strong leadership on violence against women in Wales. Partnership working that calls upon the expertise of the violence against women third sector is vital if this is to be effective. Wales has been noted at European and UK conferences as leading the way in the field of VAW; this has been due to close partnership working between the Welsh Government and specialists like WWA, alongside the Welsh Government taking the necessary bold step of proposing gender-

<sup>15</sup> Wood, Marsha, Barter, Christine and Berridge, David (2011) "Standing on my own two feet": disadvantaged teenagers, intimate partner violence and coercive control (London: NSPCC); available at: [http://www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/research/findings/standing\\_own\\_two\\_feet\\_wda84543.html?dm\\_i=674,LGWD,KIQ,CS,1QPBG,1](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/research/findings/standing_own_two_feet_wda84543.html?dm_i=674,LGWD,KIQ,CS,1QPBG,1)

<sup>16</sup> Written evidence presented by Professor Jackie Jones, University of the West of England, Chair, Wales Assembly of Women, September 2014, GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE BILL.

specific legislation to tackle the forms of violence. This approach must continue for Wales to fully achieve its aspirations in this area.

7.2 Similar Welsh models for an independent advisor role include the proposed Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, the Older People's Commissioner for Wales and the Children's Commissioner for Wales. This is particularly important if the Welsh Government wants violence against women to be seen as a comparable priority to child protection, as originally proposed in the white paper for this legislation.

7.3 There are also a significant number of international comparisons that provide useful models for how this role could work in practice including:

- The State Observatory on Violence Against Women in Spain;<sup>17</sup>
- The Special Inter-Institutional Commission for Monitoring the Implementation of the Law against Domestic Violence in Honduras;<sup>18</sup>
- The Inter-Agency Council on Violence against Women and their Children in the Philippines;<sup>19</sup> and
- The National Observatory on Violence Against Women in Denmark.<sup>20</sup>

7.4 WWA calls on the Welsh Government to appoint an independent Ending Violence Against Women Commissioner, supported by a Commission to enable the role to carry out her/his functions. The Commission should include administrative staff as well as advisers and researchers with expertise in all forms of violence against women. The functions of the Commissioner should be along the same lines of the proposed functions of the Adviser, taking into account our additions and recommendations above, and with the added functions of holding the Welsh Government to account.

<sup>17</sup> The Spanish Organic Act on Integrated Protection Measures against Gender Violence (2004) provides for the creation of a State Observatory on Violence against Women, an independent body charged with providing an annual report and ongoing advice to the Government.

<sup>18</sup> This Commission was formed following the enactment of the Law on Domestic Violence (1997). It is composed of members from the Government and civil society, and has proposed amendments to the law which were approved by Congress and have been in effect since 2006.

<sup>19</sup> This Council was formed following the enactment of Section 39 of the Philippine Anti-Violence against Women and their Children Act (2004). The Council monitors the effectiveness of initiatives to address violence against women, and develops programmes and projects to eliminate such violence.

<sup>20</sup> This Observatory consists of experts on violence against women. The aims of the Observatory include to collect information on violence against women and to ensure that government bodies meet national and international legislative and policy commitments in tackling violence against women.



## **8 General principles and purpose of the Bill: omission of education and prevention**

8.1 WWA has consulted with our member groups across Wales, colleagues working across the specialist violence against women sector in Wales and the UK, and relevant research literature to develop a number of recommendations around approaching healthy relationship education and domestic abuse in schools. This is seen by the sector and experts as vital to ensuring real change in social attitudes in order to prevent violence against women. WWA support the evidence submitted to this enquiry by Dr Emma Reynold of Cardiff University on this subject, along with the findings of her recent report 'Boys and Girls Speak Out' as well as that submitted by the Wales Violence Against Women Action Group.<sup>21</sup>

8.2 Our primary recommendation for the Bill is as follows: 'Prevent violence against women through education and support pupils affected'. We recommend this taking place through a wide range of compulsory initiatives in schools and other educational settings to prevent VAW before it starts, and for supporting pupils affected by such violence. Alongside including education on violence against women and healthy relationships within the compulsory Welsh Curriculum taught from a perspective of gender equality and human rights, WWA recommends:

- One fully-trained 'go-to' staff member in each school with expertise in violence against women and girls and the knowledge and confidence to assist pupils in seeking assistance and information;
- Ensuring schools regularly collect data on all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual harassment and bullying;
- Ensuring education on violence against women and girls and healthy relationships is available to children and young people not engaged in formal education system or 'NEETS';
- Appointing a violence against women and girls champion amongst school governors and the student council;
- Ensuring that Estyn inspects on school responses to violence against women and girls;
- Ensuring provision of comprehensive violence against women and girls and healthy relationships training for all related professionals.

8.3 WWA were disappointed to learn that the education and prevention aspects of the Bill had been omitted when introduced due to separate efforts to include lessons within the curriculum. Although reassurances have now been received by the Welsh Government that guidance on this area will now be returned to the Bill in stages 2 and 3, WWA would like to reiterate the importance of this being a comprehensive whole school approach to preventing and addressing violence against women, as outlined in point 7.2 above.

8.4 WWA calls on the Welsh Government to ensure that a whole school approach as outlined in section 7.2 above is included in any guidance under section 12 of the Bill, alongside any additions to the Welsh curriculum and that this guidance is rigorously implemented and enforced to ensure compliance within 100% of schools across Wales.

<sup>21</sup> Renold, E. (2013) Boys and Girls Speak Out: A Qualitative Study of Children's Gender and Sexual Cultures (age 10-12). The full report is downloadable here: [http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/findings/boys-and-girls-report\\_wdf100416.pdf](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/findings/boys-and-girls-report_wdf100416.pdf)

## 9 General principles and purpose of the Bill: omission of employer workplace policies

- 9.1 WWA strongly supports a duty on the public sector to produce workplace policies on domestic abuse and violence against women across Wales as outlined in the original consultation on this legislation, and was disappointed by the eventual omission of this from the Bill.
- 9.2 Whilst in the UK the key projects to have been undertaken around violence against women in the workplace have been limited to domestic abuse policies, there are international examples that point towards the importance of developing a 'whole-workplace approach' to tackling violence against women, including through preventative measures and encouraging men within workplaces to challenge violence-supporting attitudes and behaviours. A good example comes from Australia, where Women's Health Victoria's 'Working Together Against Violence' project used workplaces as a setting for the primary prevention of violence against women.<sup>22</sup> The project aimed to strengthen the organisational capacity of a male dominated workplace to promote gender equality and non-violent norms. The project comprised two phases spanning four years, from 2007 to 2011.
- 9.3 The Equality and Human Rights Commission recently updated their guidance on workplace policies to include all forms violence against women<sup>23</sup> and they have also worked in partnership with the Chartered Institute of Professional Development to develop guidance for the private sector.<sup>24</sup>

9.4 WWA calls on the Welsh Government to amend the Bill to include a 'whole-workplace approach' to violence against women, and at the minimum a duty on public sector employers in Wales to develop a workplace policy specific to domestic abuse and violence against women.

## 10 Unintended consequences and financial implications: increased pressure on services

- 10.1 Recent Wales figures on the cost of just domestic abuse on the Welsh economy was a total of £826.4 million, which included £303.5m (health care, criminal justice costs, social service, housing, legal and economic) and £522.9m (human and emotional costs).<sup>25</sup>
- 10.2 If, as hoped, victim reporting of violence against women is also raised by the Bill as it progresses through the National Assembly, then pressure on services is set to become ever more acute in the coming years. Currently it is our understanding that no funds dedicated to the Bill will go towards frontline services such as women's refuge or community 'floating support'.
- 10.3 The violence against women sector has suffered from cuts along with other public services in recent years. This has occurred alongside a significant year-on-year increase in demand for our member's services.<sup>26</sup> The sector as a whole is very dependent on secure long-term funding from Welsh Government to protect services for women and children fleeing domestic abuse and violence. In a CutsWatch survey of Welsh Women's Aid member groups between April and

<sup>22</sup> Women's Health Victoria (2011). *Working Together Against Violence*. Final Project Report. Available at: <http://whv.org.au/publications-resources/publications-resources-by-topic/post/working-together-against-violence-finalproject-report/> [accessed 11th July 2012].

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/publication\\_pdf/vaw\\_workplace\\_guide\\_201](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/publication_pdf/vaw_workplace_guide_201)

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/documents/Wales/domesticabuseguide.pdf>

December 2013 the following information about cuts to funding for services was gathered which is representative of other feedback we have received:

- Three services had sustained cuts to Supporting People funding of between 8% and 20%, adding up to over £100,000. A further three had cuts to Supporting People funding of between 4% and 17%, totalling just over £28,000. One service also referred to an imminent cut to Tenancy Support funding;
- For children and young people's services in the sector, services were clear about funding difficulties. A service stated that in terms of funding for children and young people's services 'we do not yet know if we have continued funding for this beyond March 2014'. One response highlighted the issue that grant funders think children and young people's services are statutory therefore there are difficulties finding funding. Other respondents said 'funding at lowest level for many years' and 'funding for services to support children and young people is inadequate if non-existent' as well as stating that funding for children and young people's preventative work from Welsh Government is 'very limited'.

10.4 Therefore, increasing reporting as a result of such planned aspects of the Bill as 'Ask and Act' and public sector training will undoubtedly lead to increased pressure on these services without doing anything to address the geographical gaps in provision of services. Provision should be made within the Bill to address any increase in reporting to ensure victims and specialist services are protected and supported to allow a holistic approach to implementation.

10.5 Our member groups have stated that they are already under significant pressure and are concerned by an increase in demand without more investment to secure sufficient service levels across Wales:

*'We feel this would result in adding further strain to an already busy service [in] both refuge and drop in /community.'*  
– CAHA Women's Aid

*'Refuge is a resource that is already oversubscribed, on average we get about 3 request[s] for each room we advertise and that's on a slow day – for example today we had 6 requests for a room (which would accommodate one woman and 3 children) including women accessing our drop in service.'*  
– Newport Women's Aid

10.6 WWA calls on the Welsh Government to consider resourcing an increased demand for violence against women services through funding provision under the Bill to ensure that the considerable expertise of the specialist violence against women sector is protected and strengthened further for the future and ensure a holistic approach to addressing this issue.

<sup>25</sup> Gwent Domestic Abuse Pathfinder Project.

<sup>26</sup> WWA summary briefing on the CPS VAW Crime Report for 2013-14:  
[http://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/images/WWA\\_brief\\_on\\_CPS\\_VAWG\\_Report\\_13-14.pdf](http://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/images/WWA_brief_on_CPS_VAWG_Report_13-14.pdf)

## **11 Comments on subordinate legislation**

- 11.1 WWA are concerned that many of the recommendations made during the White Paper consultation have not been explicitly included in the Bill, and therefore run the risk of not be covered appropriately in subordinate legislation.
- 11.2 With regard to what is present, such as the national and local strategies, we are concerned that the balance between primary and secondary legislation is not appropriate, as it has the danger of leading to variation of service provision as well as lack of scrutiny in the commissioning process.