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John Griffiths AM
Chair of the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee
National Assembly for Wales
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24 January 2020

Dear John,

In your letter to me dated 18 December 2018, you requested periodic updates every three months from the National Advisers to provide reassurance on the pace of implementation of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015.

I am very pleased to enclose the fourth of these updates from the National Advisers which covers the period October to December 2019.

Yours sincerely,

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Deputy Minister and Chief Whip

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We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

National Advisers' Report to the Equality, Local Government and Communities (ELGC) Committee December 2019 update

1. Purpose

In his letter dated 18 December 2018 to the Deputy Minister and Chief Whip, John Griffiths, AM Chair of the ELGC Committee, requested periodic updates from the National Advisers to provide reassurance on the pace of implementation of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015.

This is the fourth update from the National Advisers and covers the period October 2019 to December 2019 inclusive.

The sub headings below, "National Advisers" and "Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials," indicate ownership of actions described in the respective sections.

2. Introduction

National Advisers:

This quarter we finalised the approach, membership and work streams of the newly established Expert Stakeholder Group on VAWDASV which met for the first time during September 2019. We have drawn four specific themes for the group which include identifying improvements for VAWDASV regional collaboration amongst delivery agencies; reviewing the needs of children and young people who are victims of domestic abuse and making recommendations for enhanced provision; reviewing the needs of asylum seekers and refugees who suffer domestic abuse and cultural harms; and identifying the interface between devolved and non- devolved processes and making recommendations for more effective alignment.

We had a meeting with the Permanent Secretary in December. The main discussion points included training and awareness of VAWDASV within Welsh Government, particularly senior leadership teams. An action of this meeting will lead to a specific blog by the Permanent Secretary. We have been pleased by the extent of cross government working taking place in Welsh Government and commended the Permanent Secretary on the support and encouragement given by senior levels of the organisation.

3. National Indicators

Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

The National Indicator Working Group continues to review the published national VAWDASV indicators, proposed measures and data sources with a view to agreeing any amendments by the summer of 2020. Three workshops now remain which are scheduled between January and March, after which officials will make recommendations for updates to the National Indicators, measures and data sources.

National Advisers:

We have chaired certain National Indicator workshops. We were encouraged by the contributions of providers and partners.

4. Local Strategies

National Advisers:

We are pleased to report receipt of all requested local strategies. We are starting to screen these to ensure we can provide feedback and where possible identify good practice which we can share. Recently, we have been made aware of specific areas including children and young people and BME groups require specific actions, we will carefully consider any areas of improvement where relevant.

5. Statutory Guidance

Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

National Training Framework (NTF)

As of September 2019, 167,500 people in Wales have accessed training under the National Training Framework.

The Welsh Government is working with services to continue to increase the percentage of their workforce completing the Group 1 eLearning module (basic awareness training). Officials are also working with colleagues to enable access to the VAWDASV eLearning module to over 25,000 public sector employees in education settings via the Hwb portal.

Public sector professionals continue to be trained through our early intervention and prevention training 'Ask & Act' (group 2 & 3), where identifying and responding to VAWDASV is a key aspect. At the beginning of October 2019, 4,343 public sector workers were trained. Ask and Act training is now available across Gwent, Cwm Taf, North Wales, Mid and West Wales, Fire and Rescue Services, Welsh Ambulance Service Trust as well as Health Boards and Trusts. The full roll out of Ask & Act will be completed during 2020-21. Implementation meetings have commenced within Bridgend and Swansea Western Bay as well as Cardiff and the Vale.

A fully funded Welsh Government specialist course and service manager course for groups 4 and 5 of the framework (those whose specialism is in the field of VAWDASV) is currently being delivered and is due to end in March 2020, and regional workshops for group 6 leaders (includes those with commissioning and planning responsibilities) are also underway. Further meetings are planned for the new year.

Welsh Government officials, in partnership with the National Assembly Wales, are arranging for Ask and Act training to be made available for all Assembly Members and their support staff. A planning meeting is scheduled for January 2020. The training will be useful in their roles working in constituency areas. It allows Assembly Members to pro-actively engage at the earliest opportunity with those who are vulnerable and experiencing violence and abuse, and to signpost them to relevant support services.

There is a commitment within the NTF for the Ask and Act guidance to be made statutory. Therefore, Welsh Government officials are working together with Knowledge and Analytical Services to independently evaluate the Ask and Act programme early in 2020 prior to making the Ask and Act guidance statutory.

6. Health

Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

In December, officials were invited to a presentation with Public Health Wales colleagues on the key themes that recur in domestic homicide reviews. The aim was to ensure that all core roles are receiving training in line with these key themes.

National Advisers:

We have been working with the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales Police to explore and challenge current thinking in favour of a public health approach framework for VAWDASV. We feel this area of work and the workshop we participated in this quarter will help with the better alignment with the sustainable development principle within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The aim of this joint working is to identify approaches for a public health approach and to gain an understanding of the existing VAWDASV landscape across Wales.

7. Education

Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

The development of the new curriculum for statutory education (3 -16yrs) continues as described in the previous update.

Officials are working with the WJEC to design and pilot a Health and Wellbeing Peer Mentoring challenge for the Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate, which will also promote the *White Ribbon youth advocate programme*.

Welsh Government has commissioned workshops, starting in December 2019, to be delivered through the whole of Wales to provide front line professionals such as school counsellors and youth workers with greater insight, knowledge and practical tools to use when supporting young people.

Officials worked with HEFCW to develop guidance aimed at Higher Education Institutions and directly funded further education institutions in Wales on tackling VAWDASV. The draft guidance was issued for consultation in October and has since closed. HEFCW is currently working through the consultation feedback and will meet with officials to discuss the final draft in January 2020. The aim is to publish the guidance by the end of March 2020.

National Advisers:

We continue to be involved in the delivery of the new curriculum, both with the Welsh Government and key community networks. Specifically, to understand the tensions and concerns of diverse groups. One of the National Advisors is involved with mediation for the education sector within West Midlands. We are providing expert advice to the sector in Wales to allow professionals the flexibility to identify potential tensions and approaches to engage a wider range of community groups, including women from diverse backgrounds.

8. FGM, Honour Based Abuse (HBA) and Forced Marriage (FM)

Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials

The All Wales Honour-Based Abuse Group met on 9 December 2019. The amendments proposed at the last meeting to the terms of reference were agreed. There was a detailed discussion about the purpose and function of the group and it was agreed that it should have strategic responsibility for activity taking place at a regional and local level. The existing delivery plan was updated in the light of this. The next meeting is scheduled for 5 March 2020.

National Advisers:

We attended the All Wales Honour-Based Abuse Group meeting on 9 December 2019 to share our expertise on how best to develop practice and pathways which are relevant to Welsh Authorities. Our findings highlight the need for improvements within multi-agency working in identifying multiple vulnerabilities. At the meeting, we provided information about the journey of the victim, specifically disclosures, how they are classified and how risks are managed.

9. Sustainable Funding Model

Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

This area of work is proving challenging, however the Chair of the Sustainable Funding Group has asked the members of the group to come together and present their proposals for a sustainable funding model for discussion and sign up of the group.

Three members of the Sustainable Funding Group came together to produce a paper outlining their proposals for discussion. This paper will be discussed in the January 2020 meeting.

National Advisers:

Regional boards and partnerships have been given the opportunity to present their experiences of effective joint-commissioning at future Sustainable Funding Group meetings. This invitation will encourage learning from different approaches as well as facilitate open feedback and challenge to each approach

10. Funding Allocations

Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

Revenue Funding

Welsh Government continues to provide revenue funding to Regional Partnerships and third sector organisations on an annual basis.

Officials are continuing to monitor delivery against stakeholders' delivery plans via quarterly claim cycles which include monitoring meetings.

Capital Funding

16 proposals totalling £1,431,605 were submitted for the 2019-2020 Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Capital grant. Two of these were not viable. Funding of £1,063,854 was allocated to the remaining 14 applications.

Budget for 2020-21

The VAWDASV indicative revenue budget for 2020-2021 is £5.25 million, which includes additional non-recurrent funding of £250,000.

The non-recurrent revenue funding will be allocated to various priority areas, such as:

- Additional training related to harmful cultural practice, including BME training for IDVAs and / or training for staff in refuges in Wales to support families with substance misuse and mental health issues;
- Reducing waiting lists for counselling following sexual violence;
- Increasing funding to the regions for delivering perpetrator services;
- Evaluation of Ask and Act; and
- Awareness-raising for children and young people's services.

The VAWDASV indicative capital budget for 2020-2021 is £2.169 million, which includes additional non recurrent funding of £1,200,000.

The non-recurrent capital funding will be allocated to VAWDASV Refuge/Move On Accommodation

This funding will support third sector providers to buy dispersed community-based units with flexibility to meet the needs of families which cannot be met by refuges (including disability access or those with older dependents), or to enable move on from refuges. Women are more likely to be affected by domestic abuse than men and more likely to flee their homes. As women are predominately the care-givers in society they are more likely to flee with children. In addition, there may also be a requirement for men fleeing domestic abuse, particularly as they are less likely to seek or accept refuge accommodation and may feel more secure in dispersed units.

11. Working with Perpetrators

Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

The Good Practice Guidance for non-specialist public services on working with adult perpetrators' was published in November.

A total of £120,000 has been made available by the Welsh Government as grants to the seven regions in order to support them in improving the provision of perpetrator services in their areas. The Welsh Government is also offering further support and expertise to aid in the delivery of these projects.

The Welsh Government is providing support and supervision for a number of Master's degree projects in Forensic Psychology at Cardiff Metropolitan University, which involve master's students providing an evaluation for perpetrator services as a part of their academic programme. Two of these projects are nearing completion, one is ongoing and three more are currently being initiated.

Practice sharing events were held in Cardiff and Llandudno Junction in November. These events were well-attended and included presentations from Barnardo's, the Trauma-Informed Prison Project and a sexual harassment researcher.

The VAWDASV work stream of the 'framework to support positive change for those at risk of offending in Wales' met in November. Three task and finish groups reporting to the work stream are underway, focusing on perpetrator service commissioning, service standards and service user engagement.

The Welsh Government is providing ongoing support and supervision for the Swansea University harassment research study, which the Welsh Government funded in collaboration with KESS II (Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarships), part of the European Social Fund.

12. National Survivor Engagement Framework

Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

Further to the last update the pilot panels have now come to an end. Three panels were held with a mixed group of survivors during September, October and

November. The panel facilitated survivors to review the objectives in the current National Strategy on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence and what has changed, and to share their knowledge and lived experience to influence the development of the next National Strategy on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.

A theory of change model has been developed and the pilot project is currently being evaluated by the Welsh Government's research programme. Evaluation meetings will take place throughout January and February 2020 with those who engaged and will be combined with other findings from the pilot work to establish whether it is the best approach and whether the survivor voices and experiences have made a difference. This will inform the final report which will influence a sustainable survivor engagement framework which we anticipate will include multiple ways of engaging with survivors across Wales. An initial finding report is expected by the end of March 2020 with a full evaluation due spring 2020.

National Advisers:

Survivor engagement remains key in shaping and influencing real change. We intend to work with BME survivors of historic sexual abuse as part of our newly formed Learning Panel. This meeting will provide meaningful engagement with diverse groups and help provide key actions for Welsh Government and strategic partners to address any inequalities which may currently exist.

13. Live Fear Free

Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

In the absence of applications to carry out an evaluability study of the helpline during our previous procurement exercise, we will be directly contacting relevant organisations to invite them to tender for this important work to inform future contracts for the delivery of the Live Fear Free helpline.

Since the last report, the helpline received a total of 8,595 contacts; 8,224 incoming calls, 46 contacts by email, 311 contacts via the webchat service and 14 texts, 7.5% calls were abandoned prior to speaking to a helpline Support Worker.

To fully demonstrate the helpline's productivity the volume of outgoing calls should also be considered. There were 1,850 outgoing calls made with the main reasons detailed are as follows: messages to groups - problems in refuge etc.; enquiries regarding refuge space or referral; calls to police; calls to agencies; Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (RASASC) /Stepping Stones Holding service; other.

14. Communications

Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

Since the last report we have successfully launched the third phase of our 'This is not love. This is control' campaign. This phase focuses on the particular experiences of young people. It highlights the challenges young people face as they develop

relationships and a sense of individual identity. We launched this phase in 2 stages, the first to coincide with Fresher's week and the typical experiences of 19-21 year olds when they access further education. Full campaign packs were sent to universities across Wales. More recently, in October, we worked with a group of young people in the Rhondda Valley to target younger people aged 16-19. A short video clip was created with BBC News, sharing experiences of young people. A brief animation has also been created and distributed to VAWDASV networks for parents and concerned others, encouraging them to pick up on the signs of control and to access information and support.

Welsh Government officials have engaged closely with the Expert Stakeholder Communications Group, key stakeholders whose specialism is within the sexual violence field as well as survivors, to develop messaging and imagery for the phases due to launch in February 2020. Phase 4 of the 'This is not love. This is control' will continue to explore and highlight the exploitation, grooming, manipulation and fear that coercive control involves when perpetrated within families, intimate relationships and of a sexual violence nature.

To broaden the reach of the communications campaigns, community communications activities are being delivered in four areas of Wales to raise awareness of VAWDASV. This period of activities (October to March) are focusing on "This is not Love. This is Control". Activities are being led by survivors of abuse in partnership with specialist stakeholders. Events this year, during October to December have included development of a survivor led podcast, presentations, a conference in south West Wales, development of resources for working with survivors of VAWDASV with additional needs and a community event engaging with young advocates.

Following White Ribbon Day and activities marking the 16 days of activism, 7 new White Ribbon ambassadors have been recruited within Welsh Government. During this period we have continued to share mini campaigns on Live Fear Free social media channels highlighting our achievements over the last year, sharing with our wider network what support is available to victims, regions, commissioners and professionals across Wales.

National Advisers:

This year's International Day for the elimination of violence against women and White Ribbon Day was marked by both an event organised in conjunction with the Women's Institute of Wales. Nazir Afzal spoke at the afternoon event at the Senedd and later participated in a touching vigil for the victims of such violence. This was as usual followed by 16 days of action and we were pleased to see the involvement of the Welsh Government at the highest level throughout the whole period. This period needs to grow in prominence in years ahead.

Nazir Afzal gave oral evidence on the Domestic Abuse Bill to the Bill Committee during a previous UK Government parliamentary session. We also engaged with the Bill sponsors to ensure the Bill reflects the wishes of the sector in Wales, particularly survivors. The relationship with the designated Domestic Abuse Commissioner was reinforced through regular communication which respects the devolved areas in Wales but explores opportunities for collaboration especially research.

15. Conclusion

National Advisers:

The National Advisers will continue to work with key stakeholders, the public sector, UK Government, the third sector and other relevant partners, to ensure there is a strong commitment to achieving the provisions outlined in the VAWDASV Act (Wales) 2015.

The National Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2016-2021 commits to establishing a Learning Panel to consider and disseminate learning and good practice. We have established this group and will focus on specific themes. Our first theme will explore harmful practices such as Honour Based Abuse and historical sexual abuse within Black and Minority Ethnic communities.

To improve collaboration across England & Wales we have met the recently appointed Domestic Abuse Commissioner. The role of Domestic Abuse Commissioner will lead on driving improvements on the response to domestic abuse in the UK, championing victims and making recommendations on what more should be done to better protect victims and bring more offenders to justice. We will work with the Commissioner to ensure cross-border working is achieved.

VAWDASV National Advisers

December 2019