



**BOTH PARENTS MATTER**

**FNF BOTH PARENTS MATTER CYMRU**

**61 COWBRIDGE RD EAST**

**CARDIFF**

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7<sup>th</sup> January 2018

Dear Mr Rowlands

## **P-05-798 Male domestic violence victim support services to be independently run and funded.**

We are grateful for the opportunity to respond to the letter of the 12<sup>th</sup> December from the (then) Leader of the House which has raised important points. This petition was launched to address the growing trend by Welsh Government and Local Authorities to recognise Welsh Women's Aid and its member organisations as representative of the experience of male victims and to fund those charities to provide support to men as well as women. This approach is inconsistent with the Welsh Government's National Strategy that recognises the gendered nature of domestic violence and abuse.

In the fourth paragraph the (then) Leader of the House states:

***'Where we fund organisations directly, this is either to act as an umbrella organisation for both genders (Welsh Women's Aid and BAWSO), or to deliver a service to both genders (New Pathways for Sexual Violence services, Hafan Cymru to deliver healthy relationships education, Welsh Women's Aid to deliver the Live Fear Free Helpline, for example). The only organisation we fund to deliver to only one gender is Safer Wales for the men only Project Dyn and Dyn male helpline.'***

This is a remarkable but important statement, confirming that the Welsh Government recognises Welsh Women's Aid as a representative body for men as well as women. We ask what legitimacy Welsh Women's Aid or indeed BAWSO has to represent the views, perspectives and experiences of male victims of abuse, and why the Welsh Government has decided to use public funds in this way?

Welsh Women's Aid has a proud and impressive track record in representing the voices of women experiencing domestic violence and abuse. Their well resourced SEEDs project empowers survivors of abuse to talk about their experiences to influence the delivery of services. All those participating in the project are women.

In 2016 Welsh Government funded Welsh Women's Aid to undertake engagement work with survivors of abuse to inform the development of the National Strategy. On page 15 of that report Welsh Women's Aid states:

***'Although we sought involvement from women and men to participate, in separate focus groups, 65 women survivors participated in focus groups/interviews and 1 man participated by interview. A number of male survivors were contacted about the consultation and encouraged to participate***

***in focus groups or interviews by their male support workers, but declined to take part. Additional written recommendations for service improvement was also provided by some survivors, which has been reflected in the report.***<sup>i</sup>

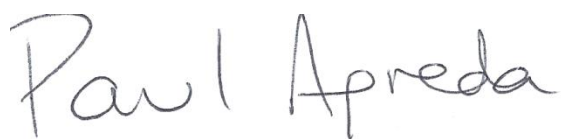
In the National Quality Standards for Domestic Abuse services produced by Welsh Women's Aid and funded by Welsh Government <sup>ii</sup> Welsh Women's Aid re-iterate their commitment to a **'By and For'** model of service design and delivery for women experiencing domestic violence and abuse. We acknowledge WWA's expertise in this field and the evidence that has been put forward that women want a 'female centred' service. Why shouldn't men expect the same provision in services designed to support them?

In 2018 our charity produced a study of male victims of abuse in which 728 male survivors contributed. We have asked the Welsh Government to fund an independent analysis of the findings of this research to help improve the understanding of male victim's experience. This has been refused on two occasions.

In relation to Safer Wales and the Dyn Project we have raised many concerns over the appropriateness of funding their service as it is delivered by a member organisation of Welsh Women's Aid and is grounded in an approach towards male victims that emphasizes the need to 'screen' or 'assess' victims of abuse presenting to the service to determine whether they are perpetrators. Ironically we have been advised by the Equality and Human Rights Commission that their view is that this 'discriminatory' approach is lawful because the Dyn Project does not provide support to female victims so is legitimately able to 'disadvantage' men.

The Welsh Government's National Strategy recognises that domestic violence and abuse is a gendered phenomenon. In that context we maintain that recognising and funding Welsh Women's Aid and its member organisations to support male victims may constitute an inappropriate use of public funds.

Regards



Paul Apreda, National Manager

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<sup>i</sup> [http://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Are\\_you\\_listening\\_and\\_am\\_I\\_being\\_heard\\_FINAL\\_July\\_2016.pdf](http://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Are_you_listening_and_am_I_being_heard_FINAL_July_2016.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> [http://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Welsh-Womens-Aid\\_Service-Standards-Final.pdf](http://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Welsh-Womens-Aid_Service-Standards-Final.pdf)