

Joint Cross Party Group on Women & Violence against Women and Children

27th November 2018

12:30 – 13:30

Media Room, Senedd

Chairs: Jane Hutt AM & Siân Gwenllïan AM (CPG on Women)

Bethan Sayed AM & Mark Isherwood AM (CPG on VAWC)

Secretariat: WEN Wales & Welsh Women's Aid

Attendees:

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Jane Hutt AM | Co-chair - women |
| Sian Gwenllïan AM | Co-chair - women |
| Mark Isherwood AM | Co-chair - VAWC |
| Jayne Bryant AM | Speaker |
| Yasmin Khan | Speaker |
| Catherine Fookes | WEN Wales (Secretary) |
| Hilary Watson | WEN Wales (minutes) |
| Eli Crouch-Puzey | Welsh Women's Aid |
| Gwendolyn Sterk | Welsh Women's Aid (Secretary) |
| Gauri Taylor-Nayar | SEEdS Welsh Women's Aid |
| Mutale Merrill | Bawso |
| Maria Mesa | Women Connect First |
| Chizi Phiri | NUS Wales |
| Cerith Rhys-Jones | NUS Wales |
| Vivienne Laing | NSPCC Cymru |
| Rachel Cable | Oxfam Cymru |
| Crash Wiggley | Stonewall Cymru |
| Sarah Thomas | NFWI Wales |
| Helen Mary Jones AM | Assembly Member |
| Leanne Wood AM | Assembly Member |
| Becs Parker | AM Support Staff (John Griffiths) |
| Jackie Jones | Wales Assembly of Women |
| Phoebe Owen | WEN Wales |
| Llinos Price | Individual |
| Polly Winn | Chwarae Teg |
| Hilary Roberts | SEEdS, Welsh Women's Aid |

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Company Number: 07891533



Apologies:

| | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| Bethan Sayed AM | Co-chair - VAWC |
| Rayner Rees | Soroptimists |
| Jess Blair | ERS Cymru |
| Llyr Gruffydd AM | Assembly Member |
| Jane Ruthe | RASASC North Wales |
| Sophie Howe | Future Generations Commissioner |
| Kirsty Williams AM | Cabinet Secretary for Education |
| Sir Roderick Evans | Standards Commissioner |
| Laura McAllister | Wales Governance Office |

Agenda:

- 1) Welcome, Chairs
- 2) Yasmin Khan – National Advisor for Violence Against Women, Gender Based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence: *Dignity and Respect in relation to the Welsh Government VAWDASV Agenda*
- 3) Jayne Bryant AM – Chair of the Standards of Conduct Committee: *Update on recommendations from the ‘Creating the Right Culture’ report*
- 4) Gwendolyn Sterk – Welsh Women’s Aid and Catherine Fookes – WEN Wales: *Dignity and Respect, VAWDASV and women’s equality*
- 5) AOB

Minutes:

1. **Welcome & Introductions – Siân Gwenllian AM (Co-chair of Cross Party Group on Women)**
 1. Siân Gwenllian AM welcome attendees to the joint cross party groups, acknowledging 16 Days of Action and Activism and that societal change is needed in relation to dignity and respect. To follow up the joint meeting there is a need to underpin our actions with a focus on societal change to eliminate violence against women. Siân Gwenllian AM then introduced guest, Yasmin Khan, National Advisor for Violence Against Women, Gender Based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.
2. **Yasmin Khan – National Advisor for Violence Against Women, Gender Based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence: *Dignity and Respect in relation to the Welsh Government VAWDASV Agenda***

Yasmin Khan explained that she and Nazir Afzal were working together with Welsh Government (WG) to achieve dignity and respect for women, by creating a culture across the whole sector. She stated that disclosure needed to be encouraged and that it was concerning that less than 20% of women were confident to come forward, rather they were living with trauma of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV). WG is committed to framing VAWDASV around dignity and respect. She stated that training must lead to outcome and identifying risk at earlier level and helping to reduce it all together was important, and that social change is paramount. She spoke of the three themes running through WG’s work: Prevent, Protection & Support. She stated the need

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for a joined-up approach so that survivors are listened to when they report VAWDASV and are not passed between many different services.

Yasmin Khan also stated that sexual violence needs to be understood much better and stated that aftercare is crucial to keep women safe and in keeping their dignity. A whole system approached needs to be developed and perpetrators need to be challenged. Public services need to do things differently. Yasmin talked about the sustainable funding group that she chairs, that's looking at unmet need. It is necessary to work smarter and collectively. She stated there's no such thing as a 'typical' survivor and that the First Minister (Carwyn Jones AM) had sent a letter to Prime Minister Theresa May to encourage her to ratify the 'Istanbul Convention'¹.

Attendees asked how far off implementing the Welsh VAWDASV (2015) Act we are? Yasmin Khan said we had a way to go yet but were moving in the right direction and that the Act has already improved response. Better join up is needed in Health. A cross government ministerial group will be established based on the National Advisors' recommendations, to priorities VAWDASV in all Cabinet Secretaries' portfolios.

Yasmin was asked about the relationships and sexuality education coming in no sooner than 2021 with the curriculum changed. Yasmin said that while this area is currently lagging behind, the National Advisors were due to meet with the Children's Commissioner soon to discuss further. Also on the topic of education, there was a discussion around survivors being subjected to victim blaming in schools – directly and through their children, that schools can be inconsistent and that more needs to be done in schools, higher education and universities. The needs of children and young people must be taken forward taking account of the National Adviser's forthcoming meeting with the Children's Commissioner.

3. Jayne Bryant AM – Chair of the Standards of Conduct Committee: *Update on recommendations from the 'Creating the Right Culture' report*

Before introducing the next speaker, Siân Gwenllïan AM stated that the Standards Commissioner, Sir Roderick Evans had been invited to speak as well. He declined the invitation but sent an invitation to the chairs of the CPGs to meet with him to discuss this meeting's conversation. Jayne Bryant AM stated that the Standards Committee would be very interested be informed of the outcome of this meeting.

Jayne Bryant AM discussed the Standards Committee's recent report [Creating the Right Culture/Creu'r Diwylliant Cywir](#). She discussed the power imbalance and how the National Assembly for Wales should have the highest standards and yet there were incidents of sexual harassment at the National Assembly that have gone unreported. Jayne Bryant AM thanked contributors to the report and stated that some responses were given anonymously. The closely connected nature of Welsh public life was highlighted. We need a culture that empowers everyone to call out unacceptable behaviour and to get diversity in politics. There needs to be shift in the understanding of what is acceptable. And the system needs to be flexible. She stated that the origin of the Assembly Members' Code of Conduct

¹ [The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#)

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was rooted in the expenses scandal in Westminster, which means that updating the original was paramount as clarity was needed.

Jayne Bryant AM stated that Contact officers have been in place since May 2018 and are being used by employees at the National Assembly for Wales. The National Assembly must hold up as an example for good practice for the rest of Wales and beyond. There was a discussion from the floor about the omission of anonymous reporting. The Committee did ask for international examples of good practice but did not receive any that they felt were relevant: Jayne Bryant AM asked for any research, perhaps from Scandinavia, New Zealand or companies (with very steep hierarchy due to AM power structure) that may be relevant.

The group discussed assisting the Standards Committee in following through the 'Creating the right Culture' report included looking at the timelines (Jayne Bryant AM confirmed that complaints over 12 months old CAN be heard -they must be flexible) - and handling of anonymous complaints (we need to check that the Commissioner and the Committee are in agreement on the fact that anonymous complaints can be heard) and considering international best practice.

Jayne Bryant AM was asked whether the Standards Committee's work was examining local government too as the behaviour of politicians as they progress from local government to National Assembly – if they travel this path – was important to note. Jayne Bryant AM confirmed that the Standards Committee looked solely at the National Assembly for Wales. It was stated that other Committees are looking into Local Government, including the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee, currently running an inquiry into diversity in local government.

It was felt that local government must be encouraged to adopt the 'Creating the right Culture' standards report and improving the diversity of local government electoral representation.

Rachel Cable, Head of Oxfam Cymru, stated that Oxfam is currently conducting a huge piece of work into global safeguarding and that Oxfam can share their work.

4. Gwendolyn Sterk – Welsh Women's Aid and Catherine Fookes – WEN Wales: *Dignity and Respect, VAWDASV and women's equality*

Welsh Women's Aid and WEN Wales discussed the pervasiveness of VAWDASV and put it in to context of the international movement, such as Time's Up and #MeToo. Welsh Women's Aid has been given the rights to the Time's Up movement in Wales, with an upcoming event. Both highlighted the need for perpetrators' behaviour to be challenged and punished and reiterated that survivors must be believed, and their experiences understood. Sexual harassment is a cause and consequence of gender inequality, which means that linking Dignity and Respect agendas to the Gender Equality Review in Wales is important. Wales needs to show zero tolerance of all forms of VAWDASV. There are very good support services in Wales, these need to be sustainably funded. The Times Up Campaign can be linked to the 50:50 campaign to improve the representation of women in public life.

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WEN Wales discussed the Women's Manifesto and the need to end gender based violence in the workplace and how 50:50 gender balance is needed in the National Assembly and at local government level yet pervasive online harassment, and bullying and harassment experienced by women candidates and politicians is creating a huge barrier to achieving these gender balances. WEN Wales discussed the 50:50 Campaign for representation that was discussed at the previous meeting – the draft plan will be circulated – ahead of the launch in 2019. Catherine Fookes updated on WEN Wales, Wales Assembly of Women And Equality and Human Rights Commissions' meeting with the First Minister (Carwyn Jones AM) regarding CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention and that Welsh Government is looking into how it can incorporate CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention into its work. It was noted that a new First Minister would be appointed in the coming weeks). The monitoring of Welsh Government action must include testing the outcomes of the FM's commitment to adopt the Istanbul Convention and setting up of a Joint Ministerial Group on tackling violence against women.

Julie James AM was due to make a statement on VAWDASV that afternoon. The floor asked about the UK Government's Domestic Abuse Bill and Welsh engagement in that. Welsh Women's Aid stated that Welsh Government wouldn't be looking at it as it was a devolved area but that the VAWDASV sector in Wales had been heavily involved. It would be possible to ask the Welsh National Advisors more about the conversations that had been happening between officials and our National Advisors and their counterparts in London.

Actions:

- 1) Write to the Standards Commissioner following up his invitation for a meeting (Chairs/secretariats)**
- 2) Update the Standards Committee on the outcome of the Chairs' meeting with the Standards Commissioner (Chairs/Secretariats)**
- 3) Any international research – countries or companies (with very steep hierarchy due to AM power structure) that may be relevant on good standards practice to be submitted to the Standards Committee (All)**
 - a. Rachel Cable from Oxfam stated that Oxfam is currently conducting a huge piece of work into global safeguarding and that Oxfam can share their work. (Oxfam Cymru)
- 4) Circulate draft plan for the 50:50 campaign from the CPG on Women (WEN Wales)**
- 5) National Advisors to be asked about their and Welsh Officials' engagement with the UK Government's Domestic Abuse Bill (Welsh Women's Aid)**
- 6) Assisting the Standards Committee in following through the 'Creating the right Culture ' report included looking at the timelines (Jayne Bryant AM confirmed that complaints over 12 months old CAN be heard -they must be flexible) - and handling of anonymous complaints (we need to check that the Commissioner and the Committee are in agreement on the fact that anonymous complaints can be heard) and considering international best practice. (Chairs/Secretariats)**

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