

PLVAW 06

Ymchwiliad ôl-ddeddfwriaethol i Ddeddf Trais yn erbyn Menywod,
Cam-drin Domestig a Thrais Rhywiol (Cymru) 2015

Post legislative inquiry into the Violence against Women,
Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015

Ymateb gan: Heddlu Gwent

Response from: Gwent Police

1. To what extent the approach to tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence is improving as a result of the obligations in the Act?

It is very early in the development of the approaches required under the Act to be able to measure any improvement in responses. From our experience, working within the pilot region in Gwent/ South East Wales, there is varying understanding of the obligation on the statutory bodies of the obligations put upon them by the Act. This limits any progress required under the Act. The Police as a non -devolved body are not obligated under the Act but we are clearly an important stakeholder in all that the Act aims to achieve and it is within our core aims and commitment to do so. Our approaches to Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence continue to develop and improve. We do this with both statutory and voluntary sector partners.

Gwent as a pilot region has undertaken significant work to make progress under the Act. This includes the regionalisation of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence team replacing the local Domestic Abuse Coordinators. This team leads on much of the action required including the implementation of Ask and Act, needs assessments and supporting understanding of obligations required by the Act. It is a significant amount of work. The team is still new and much of the work is 'in-progress' rather than completed. This is to be expected and is very much a positive step or steps. However, a consequence of the regionalisation is that the local Domestic Abuse Coordinators do not exist and some of the work done locally no longer happens. There has also been an actual reduction in the number of dedicated staff. This is a step back, one that may become insignificant and compensated for as matters develop but it is the current situation.

A further restriction on progress has been the coincidence of this Act with the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Well-Being Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. There has been a singular approach to the introduction of each act with some later consideration on the joint approach to meet the goals and requirements of all 3 pieces of legislation. The fact of implementation of the 3 pieces of legislation has been that the implementation of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 has been weakened. To be realistic, austerity measures, increasing obligations and multiple demands on the same people will have implications. That is not to say that these cannot and will not be overcome but they have impacted the early progress of approaches for this Act.

2. What are the most effective methods of capturing the views and experiences of survivors? Are arrangements in place to capture these experiences, and to what extent is this information being used to help inform the implementation of the Act's provisions?

There are mechanisms and methods at organisational and regional levels for capturing victim and survivor views and experiences. There has been some consultation for the National Strategy for the Act. This has been done by Welsh Women's Aid to inform the strategy and is the introduction of a different methodology and model of survivor empowerment as facilitators of engagement and consultation. This is most survivor centered and effective method of capturing information. Currently beyond the strategy, there is no other survivor consultation that specifically informs the implementation of the provisions of the Act. Survivor consultation is important to support all work and should not be restricted in facilitation to one organisation.

3. Whether survivors of abuse are beginning to experience better responses from public authorities as a result of the Act, particularly those needing specialist services?

Points made under question 1 are also relevant to this question. Very limited numbers of staff have had any training through the National Training Framework. Those that have will be in a better place to identify those needing support, provide information and support and signpost on to specialist services.

In addition, the Act is not about making additional resource available but is focused on 'doing things better'. This approach will take time for the positive impact to be felt by survivors.

Whether the National Adviser has sufficient power and independence from the Welsh Government to ensure implementation of the Act?

The National Adviser's power is limited by capacity. Her 'team' consists of 1 part time person. If we look at what she needs to achieve, the accountability and monitoring responsibilities and consider what work is required to enable this it becomes clear that more capacity is required. If we look to other legislation being implemented the human resource to support implementation, oversight and scrutiny is many times more. This needs very careful and realistic consideration.

4. To what extent the good practice guide to healthy relationships is successfully influencing the development of a whole school approach to challenging violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence?

The good practice guide is a very good collection of good practice examples of single projects. There is the Spectrum Programme and the Schools Liaison Programme as well as other programmes providing input in schools. These can form part of a whole school approach but not all. The guide will support development by staff that have expertise, understanding and motivation to do this work and the time to do it. We must limit our expectation that teaching staff will be the experts in delivering this. A ready to deliver, age appropriate curriculum (to be integrated into the National

Curriculum) has far more chance of being used and support a successful adoption of a whole school approach throughout all schools.