

Welsh Government Integrated Impact Assessment

Consultation on the 2022-2026 National Strategy for Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence

Integrated Impact Assessment completed by: VAWDASV Team, Communities Division, Welsh Government

Cabinet Minister responsible: Minister for Social justice

Start date: November 2021

What action is the Welsh Government considering and why?

The first (five-year) National Strategy was published in November 2016 for the period 2016-2021. This Integrated Impact Assessment accompanies the Welsh Government's consultation on a revised draft of the VAWDASV National Strategy. The new National Strategy will cover 2021-2026.

Under Section 3 of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) (Wales) Act 2015 Welsh Ministers must prepare and publish a National Strategy which sets out objectives and actions to achieve the purposes of the Act: prevention, protection and support.

The Welsh Government established a Working Group of key stakeholders to review the effectiveness of the aims and objectives of the existing Strategy and determine what revisions were required in light of policy changes and other developments, as well as the changing landscape since the onset of the Covid-19 global pandemic.

The objectives of our Strategy are:

- Objective 1: Challenge the public attitude to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence across the Welsh population through awareness raising and space for public discussion with the aim to decrease its occurrence.
- Objective 2: Increase awareness in children, young people and adults of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships and empowering them to positive personal choices.
- Objective 3: Increased focus on holding those who commit abuse to account and supporting those who may carry out abusive or violent behaviour to change their behaviour and avoid offending.
- Objective 4: Make early intervention and prevention a priority
- Objective 5: Relevant professionals are trained to provide effective, timely and appropriate responses to victims and survivors
- Objective 6: Provide all victims with equal access to appropriately resourced, high quality, needs-led, strength-based, inter-sectional and responsive services across Wales

The intended effect of our Strategy are to permanently change the culture and response to VAWDASV, improve support for victims and their children, and to prevent offending and reoffending.

We are advocating a whole Wales approach, which can only be effective if all parties feel a sense of ownership of the strategy and commitment to the shared endeavour necessary to achieve our vision. Some parties can be directed; for some that commitment is by consent. In all cases, willing support of the strategy will drive a living document that will guide activity, priorities and direction on the ground and bring individual actions into alignment. This way gives us the greatest chance of achieving our ambition. We hope to achieve this ownership through the collaborative approach we have taken to developing the strategy and our commitment to continually listen, learn and improve as we implement it. This 'blueprint' model sets out a shared course which we will collectively pursue.

Prevention will lie at the core of the strategy. Whilst support for survivors and system change to improve outcomes for survivors remain part of the armoury, we wish to shift focus from symptom to cause through a public health approach. The principles of public health provide a useful framework for addressing the causes and consequences of violence. A public health approach to violence prevention seeks to improve the health and safety of individuals by addressing underlying risk factors that increase the likelihood that an individual will become a victim or carry out violence.

We will use evidence, such as that gathered in the [What Works to Prevent VAWDASV?](#) Report published by the Wales Violence Prevention Unit, to inform our approach. We will create a 'central repository of knowledge' to co-ordinate and disseminate what and known about VAWDASV and to shape future research.

During the public consultation, we will be working with partners to engage with survivors and perpetrators to understand what they think of the draft Strategy. We will also welcome further evidence in support of our proposals, or alternative suggestions, including evidence related to the potential impact of our proposals on any of the protected characteristics. We will update our impact assessments as necessary prior to publishing the final Strategy in 2022.

In developing the draft Strategy, we have considered the well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the sustainable development principles. We consider that the draft Strategy contributes to:

- A prosperous Wales through reducing the negative economic impact often associated with being a VAWDASV survivor;
- A healthier Wales through improving the physical and mental well-being of VAWDASV survivors and their families;
- A more equal Wales through ensuring VAWDASV survivors have support to encourage them to fulfil their potential;
- A Wales of cohesive communities through awareness raising around VAWDASV and encouraging everyone to acknowledge that VAWDASV is not acceptable (particular in the case of workplace and street harassment); and
- A globally responsible Wales through the development of a central repository to collate VAWDASV-related data and research, with the aim of learning from good practice.

Conclusion

How have people most likely to be affected by the proposal been involved in developing it?

This draft Integrated Impact Assessment is being published alongside the draft VAWDASV National Strategy for public consultation. We will welcome comments on the impact assessments as part of the consultation process and update them prior to publication of the refreshed VAWDASV National Strategy. This provides an opportunity for anyone to provide their views on our proposed priorities for preventing VAWDASV.

The groups most likely to be affected by the proposals in our Strategy are:

- Victims / survivors
- Perpetrators / alleged perpetrators
- Police / Police and Crime Commissioners / Judiciary / Prison and Probation services
- VAWDASV support services / representative groups (public, private and third sector)

The draft VAWDASV National Strategy 2021-2026 builds on the existing Strategy, published in 2016. The Welsh Government established a Working Group of key partner organisations to review progress against the existing Strategy, barriers to delivering its objectives and changes in the policy landscape that can impact on tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Our partners have been able to represent the needs and views of those who access their services and the service providers themselves. We will be working with partners to undertake a programme of engagement during the public consultation on the draft Strategy, which will seek to engage with those most likely to be affected by our proposals.

We have produced an Easy Read version of the draft Strategy to make it accessible to a wider audience. Responses to the public consultation will be used to revise the draft Strategy prior to it being finalised and published.

We would welcome suggestions of any groups representing those who may be impacted by our proposals – especially those with protected characteristics – for further engagement during the consultation period.

What are the most significant impacts, positive and negative?

The draft VAWDASV National Strategy acknowledges that Wales has achieved many things in tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence but accepts that much remains to be done.

We want to build on the good work that has taken place since the launch of the first VAWDASV National Strategy in 2016 and ensure a whole Wales approach, with ownership of the Strategy, and its delivery, by our partner organisations.

In the year ending March 2020, an estimated 2.3 million adults in the UK aged 16 to 74 experienced domestic abuse in the previous year according to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (1.6 million women and 757,000 men). These figures are a slight, but not significant, decrease on the previous year.

The total costs of domestic abuse in England and Wales in 2016/17 were estimated at £70 billion (updated to 2019/20 prices), with the largest part of this relating to the physical and emotional harm incurred by victims (£50 billion), in a Home Office report (*The Economic and Social costs of Domestic Abuse, Olivier et al, 2019*). Costs for each victim of domestic abuse is estimated to be approximately £36,000. This does not take account of lost output as a result of the harm they have suffered, where many may take time off work and be less productive on their return. This was estimated at £7.7 billion for domestic abuse victims. When VAWDASV escalates, victims are more likely to require support from public services, particularly health and support services. The cost to health services was estimated at £2.5 billion, with nearly 60 per cent of these costs relating to the emotional harms suffered.

There is also a body of literature which suggests children of victims / survivors of domestic abuse suffer from the life-long impact of the abuse, leading them to be more likely to suffer from or perpetrate abuse in the future.

Prevention will be at the core of the Strategy. Changing the culture so that VAWDASV and street and workplace harassment are seen as unacceptable, will have the result of people feeling safer, which is expected to have a positive impact on their mental well-being. Reducing or preventing incidences of VAWDASV will improve both the physical and mental well-being of victims and survivors and will also reduce the economic and social costs associated with VAWDASV.

We will work to ensure a better understanding of VAWDASV – with the public and with professionals. A greater understanding of the varied forms that VAWDASV can take will aid those involved in, and going through, the criminal justice system.

In light of the impacts identified, how will the proposal:

- **maximise contribution to our well-being objectives and the seven well-being goals; and/or,**
- **avoid, reduce or mitigate any negative impacts?**

The draft Strategy contributes to the following well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:

- A prosperous Wales through reducing the negative economic impact often associated with being a VAWDASV survivor;
- A healthier Wales through improving the physical and mental well-being of VAWDASV survivors and their families;
- A more equal Wales through ensuring VAWDASV survivors have support to encourage them to fulfil their potential;
- A Wales of cohesive communities through awareness raising around VAWDASV and encouraging everyone to acknowledge that VAWDASV is not acceptable (particular in the case of workplace and street harassment); and
- A globally responsible Wales through the development of a central repository to collate VAWDASV-related data and research, with the aim of learning from good practice.

Working with our partners – both devolved and non-devolved – via a blueprint approach will enable us to continually review our actions, monitor and evaluate their outcomes. We intend the Strategy to be a live document, which is able to be adapted to meet new challenges over its five year timescale.

We have not identified any negative impacts. Therefore, no mitigation is necessary. However, if any negative impacts arise – or are highlighted through responses to the public consultation on the draft Strategy – then practical changes will be considered.

How will the impact of the proposal be monitored and evaluated as it progresses and when it concludes?

Our principle aim is to reduce the rate of VAWDASV in Wales. As part of the work relating to the National Strategy, we will monitor progress via a set of National Indicators.

One of the proposed actions included in the draft Strategy is the creation of a ‘central repository of knowledge’ to co-ordinate and disseminate what and known about VAWDASV and to shape future research.

The Repository will seek to bring together and co-ordinate the research and evaluation being undertaken by all relevant parties to improve the comprehensiveness of the evidence base available to inform decision, including commissioning. It will co-ordinate the qualitative and quantitative data to inform an understanding of the prevalence, need and impact that is vital to ensure we best understand the complexities of VAWDASV and to present this in the most usable fashion, measure success and inform what we do.

Declaration

I am satisfied that the impact of the proposed action has been adequately assessed and recorded.

Name of Senior Responsible Officer: Paul Webb

Department: Communities Division, Welsh Government

Date: 30 November 2021