



Llinell Gymorth Camdriniaeth yn y Cartref
a Thrais Rhywiol Cymru Gyfan
All Wales Domestic Abuse and Sexual
Violence Helpline

0808 80 10 800



Cymorth i Ferched Cymru
Welsh Women's Aid

Rhoi Merched a Phlant yn Gyntaf
Putting Women & Children First

October 2014

The Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Dear Chair,

RE: RESPONSE TO 'PETITION – P-04-540 STOP SEXISM IN DOMESTIC ABUSE' Sept 2014

Thank you for your letter seeking Welsh Women's Aid's feedback on the points raised by the Petitioner in response to our previous letter to the Committee.

In response to the Petitioner's concern that Welsh Women's Aid excludes men and boys, I can reassure the Committee that although our organisation's focus is to address the disproportionate suffering of women and girls from certain types of abuse, such as domestic abuse, we recognise the importance of ensuring access to services, protection and support for all victims of violence and abuse. We consider it a grave disservice to male victims to suggest – as the Petitioner does – that there is no state support for male victims; with the sole exception of refuges (which male victims tell us they don't want), state services like the police, health and social care services are available to all victims irrespective of gender. Strategically and operationally, we work closely with the leading men's domestic abuse service in Wales, the Dyn Project (part of Safer Wales), and are contributing members of the Male Domestic Abuse Network. Welsh Women's Aid also runs the All Wales Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Helpline, which is available for male and female victims and provides guidance, signposting and support to survivors in heterosexual and same sex relationships, whether they identify as lesbians, gay men, bisexual or transgender. Nationally, our healthy relationships education program for children, the S.T.A.R. program (Safety, Trust and Respect) and other work provided by our 'Children Matter' team is provided to both boys and young men, and girls and young women up to the age of 25 years. Locally, our member organisations (which are independently constituted) provide advocacy and support services for survivors (adults and children) and in some cases, work with perpetrators and other family members to achieve their goal of preventing violence and abuse.

Welsh Women's Aid's vision is a world free of violence and abuse, but in order to achieve this goal we cannot ignore the fact that specific groups within our society perpetrate and suffer violence disproportionately. Our work is based on the understanding that domestic and sexual abuse is gendered. By this we mean that most perpetrators are men, most victims are women and the gender of both victim and perpetrator influences behaviour, severity of risk, and harm caused. This approach is supported by the United Nations; by the Council of Europe; UK government, and Crown Prosecution Service amongst others. Welsh Women's Aid takes strong exception to the comment by the Petitioner 'Indeed, it is clear that WWA have a commercial imperative to ensure DA [domestic abuse] continues

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in order to protect the £4,000,000 budget in Wales.' This is not only inaccurate, but an extremely offensive statement which, I hope you agree, does not warrant further consideration.

Suicide rates for both men and women are indeed distressing and warrant further attention and investment to aid prevention. Whilst men seem to commit suicide at a higher rate than women for various reasons evidence indicates that more women attempt suicide: one-third of women attending emergency departments for self-harm were domestic violence survivors; abused women are five times more likely to attempt suicide; and one third of all female suicide attempts can be attributed to current or past experience of domestic violence.¹In terms of any updates to our position, since our last response I am able to include new figures from the Crown Prosecution Services' Violence Against Women and Girls Crime Report for 2013/14 which shows continuing high rates of violence and abuse suffered disproportionately by women in England and Wales:²

- The volume of domestic violence referrals from the Police rose to 103,569 – a rise of 15,459 referrals (17.5%) from 2012-13 and the highest referral level ever;
- The domestic violence caseload has risen since 2012-13 from 8.9% to 10.7% in 2013-14;
- The volume of convictions reached 58,276 – a rise of 5,727 convictions (10.9%) since 2012-13;
- The volume and proportion of guilty pleas rose again – volume reached 53,620 – rise to 68.7% - 92% of all successful outcomes are as a result of guilty pleas;
- New stalking offences have been implemented and there has been a significant rise in prosecutions of harassment and breaches related to domestic violence – nearly a quarter more across 2013-14 compared with the previous year;
- The majority of defendants were men at 93%;
- The majority of victims, were women at 84% (as it has been since 2010-11);
- The majority of defendants were aged 25-59 (72%), but was of concern to note that just over 26% of defendants (20,572) were under 24 with 2,114 (3%) of defendants being 14-17 years old and 111 (0.1%) aged 10-13.

Welsh Women's Aid does not wish to pit one victim against another as all of our work is focused on preventing abuse in all its forms, but within the context of limited resources, our focus is on those who are at greatest risk from violence and abuse and who suffer most, which is disproportionately women and girls.

I hope that the information provided has addressed your queries, but please do not hesitate to get in touch if I can provide further clarification or information.

Yours sincerely,

Eleri Butler
Chief Executive Officer
Welsh Women's Aid

¹ Stark, E. and Flitcraft, A. (1996) Women at risk (London: Sage); Mullender, Audrey (1996) Rethinking domestic violence: The Social Work and Probation response (London: Routledge).

² http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/docs/cps_vawg_report_2014.pdf