

Julie James AM
Leader of the House and Chief Whip

11 January 2018

Dear Julie

Implementation of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act

In 2016, we undertook post-legislative scrutiny of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act. We felt that it was timely to follow up on this work, and I am writing to seek an update on progress in implementing this Act.

There are questions here, which relate to the Cabinet Secretary for Education's portfolio, I would therefore appreciate if you could co-ordinate a response that covers all areas. I have copied the Cabinet Secretary for Education into this letter.

National strategy

The National Strategy was published on 4 November 2016 as a high level, strategic document, rather than a detailed action plan. The then Cabinet Secretary told us that a more detailed delivery plan would be published as “a way of getting through the legal challenge of not delivering the strategy at the appropriate time.”

We raised concerns that the delivery plan would not be legally enforceable under the Act, unlike the national strategy. The Welsh Government said that the legal



status and timescale for the delivery plan would be determined by a Task and Finish group.

- When will the delivery plan be published?
- What will be the legal status of the plan (for example, will it be published as statutory guidance) be decided? Will it be legally enforceable?
- How will the plan be consulted on?

Local strategies

In October 2016, we heard that local strategies were beginning to be developed in the absence of the delivery plan or commissioning guidance, which ‘could lead to inconsistencies in approaches across Wales’.

The Welsh Government’s response to our report said that “guidance will be published in relation to local strategies in July 2017”. This does not appear to have been published.

The Wales Audit Office published Findings of Call for Evidence on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 in August 2017, which found that “local strategies are developing but need to be integrated with recent legislation to be truly effective”.

- Has the guidance on local strategies been issued to local authorities and health boards?
- Are all local authorities and health boards likely to meet the May 2018 deadline for local strategies?
- Without a National Adviser currently in place, what support is available to local authorities and health boards in producing local strategies?
- How many local strategies have been consulted upon so far?
- How will the content and objectives of all local strategies be evaluated across Wales as a whole?



Education

A key area of focus for us during our scrutiny was the role of education. We made a number of recommendations, including calling for a commitment that healthy relationships should be covered in the new curriculum.

We were therefore pleased that the healthy relationships expert group in March recommended, in December 2017, that Sexuality and Relationships Education (SRE) should be a statutory part of the new curriculum for all schools (age 3–16).

- (For the Cabinet Secretary for Education) What are the next steps in taking forward the recommendations of the expert group on healthy relationships education?
- (For the Cabinet Secretary for Education) Why was the decision made not to bring forward regulations under section 9?

Higher education

- (For the Cabinet Secretary for Education) When will guidance be issued to higher education institutions under section 10?

National indicators

The Welsh Government's response to our report said that the national indicators would be published “not before” October 2017.

- When will the national indicators be consulted upon and published?

Statutory guidance

The Welsh Government told us in 2016 that the statutory commissioning guidance “will be consulted on by July 2017”. This has not yet been consulted upon or published.

Guidance on the National Training Framework is in force.



A consultation on Ask and Act ended in January 2016. Pilot projects are currently underway in Abertawe Bro Morgannwg health board area and in Gwent. The Welsh Government's recent letter to us said that a phased rollout of Ask and Act is taking place, rather than a full national rollout.

Multi-agency collaboration guidance was consulted on in 2015. The Welsh Government response to our report stated that the multi-agency guidance "will be considered in light of the local government White Paper". It has not yet been published.

According to the written evidence we received to our inquiry, guidance on working with perpetrators was consulted on with the Advisory Board in 2015, but has not been published.

- **When will the statutory commissioning guidance be published?**
- **What is the current status of the rollout of Ask and Act programme, and what is the future rollout schedule? When will the rollout be complete?**
- **When will the multi-agency collaboration guidance be published?**
- **When will the guidance on working with perpetrators be published?**

Other developments

In a consultation document about funding for supported housing published in October 2017, the UK Government proposed to remove refuges and other forms of short-term supported housing from the welfare system, meaning that people will not be able pay for supported housing with their housing benefit. Instead, it proposes that English local authorities and devolved administrations in Wales and Scotland are given a ring-fenced grant for short-term supported housing.

- **What discussions has the Welsh Government had with the UK Government about the proposals to remove refuges from the welfare system?**
- **How will funding be allocated to refuges in the future in Wales?**

The Welsh Government's response to our report in 2016 said that "development of a sustainable funding model is a priority to deliver the National Strategy. This




work will include a review of existing Welsh Government funding that contributes to VAWDASV to ensure making the best use of the resources available[...] Progress will be reported to [the then Cabinet Secretary] at the Advisory Group in July 2017.” No announcement or publication has yet been made.

- **When will the review of funding for VAWDASV services be completed and published?**

I would appreciate a response by 22 February 2018, following consideration of your response, we may wish to invite you to give oral evidence to further inform our considerations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John', with a stylized flourish above the 'h'.

John Griffiths AM
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

