

ANNUAL REPORT

**National Adviser for tackling Violence against Women, other forms
of Gender based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence**

The first six months: September 2015 – March 31st 2016

NATIONAL ADVISER RHIAN BOWEN-DAVIES

INTRODUCTION

My name is Rhian Bowen-Davies and this is my first Annual Report as National Adviser for Violence against Women, other forms of Gender based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.

This, my first Annual Report, relates to the six month period from my appointment in September 2015 to March 31st 2016 and summarises how I exercised the functions of the National Adviser. This six month period informed the content of my Annual Plan April 2016 – March 2017 which was published in April 2016.

The appointment of the National Adviser, the first role of its kind in the UK, is required by the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 (the Act).

This potentially ground breaking legislation provides the strategic framework to improve arrangements for the prevention, protection and support of those affected by all forms of Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.

During this period I reported to the Minister for Public Services, Leighton Andrews AM.

THE ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE NATIONAL ADVISER

The National Adviser provides an independent, expert perspective to the work being taken forward in Wales; advising, shaping and informing legislative, strategy and policy developments and driving forward improvements in the prevention, protection and support for all individuals affected by violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

The role is a statutory advisory role, independent of Government, and its functions are detailed in Section 21 of the Act;

The National Adviser is to exercise the following functions, subject to the direction of the Welsh Ministers

- a) To advise the Welsh Ministers about pursuing the purpose of this Act or tackling related matters*
- b) To give other assistance to the Welsh Ministers in their pursuit of the purpose of this Act or tackling related matters*
- c) To undertake research relating to the purpose of this Act*
- d) To advise and give other assistance, with the agreement of the Ministers, to any persons on matters relating to pursuing the purpose of this Act or tackling related matters*
- e) Produce reports on any matter relating to the purpose of this Act or tackling related matters*

The Act requires the National Adviser to draft an Annual Plan. The Annual Plan must set out how I propose to exercise the functions of the role during the following financial year.

Section 22 (2) states that an Annual Plan must

- a) *State the Ministerial Adviser's objectives and priorities for the financial year covered by the report*
- b) *State any matters on which the Ministerial Adviser proposes to report during that year*
- c) *State any other activities the National Adviser proposes to undertake during that year in the exercise of the National Adviser's functions.*

My first Annual Plan was published in April 2016.

Each year I am required to report to the Welsh Ministers about the exercise of my functions during the previous financial year. My annual report must include

- a) *An assessment of the extent to which the National Adviser's objectives and priorities for the financial year covered have been met;*
- b) *A statement of the matters on which the National Adviser has reported during that year;*
- c) *A statement of the other activities the National Adviser has undertaken during that year in the exercise of the National Adviser's functions.*

The Act requires Welsh Ministers to publish both my annual plan and report.

THE CONTEXT – RELEVANT DEVELOPMENTS

The six month period covered by this Annual Report provided an exciting and progressive international, UK and national context for me to establish the role of National Adviser.

ON THE WORLD STAGE

In September 2015 world leaders agreed 17 new global sustainable development goals as part of the **“Transforming our World – The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”**.

Sustainable Development Goal 5 commits to achieving **“Gender Equality and empowering all Women and Girls”** and includes targets to

- *End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere*
- *Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation*
- *Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation*

The publication of the sustainable development goals underlines a global commitment to ending all forms of violence against women and girls and a set of indicators to monitor the progress of the goals are expected in 2016.

ELSEWHERE IN THE UK

The publication of the **UK Government’s “Ending Violence against Women and Girls Strategy 2016 -2020”** in March 2016 builds on the work of the UK Government over recent years and prioritises the prevention of violence and abuse, provision of services, partnership working and pursuing perpetrators. The accompanying action plan provides detail of the legislative and policy changes required to deliver the strategy and the resources being invested to support implementation. When considered collectively, the UK Government strategy commitments and subsequent inquiry announcements by both the Home Affairs and Women and Equalities Parliamentary Committees relating to prostitution and sexual violence and harassment in schools provide an opportunity for increased engagement with UK Government. Whilst recognising the “complexities” of devolved and non-devolved policy areas it is imperative that potential duplication is avoided and opportunities for improved co-ordination, consistency and coherence identified for stakeholders and survivors.

UK legislative developments have strengthened further the purpose of our Act and the UK Strategy, in particular offences contained within the **Serious Crime Act 2015**;

- Sections 70 – 75 introducing new offences relating to Female Genital Mutilation, protection orders and a mandatory duty to report to the police
- Section 76 which came into force on December 29th 2015 introduces an offence of “Controlling or Coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship”. This offence recognises the reality of domestic abuse for victims; a continuous and repeated pattern of controlling behaviours which have a cumulative impact on an individual’s day to day life causing fear, isolation and distress

HERE IN WALES

Having received Royal Assent for the **Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act** in April 2015 Wales now has a legislative framework to enable progress and deliver improvements. Since September 2015, **two commencement orders** have brought into force all provisions of the Act including requirements on Welsh Ministers, Relevant Authorities and the National Adviser. There have been consultation periods for three pieces of draft statutory guidance;

- The National Training Framework,
- Ask and Act and
- Multi Agency Collaborative Working

In March 2016, following consultation, the National Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Training Framework was published as statutory guidance.

The Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act aims to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales and, through the introduction of a

sustainable development principle, requires Public Bodies listed in the Act to think more about the long term, work better with people, communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined up approach. Wales' first Future Generations Commissioner will act as a guardian for the interests of future generations in Wales and support the public bodies listed in the Act to work towards achieving the well-being goals.

The implementation of the **Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014** aims to improve the well-being of people who need care and support and carers who need support. The Act changes the way people's needs are assessed and the way services are delivered; promotes a range of help available within the community to reduce the need for formal, planned support and introduces stronger powers to keep people safe from abuse and neglect. The Act also has wide ranging implications for ensuring services are able to provide the right support at the right time.

The **National Independent Safeguarding Board** has been established under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. The National Board is an advisory body that will advise Welsh Ministers on safeguarding people in Wales. It will work alongside the regional safeguarding adult boards and safeguarding children boards to secure improvements in safeguarding policy and practice throughout Wales. The Chair and members of the National Board were appointed in 2016.

In **January 2016 Public Health Wales published a report on the first Welsh Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACEs)**. ACEs are stressful experiences occurring during childhood that harm a child (e.g. physical or sexual abuse) or affect the environment in which they live (e.g. growing up in a house with domestic violence or abuse). Findings show that ACEs have a major impact on the development of health harming behaviours in Wales and the prevention of ACEs is likely to not only to improve the early years experiences of children born in Wales but also reduce levels of health harming behaviours such as problem alcohol use, smoking, poor diets and violent behaviour.

The study found that 16% of adults had lived in households where there had been domestic abuse and that, as children, 17% of adults had experienced physical abuse and 10% had experienced sexual abuse.

The first Welsh ACE survey identified that a substantial proportion of the Welsh population suffered abuse, neglect and other ACEs during their childhood with 47% reporting having experienced at least one ACE and 14% having experiencing 4 or more ACEs.

Activity by other Commissioners in Wales has continued to identify Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence as a strategic priority;

- In February 2016 the Children's Commissioner for Wales published the findings from the second phase of "Beth Nesa? What next? - the biggest consultation with children and

young people to inform the priorities of the Children's Commissioner of Wales and to gather new evidence of the lives of our children and young people.

6000 children and young people (aged 3-18) and 1000 adults responded to the consultation and the findings are considered in line with the themes of Provision, Protection and Participation. For young people aged 11-18 protecting children and young people from violence and abuse in the home was a priority and this was also reflected as a priority for adults who responded to the survey.

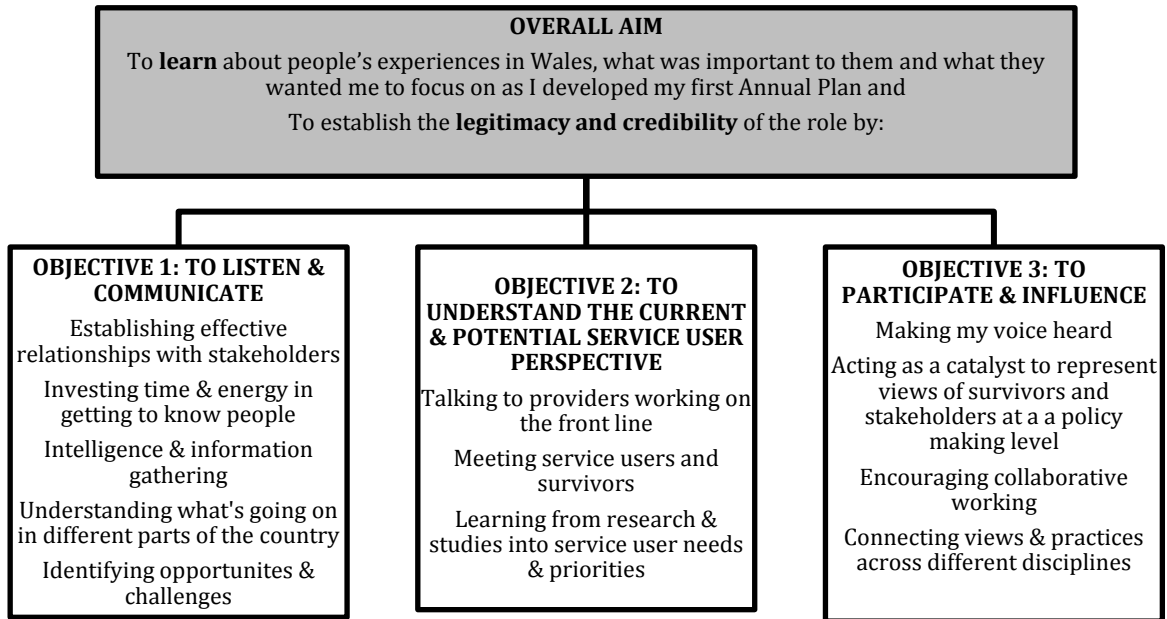
As a result of these findings the Children's Commissioner for Wales has identified the safety of children and young people; in the community, school and at home as a priority for 2016-19.

- The Older People Commissioners' priorities for 2015/16 reinforce her commitment to safeguarding and protecting older people in Wales experiencing violence and abuse; working alongside professionals to raise awareness, developing resources and working in partnership to understand and remove barriers faced by older people in accessing justice.

The legislative and policy infrastructure outlined here provide a complementary and enabling framework for the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015; providing opportunities to both prioritise and mainstream violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. The principles underpinning the legislative framework provide a space for action and an opportunity to work differently. When considered alongside an increasing evidence base for prevention and early identification and the continued recognition of Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence as a cross cutting priority in society, Wales has a unique opportunity to support and enable system change and practice improvement.

THE FIRST SIX MONTHS: SETTING THE FOUNDATIONS

What I wanted to do in this period



What I've done.....

OBJECTIVE 1: LISTENING AND COMMUNICATING

I actively sought out inclusive and meaningful opportunities for individuals to engage directly with me, to share their experiences and shape and inform my priorities

Written Communications	Chief Officers of all relevant authorities, strategic leads and the specialist sector
Meeting with survivors	Individually and collectively who have or are receiving information, accommodation and support services from a range of providers across Wales
Attendance at strategic meetings and fora	Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Advisory Group, Violence against Women Action Group, Ask and Act Implementation Board, Home Office Stakeholder Group, DRIVE Advisory Group, National leadership Groups – FGM / Honour Based Violence and Modern Slavery, Curriculum Reform – stakeholder group, MARAC Scrutiny Panel
Social media and media engagement	Press interviews about my role and specific issues relating to Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence, social media and blogs
Meetings with key	Chief Officers and strategic leads for relevant authorities, commissioners, Regional Collaborative Committee representatives, Welsh Government

stakeholders

officials, Police and Police and Crime Commissioners, Specialist Sector, National Probation Service and NOMS, CPS, Home Office, Public Health Wales, NUS, EHRC, Independent Police Complaints Commissioner and Domestic Abuse Co-ordinators, Welsh Language and Older People's Commissioner

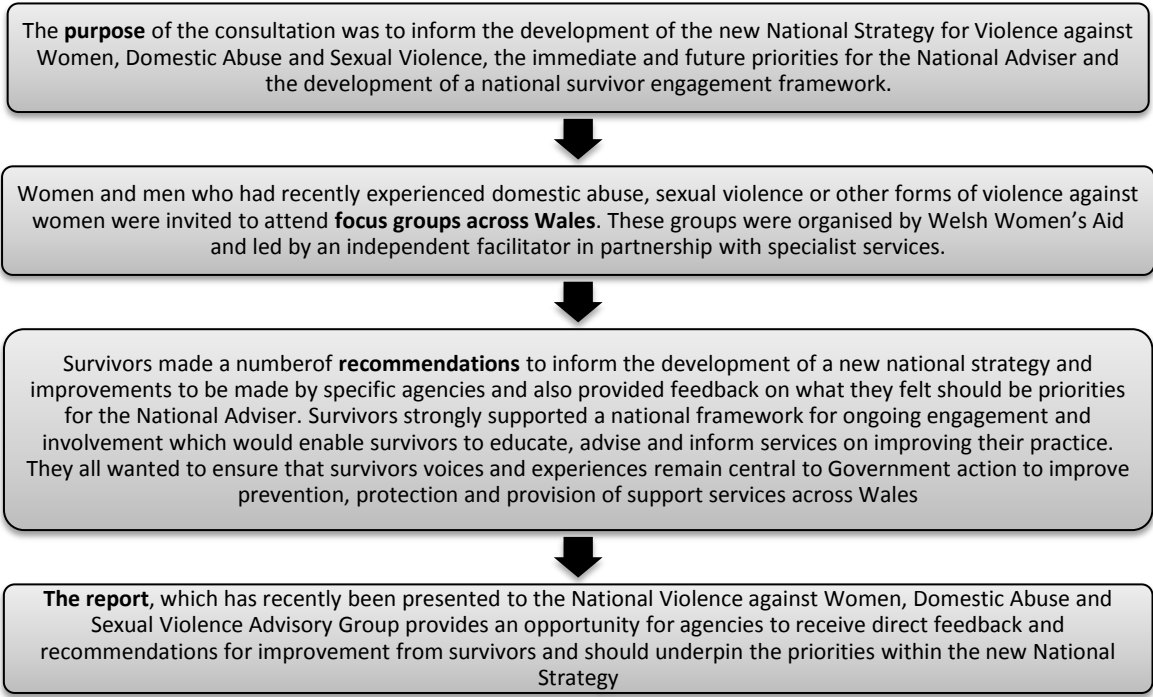
Conference and events

Police and Crime Commissioner Events, Welsh Women's Aid Coercive Control and Prevention Seminars, Safeguarding events, Welsh Government Education and Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Conference, NHS Confederation, Local Health Board and Local Authority Presentations, White Ribbon events

These diverse activities have provided a platform for me to articulate the role and functions of the National Adviser and for individuals to gain a better understanding of the role. They have accelerated my own learning, enabling me to develop a greater understanding of survivor and stakeholder experiences across Wales, the challenges and barriers faced and what is important to them.

OBJECTIVE 2: UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT AND POTENTIAL SERVICE USER PERSPECTIVE

Key to my learning has been the survivor consultation undertaken by Welsh Women's Aid on behalf of the Minister for Public Services between January and March 2016 and the resulting report **"Are you listening and am I being heard? - A report of the recommendations of survivors of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence in Wales"**. I attended three of these focus groups where survivors were asked about their recent experiences of using services, their recommendations for improving service responses and priorities for the national strategy in relation to prevention, protection and support.



The learning resulting from my engagement with stakeholders and survivors was crucial to the development of my first Annual Plan. Through asking questions, listening and observing I developed key principles of working and identified my vision, priorities and objectives which are now embedded within my Annual Plan April 2016 – March 17.

OBJECTIVE 3: PARTICIPATING & INFLUENCING

The engagement described above gave me lots of ideas and enabled me to explore how best to work alongside stakeholders to support implementation of the Act. As I have considered and analysed information that was presented to me I was able to start to get involved and to apply my learning. Below are some of the ways I have contributed to debate and discussions:

Working with strategic leads locally and regionally to support implementation of the Act – development of needs assessments and strategic plans	Advice to the Minister on current issues - providing information, ideas, reports and recommendations	Attending national groups: Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Advisory group, DRIVE Advisory Group, Ask and Act Implementation Board, Public Health Wales All Wales Group, Curriculum Reform Stakeholder Group, MARAC Scrutiny Panel
Advising and supporting 3 regions to review and develop effective, integrated governance structure	Advising relevant authorities in relation to policy development and planning for the implementation of the Act	Supporting areas to move to regional footprints
Advice on the the development of commissioning guidance to improve the consistency and practice of Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence commissioning in Wales	Advice to establish a Cross Government Officials Group to create opportunities for integration of Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence across Government divisions and departments	Advice to Welsh Government through formal consultation processes and events on National Training Framework, Ask and Act and Multi Agency Collaborative working

SUMMARY OF WHAT I SEE AS MY KEY ACHIEVEMENTS SEPTEMBER 2015 – MARCH 2016

During this early period my priorities have been to

- **Establish the role** of National Adviser – a new role for Wales and a new role for me. I have endeavoured to bring energy and drive to the position and to use this period to introduce and explain the expectations and core functions of the role to stakeholders across Wales and to key parties elsewhere in the UK
- **Identify partners** and develop effective working relationships at all levels
- Use the information and knowledge to develop my Annual Report which outlines, the principles by which I will work, my priorities and objectives and sets out my statement of intent
- **Listen to experiences** of survivors who know first-hand what it is like to live through violence and abuse and know best what may help others in a similar situation
- **Work to bring an understanding**, focus and clarity to Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence within the Welsh context
- **Support and enable** – working alongside others to create buy in to the role and the strategic vision and direction that I have set out

It is vital that you keep talking to me so that I am aware of innovative practice and interventions and that I can take these into policy and strategic debates. It's a central part of my role to challenge current thinking and to represent evidenced based survivor, practitioner and stakeholder views in high level settings.

Alongside this I want to use my platform and position to promote the Welsh perspective on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence in the UK and on the international stage in order to ensure that Wales is a prominent and equal contributor.

Looking forward in 2016 -17

This first six months provided me with the opportunity to develop an Annual Plan based on the experiences and priorities communicated to me by stakeholders and survivors. I will now focus on progressing and delivering the priorities identified within my Annual Plan.

Here's a reminder of key elements in the Annual Plan April 2016 – March 2017:

7 core principles will inform how I will carry out my duties:

Safety & Safeguarding

For me, the key principle that underpins the purpose of the legislation and my role is that of safeguarding; any child, young person or adult, at risk, or experiencing any form of violence against women, gender based violence, domestic abuse or sexual violence.

Leadership

I will provide visible, active leadership and a consistent, strategic focus for all forms of Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.

Enabling & Encouraging

I will work with and alongside Public Services and the Voluntary Sector to inform and influence change; making workable recommendations to improve the impact and effectiveness of services for individuals and families.

Early Intervention & Prevention

I will work alongside stakeholders to develop and promote an evidence base that demonstrates the impact and effectiveness of early intervention in reducing long term societal risks and financial costs

Collaboration & Integration

I will identify and support opportunities nationally, regionally and locally to mainstream Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence as “core business” and facilitate innovative, creative ways of working together.

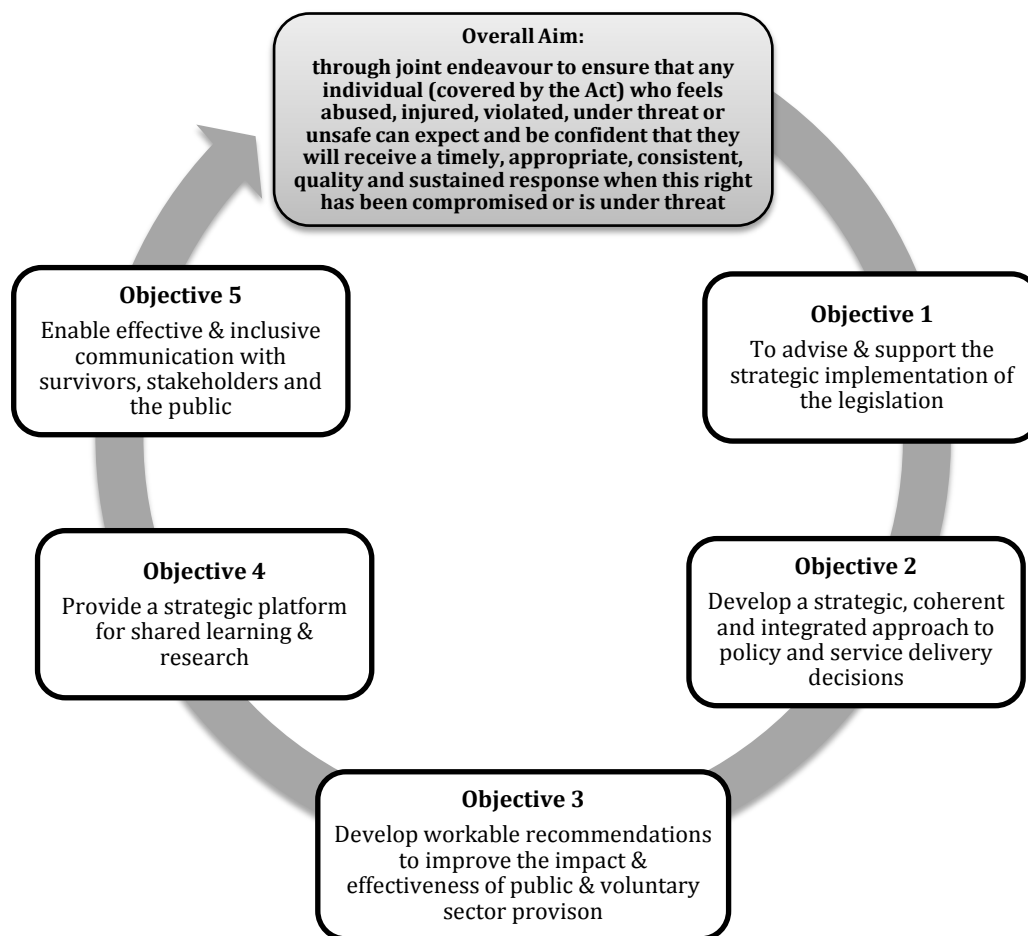
Consultation & engagement

I will ensure there are opportunities for stakeholders and survivors to inform and shape policy and service delivery. I will continuously seek to listen, comprehend and respond to their experiences, needs, challenges and aspirations.

Promoting learning & excellence

I will provide a strategic platform to ensure that good practice and learning is disseminated and used to support improvements that enable service providers and commissioners to achieve the highest possible standards.

Overall aims and objectives



WHAT'S AHEAD IN 2016/2017

There are some key developments expected this year that will provide me with an opportunity to progress the principles, aims and objectives highlighted above:

I will continue to inform and influence the development of the **National Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy** which will be published in November 2016. I hope to contribute to an ambitious, integrated strategy that will set out the principles, approach and priorities for action that Welsh Government and public bodies in Wales should take to mainstream and prioritise violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, making it “everyone’s business”. The Strategy needs to build on the priorities set out in the Right to be Safe Strategy and the opportunities provided by the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015.

I expect the recommendations and priorities identified by survivors in Welsh Women’s Aid report “Are you listening and am I being heard? - A report of the recommendations of

survivors of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence in Wales” to be integral to the Strategy, demonstrating how Welsh Government are placing survivors central to improvements in Wales.

Alongside the development of the National Strategy I will lead work to develop a set of **National Indicators** that will articulate and measure progress towards the achievement of the purpose of the Act.

The development of the National Indicators provides an opportunity to work towards a co-ordinated and coherent measurement framework with disaggregated data which would form part of a wider integrated approach to addressing and prevention all forms of Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.

Furthermore, the creation of National Indicators provides an opportunity to mainstream data from this field across wider policy areas; aligning and supporting existing measurement frameworks and strengthening the comparability of data from different policy areas.

The development of National Indicators presents an invaluable opportunity to improve the collection and analysis of data required to enhance knowledge to inform, shape and evaluate the impact of policy and practice developments and, fundamentally, ensures that individuals are protected and supported and prevention work is informing lasting behavioural and attitudinal change.

It is my intention that the National Indicators will be published for consultation at the end of 2016/17.

The establishment of **Public Service Boards and Health and Social Care Partnerships** and the requirement for **population needs assessments** provide an opportunity for me to work alongside local and regional leads to embed Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence as a strategic priority within the requirements of the wider statutory requirements and, furthermore, improve the consistency and coherence of our legislative framework.

This year will see **elections both for the National Assembly of Wales and our four Police and Crime Commissioners**. Those elected have a key leadership role in the implementation of the Act and delivering improvements for individuals and families experiencing any form of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence and I look forward to working alongside elected officers to progress a shared agenda.

It is paramount that I continue to listen and engage in order to feed your views into the above and to shape the future direction of my work in general. It is imperative that my post acts as a catalyst to bring experiences and expertise together and to create platforms to share learning and harness experiences to inform best practice and pursue service improvements.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have set ourselves an ambitious agenda on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence in Wales and my role has a part to play if we are to achieve the vision to improve arrangements for protection, support and the prevention of all forms of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

During this initial period I have invested time and energy to provide meaningful opportunities for survivors and stakeholders to engage directly with me. I have listened to their experiences, challenges and aspirations and asked what is important to them in order to inform the principles, aims and objectives integral to the development of my Annual Plan.

I believe that this was the right approach for my initial 6 months – being visible, establishing relationships, gathering and analysing information and intelligence. It feels now that I need to move to the next phase of the role – using the information and intelligence to get involved and influence improvements and change. It is important that the Adviser gets involved at a practical level in achieving change as opposed to simply being seen as a public figure.

My Annual Plan is both challenging and ambitious – it provides focus and clarity in terms of what I am trying to achieve and there is a lot to do if we are to deliver lasting change. The breadth and scale of my annual plan raises questions about the role of the National Adviser and the infrastructure in which it operates, issues that if not addressed, could potentially limit the effectiveness and potential of the role.

The role is part time and has limited resources attached. One of the issues that I will be pursuing is to ask for additional resources to back up the post and to enable me to build the capacity and consolidate the effectiveness of the role. A balance is required between the resources provided by Welsh Government and the fundamental need to maintain the independence of the role. Given that it is the first term of the post this provides an opportunity for reflection and learning and it is fitting to address these issues at an early stage.

This year Wales will have a renewed National Strategy which is intended to provide an overall framework to achieve the goals set out within the Act. My view is that the Strategy will only deliver if underpinned by detailed intent and sustained informed action. I believe an **infrastructure for delivery** of the Act that sets out in detail the reality of what is needed to make a difference would help reinforce the Act and promote a consistent Wales wide approach to implementation. Such an infrastructure must be underpinned by a needs-led, strengths-based service model, resourced appropriately and sustainably and within an integrated and coordinated **whole system approach**. It must be interwoven with other key

areas of public policy, finances, commissioning activity, service delivery and accountability frameworks.

Alongside survivors and stakeholders, I want to be part of exploring and developing these approaches to create the opportunities for policy and decision makers to listen, reflect and act to fulfil the potential offered by the Act.

As National Adviser I feel I have a mandate and a unique opportunity to influence and shape change for individuals experiencing Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence. This is what makes this role so stimulating, it's what motivated me to apply and I will endeavour to use the position to its full potential. Survivors have high hopes for the Act and we need to listen to and learn from their experiences and be ambitious and transformative in our thinking and joint efforts if we are to live up to and exceed their expectations. It is incumbent upon us to do so.

How to contact the National Adviser for Violence against Women, other forms of gender based violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence

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