



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

Cross Party Group on Violence against Women and Children

Progress on Policy

Sponsored by Mark Isherwood AM and Bethan Sayed AM

18th July 2018 12:00 – 13:30

Media Briefing Room, Senedd, National Assembly for Wales

Mark Isherwood AM (co-chair)
Bethan Sayed AM (co-chair)
Jane Hutt AM
David Rowland AM
Gwendolyn Sterk – Welsh Women’s Aid (secretariat)
Joanne Hopkins - Home Office (speaker)
Nazir Afzal - National Advisor for VAWDASV (speaker)
Catherine Phillips – Welsh Women’s Aid (speaker)
Helen Jones - Atal y Fro
Morgan Fackrell - Cardiff Women’s Aid
Vivienne Laing - NSPCC
Elinor Crouch-Puzey – Welsh Women’s Aid
Frances Beecher – Llamau
Sarah Thomas – NFWI
Rebecca Powell – Home Office Wales
Gauri - SEEdS
Julie - SEEdS
Hilary - SEEdS

Apologies:

Simon Thomas AM
Sophie Howe - Future Generations Commissioner
Yvonne Jardine
Lynne Sanders – Swansea Women’s Aid
Sian Morgan – Hafan Cymru

Minutes
Mark Isherwood AM, chairing, confirmed minutes had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Speakers:

Jo Hopkins, Home Office Wales

Update on UK Governments Transforming the response to Domestic Abuse consultation

Nazir Afzal, National Adviser for VAWDASV

Update on progress on the implementation of the Welsh Government National VAWDASV Strategy 2016-2021

Catherine Phillips, Welsh Women's Aid

Update on policy and provision of VAWDASV support for Children and Young People

Discussion:

Domestic Abuse Consultation: Jo Hopkins updated the group on the recent consultation, noting that it builds on the proposals and commitments made by the Prime Minister in February 2017. Particular areas covered by the consultation included:

- Protection orders
- Harm to a child
- Creation of a DA commissioner
- Commitment to ratifying the Istanbul Convention

The consultation was set into 4 themes:

- Promote awareness of DA, encourage public support and relevant support for professionals
- Safety of survivor
- Pursue and deter - developing effective responses to perpetrators
- Improving performance and a better response across local areas

Events were held in Wales as part of the consultation process including sessions run by Welsh Women's Aid with survivors and services and a session with Gwent VAWDASV team and Dyfed Powys PCC on older people's experiences of abuse and session by Respect UK and Welsh Women's Aid on responses to perpetrators.

Key themes emerging feedback include:

- Criticism that the definition does not include sexual violence
- Concerns over the remit of the DA Commissioner
- Need for sufficient funding
- Discrepancies between family and criminal courts
- Challenges around bail conditions for perpetrators and lack of repercussions when bail is breached.

Next Steps:

3200 responses were received from both survivors and sector organisations which are currently being reviewed. Additionally, feedback from the consultation events is also being considered as part of the overall response. No date has been confirmed for the response from UK Government and draft bill as yet. It was highlighted there will be questions about how the bill will work in Wales in the context of the VAWDASV Act and National Advisors.

Update on VAWDASV Strategy Nazir Afzal, National Advisor for VAWDASV confirmed there are concerns with the speed of delivery of the VAWDASV (Wales) Act 2015. Particularly in terms of the development of national indicators. Nazir confirmed draft indicators will be published before Christmas for consultation.

Both National Advisors addressed cabinet regarding the Istanbul Convention and have stated they believe Wales can lead the way in ratifying before the rest of the UK.

Nazir highlighted concerns around governance and recent asks of Welsh Government, these included;

1. A strategic leadership group to include all departments, with a commitment that senior individuals will be part of it was proposed to cabinet.
2. An expert group supporting Government on the delivery of their commitments
3. Stakeholder group which should be a reflection of the geography of Wales and look to change the postcode lottery of service in different parts of the country

Children and Young People Catherine Phillips, Welsh Women's Aid updated the group on recent actions and policy developments relevant to CYP. She confirmed focus groups had been held with SEEDs which echoed concerns raised in the DA Bill consultation about the family courts. With training, particularly around coercive control fundamental to improvement.

She noted the planned roll out of SRE by 2022 as a welcome development but asks how this will be measured and ensured it is part of the whole education approach. It is also welcome that the Welsh Government plan to end the physical punishment of children in Wales and members of the CPG had contributed to the consultation.

Catherine updated the group on a recent ACEs conference and gave an example of a school that has adopted the ACEs approach, including ending exclusions and working to a reduced timetable while supporting the child.

The presentation finished with feedback from the Unity Youth Gender Conference workshop on gender stereotypes and sexism where young people talked about typical feminine and masculine male stereotypes and the harm this could cause. Pupils then shared what they wanted to call 'Times Up' on, some of the thoughts included; using gay as an insult, sexist remarks, racism, jokes about rape and sexism in the media.

Questions/comments from the floor key themes included;

Commissioning and the power procurement within local authorities' hold. It was raised that there were pockets of good practice in commissioning but this was not consistent across local authority areas. It was noted that the Welsh Government would be publishing VAWDASV commissioning guidance but there was a need to ensure that local authorities, particularly procurement leads, actually utilized it to enable sustainable provision.

The importance of a framework around bail to strengthen the argument for not granting bail to dangerous perpetrators as well as coercive control not being included on applications at the rate physical abuse is. Additionally there is a discrepancy between what is ordered in court and upheld by the Police. This results in a lack of confidence in the system by survivors.

SDVCs have been significantly reduced in Wales. Jo Hopkins confirmed work is underway to look at the provision of SDVCs in Wales and is keen to include survivor and sector voices.

Gaps in the recently published Delivery Framework were highlighted included the concerns about the removal of the Supporting People ring-fence. Nazir confirmed this is a working document and feedback is welcome.

Bethan Sayed AM highlighted the public enquiry into undercover Police who formed relationships with women activists. She is concerned about slow progress and the need for more AMs to sign the circulated letter.

Actions:

Group agreed a letter will be drafted to Alun Davies AM regarding procurement within local authorities.

Group agreed to share the letter the public enquiry into undercover Police with members to encourage more AMs to support and sign.

Next Meeting: Voices to Power – 17th October 2018

The Chair thanked all for attending and the meeting closed at 13:30.