



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

POLICY AND STRATEGY

Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence: strategy 2022 to 2026

How we will work with other organisations to tackle violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

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Foreword

I want to make Wales the safest place to be a woman. We have achieved a lot in Wales by prioritising Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV), collaboration and innovation such as the Violence Against Women and Girls, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 from which the duty to produce this strategy flows. However, there is more to do to realise our ambition, so the approach we take must advance the successes we have seen and find new ways to energise and co-ordinate our activity.

Renewing our approach is necessary because, as the events of the last few years have shown, women are still murdered and abused by violent men. Home is still a place of fear for some, made so by those who they should be able to trust, but who instead abuse the power they hold. Women and girls still have their sexuality and identity controlled by a perverse sense of honour or a desire to exploit it.

Whilst we were shocked by the murder of Sarah Everard and Sabina Nessa at the hands of a stranger, many more women die each year at the hands of violent men who are known to them and many 1000s again suffer violence and control that blights their lives and opportunities. To change that we must tackle the perpetrators, we must support the survivors and we must change the culture of misogyny and harassment that feeds the abuse.

Women and men can be affected by VAWDASV but men form the vast bulk of perpetrators. It is clear that the biggest difference we can make is to tackle male violence. Women's safety will not come from changing women's behaviour it will come from changing the culture that fails to tackle toxic masculinity. In order to do this, we have extended the scope of our strategy to include street and workplace harassment, we will work with survivors and we will create space for a dialogue amongst men about what masculinity means in a world without VAWDASV.

This strategy sets the agenda for Welsh Government and the agencies it directs and funds. However, it is also a strategy for the whole of Wales, across

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government, including non-devolved bodies, the public and private sectors and, importantly, the whole of Welsh society. If we are to succeed in our ambitions we must make sure that our actions are aligned and our efforts complimentary. Therefore the blueprint structure we are creating and the National Partnership Board we are convening will put a framework around our collaboration and hold us to account to each other so that the impact is felt across the whole of society.

I would like to thank all the organisations and individuals who have been part of the process of developing this strategy. I am proud of the way we have worked together to create a strategy, which I believe is truly 'owned' by all parties. The next task is to make this strategy live across the whole of Welsh society.

Jane Hutt MS

Minister for Social Justice

Introduction

Wales has achieved many things in tackling violence against women and girls, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) and we have a right to be proud of our record. To be proud of the public authorities who have worked tirelessly to create an environment where VAWDASV is challenged. Proud of the delivery partners who offer support through services which are responsive and values driven and proud of the survivors who have offered their voice and perspective to help others by informing the way we, as devolved and non-devolved bodies, improve together.

However, whilst these achievements are recognised, much remains to be done. We must continue to build and sustain effective services which support survivors and hold perpetrators to account, however, VAWDASV does not happen in a vacuum it has roots in cultures and attitudes that run across our society. Perpetrators are emboldened and abuse is normalised by the environments in which they live and if we are to meet our ambitions we must, not only, address the effects of VAWDASV we must also 'turn of the tap'. There is more to be

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done to address the causes of VAWDASV, to create and support the societal change that will de-normalise and marginalise attitudes that give succour to abusers. This strategy, which is the second to be completed under the duty established by the ground breaking Violence against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015, sets out the approach to be taken by the Welsh Government elected in May 2021. It will cover the period to the end of this administration in 2026. It is marked by this commitment to tackle cause as well as effect.

Ambition lies at the heart of this strategy. Whilst there are laurels, we do not intend this strategy to rest on them. Whilst there are successful actions and interventions we want to continue, we will define new priorities and approaches to expand and accelerate our response and address VAWDASV as a whole system.

Our vision is to end violence against women and girls, domestic abuse and sexual violence in Wales. Some may respond that the ambition cannot be realised but VAWDASV is not inevitable. It is more than 'behaviours' that enable VAWDASV, it is societal norms, attitudes and beliefs that must be challenged as these are what perpetuate, excuse and legitimise VAWDASV. It is true that we may not end VAWDASV during the life of this strategy but by setting our sights this high we may well achieve our aim to make Wales the safest country in the Europe for everyone, to undermine the environment in which domestic abuse takes place and to de-normalise sexual harassment and violence, and the behaviours which enable it, in all parts of our society.

Ending VAWDASV is a complex challenge, involving many facets and issues affecting cause and effect for survivors and their families, perpetrators of abuse and those bodies with a duty to act whether that is legal or moral. This is intended to be an all-Wales strategy defining and leading action within all parts of the Welsh public sector. It is a strategy for public authorities and the third sector setting out priorities to create a collective sense of endeavour towards shared goals. It is also a strategy for business and wider society to make the changes to norms, behaviours and cultures, which will lie at the root of achieving our ambitions. This strategy seeks to end VAWDASV and therefore must take a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary approach including the voices of experts by experience at its heart.

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Our whole Wales approach 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.

Making this strategy a living document will also take leadership at all levels and in all parts of the system. Leadership from politicians and leaders in public service, leaders in the voluntary sector and other parts of civic society, leaders in business, the care sector and education and as individuals taking responsibility to lead within society, to challenge and educate.

This strategy has to be understood therefore as a Welsh Government strategy, as a strategy for service delivery partners, but most importantly as a whole Wales strategy built on ambition for what our nation can be.

What will we do to address VAWDASV?

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.

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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

Increase the 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.

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How will we do this?

Our blueprint for action

What is a blueprint?

A blueprint is an action plan that draws together different organisations to jointly deliver a whole system approach to address an issue.

The Blueprint will create a new shared governance structure which reflects the joint ownership across devolved and non-devolved bodies and the partnership between the public, private and specialist sectors. The blueprint approach secures the multi-agency co-operation and commitment we seek. Multi-agency includes both devolved and non-devolved public bodies, it includes third sector delivery agencies, it involves representative voices, such as the Older Persons Commissioner, and it involves survivors. This creates a broad partnership of parties who are tasked with, or commit themselves to, ending VAWDASV.

It also includes functions across the range of public policy, such as Education and Health, which have a role in contributing to and delivering VAWDASV policy. It involves policy makers, commissioners and delivery agencies in a partnership which will formalise the culture of collaborative working which already exists in Wales and optimise the impact of co-operation by providing a structure through which it can happen.

The approach will do this by putting in place a structure for the development of joint policy, co-ordinate investment and activity between partners and drive delivery through peer support and challenge. The blueprint approach seeks to bring together the resources controlled by partners within the blueprint and contribute to an end VAWDASV by facilitating shared understanding and common direction.

This is a strategy for the whole of Wales and Welsh Public Service. As such, it requires ownership by all the key partners involved in delivery of the Strategy. Whilst this is the statutory strategy developed by Welsh Ministers, it also

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represents an agreed approach, signed up to by all partners. In order to facilitate this ownership and to provide oversight of delivery we will require a governance structure which reflects this strategic partnership across devolved and non-devolved bodies and the partnership between the public, private and third sectors.

What does the Blueprint look like?

Blueprint governance and accountability

We will create a new, co-chaired Ministerial-led National Partnership Board. This Board will have oversight of delivery of the Strategy. The National Partnership Board will provide a forum in which to broker shared decisions and commitments. It does not usurp the autonomy of any of its members, but it does provide a space in which co-operation can develop common and complementary approaches. Partners will take mandates secured at the National Partnership Board back to their own organisations and offer accountability for their progress to partners through the Board.

The Partnership Board will sit at the top of a structure, which is served by a number of work-streams focusing on specific areas. It will also oversee the work of regional boards to ensure they deliver the all-Wales approach whilst still reflecting regional difference. Membership of the Board will reflect those bodies who have key duties in tackling VAWDASV. In developing the Board membership we will consider including representative voices to ensure that the interests of providers, survivors, and employers can inform discussion.

The Partnership Board will create a series of sub-groups or work-streams, which will report to the Partnership Board, to take forward and oversee work on key actions. These groups may change over time as progress is made and priorities develop. However, initially these groups will address:

1. street harassment and safety in public place
2. workplace harassment
3. tackling perpetration

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4. sustainable commissioning
5. older people and children and young people's needs
6. survivor voice.

In establishing this governance structure we will be cognisant of the lessons to be learned from other areas such as the Blueprints already created for Youth Justice and Female Offending and in other cross-cutting policy.

How will we deliver this?

Devolved and non-devolved partners will work together as part of the Blueprint to scope and develop policy and deliver innovative solutions to:

Street harassment

Tackling street harassment is an important part of this strategy. It reflects the programme of this government and is in itself a harm we want to reduce. However, it is also an important part of the 'theory of change' behind what we are trying to achieve with this strategy. That is by reducing the overall level, and increasing the unacceptability, of street harassment and the attitudes that lie behind it, we have impact at the whole society level that reduces the overall likelihood of violence against women and girls, domestic abuse and sexual violence. In tackling street harassment we will build our understanding of its causes, improve the environment for reporting, support victims and others to challenge and raise awareness and shift focus on to male attitudes away from expectations placed on female victims to condition behaviours.

But this is about more than harassment. It is also about misogynistic violence and sexual violence that can be experienced in public space. In order to make women feel and be safe, we must not only tackle the end of the spectrum that feeds the toxic environment, we must also do more to directly challenge and hold to account those who would perpetrate these acts. In doing this we recognise the need to integrate our approach with wider community safety and policing as well as its place in gender equality work.

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Workplace harassment

Workplace harassment has a significant impact on life chances for individuals, gender equality as well as cross-sectional equality issues such as race and LGBTQ+. By definition tackling workplace harassment will involve employers and trade unions in all sectors including the private sector. We will use the framework of the Workforce and Social Partnership Councils to shape the agenda, but we will also create subject specific mechanisms to support our whole society agenda. The approach will put survivors at the centre, challenge and support perpetrators to change and create zero tolerance environments. The workplan will involve building our evidence of what works and promoting excellent practise and develop the tools and levers we have for change including leadership, awareness raising and the use of persuasion and tools such as public procurement to ensure that HR policies are effective at reducing workplace harassment. Examples of horrific breach of public trust by some in positions of authority has highlighted the dangers posed not only to the individuals who are abused or exploited by those who they should be able to trust but also to wider confidence that public institutions are committed to ending VAWDASV.

Amongst its priorities, the workplace harassment group will be tasked with building a coherent and effective response to abuse of trust in public bodies. By working across the partnership we can offer consistent messages, support disclosure and challenge to cultures and structures that enable such breaches. This will be an important public demonstration of the commitment to end VAWDASV by the partnership by action at all levels and in all circumstances.

Tackling perpetration

Working with those who carry out abuse and Tackling Perpetration is fundamental to our public health approach to VAWDASV. We intend to build on the work already done in this area by increasing our collective focus on these individuals. This will both challenge and support those who carry out abuse to both deter and to facilitate enduring change in behaviour. We will take this

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approach within the criminal justice system through Policing, Prison and Probation. We will also take this approach within support services aimed at those who carry out abusive and violent behaviours as well as co-ordinating these services with specialist survivor support to ensure the whole system addresses causes whilst still supporting victims.

More than this we will also ensure that our public campaigning provide opportunities for those at risk of carrying out abuse and violence to choose education and support to divert them the risk they pose to others. This will involve an expansion of the service offer we collectively have. This approach is recognition that the approach to those carrying out abuse must be preventative if we are to break cycles and prevent re-offending. The group will work with commissioners to focus on and continue with psychologically informed, evidenced based interventions for supporting change amongst those who demonstrate these behaviours and ensure commissioning is safe, appropriate and leads to improved outcomes for not only the perpetrator but victims and survivors. The group will continue to work with stakeholders across specialist services and academia to develop a better understanding of what factors support and motivate behavioural change and utilise to inform provision.

Sustainable Commissioning

Much of the support that provides survivors with safety and security, recover from their experiences and rebuild their lives are provided by the Third Sector. Many of the commissioners of these services will also be sat around the partnership table. There is an opportunity for the working group to build on existing work to develop a system of Sustainable Commissioning providing stability and confidence for providers to deliver. Whilst commissioning should always drive quality and effectiveness it is important that our approach is driven by our Welsh principles of improvement through collaboration over competition. Providers and service users have confidence that effective and efficient services will continue to be available.

We will achieve this by ensuring that needs assessment, strategic planning and procurement are optimal for this purpose. Existing Welsh Government

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Commissioning Guidance has been developed through wide engagement, but there is a need to ensure that guidance is comprehensive and inclusive for all Commissioners and implementation is supported to ensure consistency. We will therefore review the guidance to ensure that it is comprehensive and build on the work of the existing National Advisors Commissioning Group to implement it. The group will also consider the appropriate accountability of local and regional planning mechanisms to the National Partnership Board. The group will be able to co-ordinate the funding provided by partners identifying duplication and gaps, opportunities to complement and support others objectives and tackle the negative impacts of funding structures which can sometimes be short-term and constrain innovation.

Older people, children and young people

Responses to the consultation on the draft strategy highlighted the importance of understanding the impact of VAWDASV across a whole life span. There is a danger that needs of Older people and children and young people have not been adequately recognised to date. As part of the comprehensive understanding of VAWDASV the working group will be able to consider our understanding of the needs of children, young and older people in order to ensure service responses are appropriate and that harms are prevented and addressed for these groups. Working alongside Safeguarding policy development, the group will ensure that there is clarity and cohesion in parallel approaches to Safeguarding and VAWDASV. The group will also be able to support the implementation of the RSE curriculum's promotion of healthy relationships, as well as work to address peer on peer abuse.

Survivor voice

Listening to the lived experience of survivors will be fundamental across the full range of the Blueprint framework but a key mechanism in achieving this will be the scrutiny panel established as the working group for the Survivor Voice. The group will be made up of those with lived experience across the range of VAWDASV allowing members of the group to contribute based on their own

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experience without being asked to represent the experience of others in environments dominated by 'professionals'. The group will be able to develop policy advice for the National Board on user involvement in decision making and engagement. However, their key role will be to work as a scrutiny panel to which the policy advice of other groups will be referred for consideration. So that advice referred up to the National Partnership Board will always have a survivor perspective integrated within it.

Cross cutting themes

In addition to the specific questions addressed to each group, the work groups will also address common themes, which will be considered by all the groups. Key themes will be:

Embedding a cultural shift in attitudes

This means addressing male violence and shifting away from victim blaming. We recognise that in order to do that we need to engage men in the conversation. Many men show supportive attitudes on VAWDASV, as exemplified by reactions to the White Ribbon campaign and #MeToo. We now need to go further and have conversations amongst men about addressing male violence to ensure that our solutions have traction amongst the community that we most want to affect.

Promoting and supporting healthy relationships

Promoting and supporting healthy relationships is already a key part of our approach and, recognising the long-term nature of our ambition, has already informed the new Curriculum for Wales. This strategy covers the period of implementation of the new Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Code and guidance. Successful implementation will support learners' rights to enjoy fulfilling, healthy and safe relationships throughout their lives. Our strategy is therefore reliant on working to make this implementation a success. More broadly we will continue to promote healthy relationships in the way we support

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families and vulnerable individuals. By promoting a consistent concept of what healthy relationships look like we will support our whole society approach and facilitate the discussion that is necessary.

Communications and engagement

Awareness raising has been an important part of the approach to date. This will remain a key tool to facilitate prevention and the Programme for Government commits to expanding our communications work. Awareness raising will therefore remain fundamental to our strategy. What we do want to do is develop this in a two-fold fashion. Firstly, we want to continue to develop our work with professionals to equip them to identify, challenge and refer cases of VAWDASV. Professionals in Education, Health, Housing and other areas can be the first line of defence against VAWDASV and securing safety for victims. We also want to bolster our wider public awareness interventions to reflect our public health approach. The purpose will be to facilitate behaviour change at the whole society level through public discussion which would de-normalise VAWDASV and the attitudes that support it.

Education and support for those at risk of carrying out abuse

More than this we will also ensure that our public campaigning provide opportunities for those at risk of carrying out abuse and violence to choose education and support to divert them the risk they pose to others. This will involve an expansion of the service offer we collectively have. This approach is recognition that the approach to those carrying out abuse must be preventative if we are to break cycles and prevent re-offending

Effective strategic planning

Effective commissioning is built on effective strategic planning including a sound understanding of needs and what works. As part of the implementation of our

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partnership Blueprint we will review our planning mechanisms to ensure that they reflect our whole system approach involving all the key commissioning partners. We will ensure that strategic plans are informed by stakeholder views and the user voice and develop co-production wherever this is possible. We will ensure Commissioners are better informed about VAWDASV, the evidence of needs and what interventions should be invested in i.e. what works. As part of this process we will also work to improve the connection between existing regional structures, such as Regional Partnership Boards, to ensure that VAWDASV is complemented by planning in other areas and we achieve the integration and collaboration that is required of us.

Developing a national framework of standards

Crucial to achieving our vision is the ability to call on effective specialist service delivery. Whilst we should be responsive to local need, it is also important to ensure consistency across Wales. In order to achieve this we will develop a national framework of standards which can articulate what a good service offer looks like and the minimum service levels that should be expected. This would seek to ensure that the Welsh model of collaborative delivery could be embedded in comprehensive service offer meeting the needs of all. Monitoring and driving the delivery of this framework would be a responsibility of the National Partnership Board and will rely on the commitment of all of the funding partners. The framework will support the sustainability of services and partners will have clear expectations for the commitment expected of them. For these reasons the framework will be collaboratively developed with all partners including funders, providers and users.

Review of the national indicators

In order to evaluate the impact of our strategy it is important that we use measures which reflect our whole system approach and reflect the contribution of the full range of our partners. For this reason we will review the National Indicators to ensure they reflect the full partnership and can measure the progress of our public health approach. In doing so we will recognise

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responsibility of non-devolved bodies to parallel approaches set out by the UK Government.

Addressing intersectionality

Understanding the equality impact of VAWDASV on an intersectional basis will be vital if we are to address the problem for everyone in Wales and recognise the cumulative impact intersecting disadvantage can have. Looking through the lens of intersectionality will also help us develop our comprehensive understanding of VAWDASV to include the needs of all those affected including children, older people, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, disabled people and LGBTQ+ communities. The impact of VAWDASV is not uniform, affecting different people in different ways, and so we will be focused in our response, to ensure our outcomes promote equality.

What approaches will we take?

The Principles behind our strategy

To achieve our vision to end violence against women and girls, domestic abuse and sexual violence we will need collective and focused action. The strategic approach we want to take builds on existing achievements and progress, we do not wish to lose that progress. However, this strategy will focus on what we need to prioritise for action to develop our approach further.

What defines our approach will be the following principles:

- whole society approach
- tackling male violence
- a comprehensive understanding of VAWDASV
- an equalities approach
- survivor's voice
- a public health approach
- trauma informed

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- collaborative working and co-production.

Whole society approach

VAWDASV, and the capacity to end it, sits within the whole of society. Whilst the personal experience of VAWDASV will be specific, the attitudes and behaviours that sit behind it have their roots in broader society and attitudes. Misogyny and toxic attitudes about masculinity, ageism, ableism, racism, victim blaming and cultural inequalities can contribute to an environment where negative behaviours are normalised and VAWDASV is not challenged. The impact of these attitudes are felt across the whole spectrum of VAWDASV from street or workplace harassment to so-called 'honour' based violence, domestic homicide, stalking or rape. Our strategy is to affect those societal attitudes all the way through the spectrum with 'public health' approaches and to provide leadership within the public debate that is already occurring.

Public, civic and community leaders have a role in driving cultural change and shaping debate. Our strategy is to harness all aspects of this leadership to ensure Wales becomes a zero tolerance nation for VAWDASV and the attitudes and behaviours that feed it are challenged.

Ending VAWDSASV and supporting those who need it is everyone's business. It is the responsibility of the individual, the family, the community the institutions the sectors, government, and the nation as a whole. A Wales with no VAWDASV sees everyone as equals, recognises and addresses the structural inequality that is the root cause, addresses stigma, and importantly challenges harmful behaviours.

Tackling male violence

Tackling male violence, and the misogyny and gender inequality that lie behind it, are how we will break the cycle and address the root causes of VAWDASV. Male violence, and the associated controlling behaviours, are an abuse of power that stem from gender inequality. This strategy recognises that we must challenge attitudes and change behaviours of those who behave abusively. It is

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not for women to modify their behaviour, it is for abusers to change theirs.

VAWDASV is committed primarily but not exclusively by men against women. It is important to recognise therefore that not all victims of VAWDASV are women and it can also affect men and those with a non-binary identity. All perpetrators, regardless of their gender, will be held to account for their actions, however this strategy recognises that male violence defines VAWDASV and properly addressing the power and control dynamic created by gender inequality is key.

This strategy will, therefore, specifically challenge male violence and the things that cause it. This must start with boys and young men if future generations are to be offered an opportunity to break this cycle and to develop healthy relationships based on respect and consent.

The experience of VAWDASV is gendered and this must be a strategy therefore that men also understand and feel motivated to take action. The onus is not on women to change the behaviour of men, it is for men to step up and address internalised misogyny and attitudes that lead to VAWDASV.

A comprehensive understanding of VAWDASV

VAWDASV encompasses violence against women and girls, domestic abuse and sexual violence. VAWDASV should not be understood narrowly, it includes concepts such as sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, so-called 'honour' based violence, elder abuse, stalking and coercive control as well as domestic abuse and sexual violence. Domestic abuse can however dominate the public and professional perception. This can, and has, led to responses starting and finishing with domestic abuse with the broader concepts missed. This might take the form of professionals not recognising issues for referral, treating abuse as a safeguarding issue rather than an offence or commissioners regarding domestic abuse provision as ticking all the boxes. During the life of this strategy we want to ensure that the understanding of VAWDASV is comprehensive, addressing sexual violence as successfully as we address domestic abuse for example.

This comprehensive understanding must also include the full spectrum of

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VAWDASV. The Welsh Government's Programme for Government contains the commitment to strengthen our strategy "to include violence against women in the street and workplace as well as the home." This means we are engaged in the public as well as the private space. By tackling VAWDASV wherever it occurs we will support our preventative and whole society approach.

An equalities approach

The experience of VAWDASV is intrinsically linked to factors that relate to equality characteristics. VAWDASV is about the abuse of power and as such perpetrators find space wherever inequalities disempower those who are victimised. Therefore when working we must consider other aspects of discrimination and how they intersect with disability, gender, race and LGBTQ+.

Data from Crime Survey for England and Wales shows that, in the year ending March 2020, disabled people were more likely to have been victims of domestic abuse in the last year than other people; this is true for both **men (7.5% compared with 3.2%) and women (14.7% compared with 6.0%)**. **Research published by SafeLives** in 2017 shows that disabled victims of domestic abuse also suffer more severe and frequent abuse over longer periods of time than non-disabled victims.

We know that domestic abuse services in Wales cater to the LGBTQ+ community, but under reporting and a lack of data recording hinders our ability to evidence fully the scale of the problem in Wales. Many recognised studies indicate up to 40% of the LGBTQ+ population will experience domestic abuse in some form during their lives, this rises to approx. 80% for the trans community.

To work towards addressing this we have an action in the LGBTQ+ Action Plan to 'Specifically target violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) in the LGBTQ+ community - to better understand the reasons for historically low reporting from the community, ensuring all literature, messaging and awareness raising initiatives are inclusive, and where necessary specific to the LGBTQ+ community. Data collection from VAWDASV service providers, along with professional and public services, including police data should capture LGBTQ+ reporting, referrals, incidences etc.'

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Cultural differences can affect issues like honour based abuse and violence. Sexuality and gender identity can shape the experience of VAWDASV. VAWDASV amongst older people can be hidden and therefore underestimated in our response. Race can be an important cross-sectional factor affecting outcomes for individuals, and of course gender underlies the major part of the challenge.

This strategy will work to align to our Strategic Equality Plan, the draft Race Equality Action Plan, the draft LGBTQ+ the Disability Rights action Plan as it is developed. This will ensure our response understands and reflects issues of equality, tailoring our response to ensure that inputs are specific and outcomes equalised.

These issues cross-cut with safeguarding. Whilst VAWDASV is not captured by statutory safeguarding duties and guidance, it is essential that our response is joined up with action to protect children and adults at risk of abuse.

Survivor's voice

In order to achieve these principles and to offer the response to VAWDASV we want, it is essential that we listen to the survivor voice. This strategy is driven by the ways of working set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. It is long-term in the impact we want to make. It focuses on prevention to reduce the problems for the future. It is integrated, bringing together the objectives of different bodies to a single purpose and it is collaborative based on joint working to tackle issues together. Most importantly it involves people at risk of perpetrating and survivors, not only in understanding the nature of the solutions that work but also in harnessing their own capacity to build sustainable solutions. This work will build on and incorporate the current survivor engagement strategy. Structurally, the survivor voice working group will provide a mechanism for the survivor voice to be expressed. However, it is important that that voice is heard throughout the delivery of the whole strategy.

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A Public Health Approach

The principles of public health provide a useful framework from which to understand our approach and the 'theory of change' through which we intend to end VAWDASV. A public health approach understands the causes and consequences of violence, abuse and control. The approach is based on whole populations and, as such, depends on co-ordinated effort acknowledging the causes of health and social problems through multi-agency responses.

A public health approach to preventing VAWDASV improves the safety of all by addressing the underlying risk factors that increase the likelihood that an individual will become a survivor or perpetrator. There are four steps to a successful public health approach which are integral to this strategy:

- Definition of the problem through the systematic collection of information about the magnitude, scope, characteristics and consequences of violence.
- Establishment of why violence occurs using research to determine the causes and correlates of violence, the factors that increase or decrease the risk for violence, and the factors that could be modified through interventions.
- Investigation of what works by designing, implementing and evaluating interventions.
- Implementation of effective and promising interventions in a wide range of settings, including monitoring the effects on risk factors and outcomes.

The World Health Organisation's Violence Prevention Alliance describes an 'ecological framework' which represents the interplay between individual, relationship, community and societal factors which interact to determine the risk of violence. In delivering this strategy we expect all decisions to be shaped by an understanding of this model and to seek to optimise the impact individual interventions have on the framework.

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. This does not mean that survivors can, or should expect any less from our

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approach. This is about expanding the impact of what we do to ensure that survivors as individuals are supported holistically and that there is a wider societal effect which reduces the chances that they would experience VAWDASV in the first place. In this context prevention is an umbrella term meaning that VAWDASV and the harm it causes is prevented across the spectrum including:

- primary prevention: preventing violence before it occurs
- secondary prevention: responding to violence to minimise harm, improve services and prevent further violence
- tertiary prevention: preventing recidivism and intergenerational cycles of abuse.

Our public health approaches will expose a broad segment of the population to prevention measures and reduce and prevent violence at a population-level. This means we will seek to identify individuals who may become survivors, or perpetrators, of VAWDASV earlier but also we will employ population wide interventions to 'de-normalise' violence, coercive control, and harassment. This strategy adopts a life course approach to VAWDASV, inclusive of children and adults of all ages, including older people recognising features of abuse throughout an individual's life stages.

Trauma informed

Experiences of domestic abuse and sexual violence are recognised as adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). There is a significant evidence base on the risks to those who experience violence against women, domestic abuse and /or sexual violence as they are growing up and how the experience can contribute to negative health and social outcomes for them in adulthood. This is separate to the experience of adults as victims or perpetrators of abuse but requires services and commissioners to understand the impact on the child and take action to prevent and mitigate that, and then provide support to children and adults that recognises the trauma they have experienced. To do this organisations need to ensure the people who work for them, as well as the people they support, can feel safe and trust is built. To do this we must ensure

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there is peer and professional support for those working in the field as well as survivors. The work we are doing on a national trauma framework will help with this.

We need to reduce ACEs being experienced by children and young people, mitigate their impacts and understand the impact ACEs have had on those who have experienced VAWDASV; including those who themselves have carried out abuse. This means that those who provide service responses need to understand the impact of ACEs and the need to deliver services in a trauma informed, needs led and strengths based way. Our understanding of ACEs and taking a trauma informed response should therefore inform service design, commissioning and evaluation to ensure successful outcomes.

Collaborative working and co-production

In line with the Well-being of Future Generations Act we have taken a collaborative approach to developing this strategy. In implementing this strategy we will continue to work collaboratively as well as involving all stakeholders. Service solutions will be co-produced wherever possible building on the strengths of survivors and perpetrators and involvement will be key to the design of our blueprint governance structure.

What are our immediate priorities?

Our delivery plan

The strategy set out above gives a clear sense of direction and the Blueprint is our action plan and structure for delivery. There are, however, key initial deliverables which we can commit to now:

- Establish the National Partnership Board and the governance structure which sits below it.
- Create a 'central repository of knowledge' as a staffed body to co-ordinate and disseminate what is known about VAWDASV and what works and to

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shape future research. This 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 decisions, 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. Welsh Government has committed to establishing a Race Disparity Unit, a Disability Disparity Unit and an Equalities Data Unit which will be focusing on the provision of evidence to support policy making and addressing data gaps. The central repository will work alongside and compliment these units.

- Review and refresh the role of Regional VAWDASV Boards to ensure that; accountability to the National Partnership Board is secured, senior engagement from partners is achieved, relationships with other regional structures are coherent and that the relationship with local planning and commissioning is explicit.
- Develop an awareness raising public campaign to tackle street harassment and develop a common approach for Police and other agencies to enforcing current legislation relevant to street harassment.
- Working with the Trade Unions and Workforce and Social Partnership Council to develop a common approach to reducing workplace harassment.
- Re-purpose the VAWDASV National Advisors Commissioning Group to form the sub-group of the National Partnership Board and establish a new collaboration and accountability framework which sets out the relationships between the National Board, Regional and Local structures as well as with Regional Partnership Boards to ensure planning and commissioning delivers against the national framework and provides sustainable, quality services.
- Develop a model for local and regional engagement to inform planning and commissioning.
- Establish a 'toolkit for engagement' to provide a uniform mechanism which can inform improvement across all parties that sign up to the strategy.
- Establish a standards framework to establish the fundamentals of a service offer for commissioned services, drive quality and sustainability of service provision which also includes intersectional issues and is aligned with the social model of disability.

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- Develop training and education materials suitable for public service providers to help promote healthy relationships through their service delivery.
- The Welsh Government will review the National Indicators to ensure that they reflect this strategy and can be used to measure our progress in delivering our aims and objectives.
- Continue to work with UK Government and other partners to find appropriate solutions to meet the needs of survivors of VAWDASV with no recourse to public funds due to immigration status in line with Welsh Government's Nation of Sanctuary Action Plan.

For further understanding of the scope and context of this strategy please see Annex A.

Annex A: scope and context

Scope of this strategy

We recognise that abuses of power are more often committed by male perpetrators as a cause and a consequence of societal inequalities between men and women and of the power that men often have as a result of biology and longstanding societal norms. We also recognise that victims and survivors are predominantly female and that women are disproportionately impacted by all forms of violence and abuse. It happens to women because they are women. This is not to say that men cannot be subject to abuses of power and that sometimes women can be perpetrators. Nor does it deny the fact that gender identity can take many forms and that it is the abuse that defines the scope of this strategy not the gender or otherwise of the perpetrator or survivor.

However, whilst the response to VAWDASV is, in this respect, universal, it is important to recognise that a significant proportion of the problem we are trying to solve is gendered and is defined by male violence and abuse. To this extent this strategy is based on that gendered understanding both in terms of the support offered for survivors and the challenge and support offered to

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perpetrators. This strategy encompasses male victims and female perpetrators but it also has a clear purpose in changing attitudes to male violence both for individuals and in wider society as a key part of achieving our ambition for zero VAWDASV.

The strengthening and advancement of equality and human rights has been a central focus of every Welsh Government since the beginning of devolution. This government is more determined than ever in its focus and determination to create a fairer more equal Wales. As a step on that journey, we recently published the **Strengthening and advancing equality and human rights in Wales research report**. In addition, the current Programme for Government includes a commitment to incorporate the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People (UNCPRD) into Welsh law. Previous administrations have also stated their commitment to the Istanbul Convention. This Strategy strengthens our commitment to the principles of the Convention by setting out further measures which are directly relevant to the provisions of the Convention.

Welsh Ministers are under a duty to comply with the European Convention on Human Rights in the exercise of all their functions, as are all other public authorities. The Welsh Ministers also support the principles contained in the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This includes goal 5 - Achieve Gender Equality and empower all women and girls which includes a target in relation to violence against women and girls.

The VAWDASV (Wales) Act 2015 also clarifies that children can be subject to VAWDASV. It is important that this is recognised in understanding the scope of this strategy.

Welsh Ministers are also under a duty to have regards to the requirements of Part I of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The VAWDASV Act, this Strategy and our wider policy programme supports victims and acknowledges violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence as issues for children and young people. The actions and principles contained in this Strategy have been identified and developed in the spirit of the principles of all these international instruments and where possible to further

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embed those principles in the measures that have been adopted in Wales to combat violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. It is also important to recognise children and young people are entitled to the right to be safe through the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and associated guidance and practice advice.

Tackling VAWDASV sits across devolved and non-devolved functions and there are legislative contexts within Wales as well as at the UK level. The Welsh Government and Welsh local authorities and health boards have statutory duties which apply to them which are derived from Welsh legislation (In particular the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual violence (Wales) Act 2015). Through commissioning arrangements other bodies such as third sector delivery partners and specialist services are also accountable for their contribution.

Key elements of the legislative context which impact on the objectives and actions identified in this Strategy are:

- the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 sets out seven wellbeing goals which are relevant to prevention of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence and support of survivors, including an equal Wales, a healthy Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities. Relevant Welsh public sector bodies have to take action to achieve these goals
- the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 provides a legal framework for improving the well-being of people (adults and children) who need care and support, carers who need support, and for transforming social services in Wales. This requires local population needs assessments to inform the development of local strategies. Part 7 of the Act and associated guidance supports a robust safeguarding framework to protect children and adults at risk of harm, neglect or abuse.
- the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 enshrines in legislation the role of the local authority in preventing and alleviating homelessness. This Act specifies that whether a person or a member of that person's household is at risk of abuse, including domestic abuse, is a factor in determining whether it is reasonable to continue to occupy accommodation.
- the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 sets out a new approach to joint

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contracts which will help survivors by enabling perpetrators to be targeted for eviction.

Policy linkages

Achieving our vision also requires the co-ordination of policy across a number of areas involved in the causes and effects of VAWDASV. Of particular relevance to tackling VAWDASV are:

Substance misuse policy. Harmful substance misuse can underlie the circumstances of those who perpetrate and those who experience VAWDASV. Ensuring that support for perpetrators and survivors addresses substance misuse using a whole systems approach, where relevant, is crucial to successful outcomes. This means not only co-ordination at a strategic level but also a joined-up service offer. Implementation of this strategy will be co-ordinated with our approach to harm reduction through our current Substance Misuse Delivery Plan 2019 to 22.

Poor housing and homelessness can contribute to the causes of VAWDASV. The provision of good quality temporary and permanent housing as well as protecting the housing rights of those who experience VAWDASV must all play an important part in our response. This means meeting the specific needs of all groups including for example older people who have experienced VAWDASV and wherever possible expect perpetrators to leave the home rather than survivors. Implementation of this strategy will be co-ordinated with the “Strategy for Preventing and Ending Homelessness”

There are circumstances where the vulnerability of a victim of VAWDASV would make the matter a safeguarding issue. It is important that the VAWDASV response and the safeguarding arrangements are complementary. The implementation of this strategy will be co-ordinated with “Working together to safeguard people”

Social Services have a key role in supporting many people who may be survivors or perpetrators of VAWDASV. Implementation of this strategy will be co-ordinated with “Fulfilled Lives Supportive Communities.”

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Part 7 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and associated statutory guidance supports a robust safeguarding framework to protect children and adults at risk of harm, neglect or abuse. The **Wales Safeguarding Procedures** and All Wales Practice Guides explain what this means for practice across agencies and across Wales. This includes harm related to domestic abuse, sexual violence, child sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, honour-based abuse, female genital mutilation and abuse of older people.

Education, through delivery of the new curriculum, will have a key part to play in communicating the concept of 'healthy relationships'.

The Race Equality Action Plan, the Gender Equality Plan, the LGBTQ+ Action Plan and the Action on Disability: the right to independent living framework and action plan provide a complementary approach which will address cross-sectional aspects of the discrimination survivors of VAWDASV face. We will use the implementation of these plans to support the delivery of this strategy by ensuring a line of accountability and oversight. This will ensure that our VAWDASV approach delivers for all and contributes to meeting the objectives set out in those plans.

The UK context

This Strategy also sits within a wider UK context. Many of the partners who are committing to implementing this strategy are accountable, as non-devolved bodies, to the UK Government; Police Forces, Police and Crime Commissioners, and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service fall into this category for example. Making this strategy work relies on understanding the UK context, recognising differences and developing, and using, mechanisms to avoid tensions and support a more consistent approach to tackling VAWDASV. The UK Government has published its' **Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy** and intends to publish a separate Domestic Abuse Strategy. We are committed to working with the UK Government to make sure the legislative, administrative and funding framework, as it affects VAWDASV, will support what we are trying to achieve in Wales and that Wales makes a positive contribution to tackling VAWDASV across all parts of the UK. This will include continuing to

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press UK Government to meet the needs of VAWDASV survivors with no recourse to public funds.

A range of UK legislation, in particular in relation to offences, affects the environment in which this strategy will be implemented in Wales. These include: The Modern Slavery Act 2015, The Crime and Security Act 2010, The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 and The Serious Crime Act 2015. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 is the most recent addition to this and its provisions contain important advances on matters such as addressing controlling and coercive behaviour, non-fatal strangulation and Family Court arrangements. We will work with partners to ensure the successful implementation of the Act. The Act also creates the office of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner. Whilst the Commissioner does not have a jurisdiction over devolved matters Welsh public authorities will work collaboratively with the Commissioner to further the shared agenda to drive improvement.

Additionally, the welfare and benefits system can impact strongly on the ability of survivors to maintain or develop financial independence and we will continue to press for arrangements which recognise this impact.

The Global context

VAWDASV is a global problem, the Welsh Government supports the principles of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence ('Istanbul Convention'), to which the UK is a signatory. This sets out minimum standards to prevent violence against women, protect victims and prosecute perpetrators. Through the delivery of this strategy we intend not only to better these minimum standards but to make our Welsh contribution to the global challenge to tackle VAWDASV.

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Annex B: United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defines violence against women as:

- all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological, or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.
- This encompasses, but is not limited to:
 - physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation
 - physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution
 - Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.

References in the strategy to “violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence” or “violence and abuse” should be read to capture all forms of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence. Whilst it is important that this strategy acknowledges and communicates the disproportionate experience of women and girls this does not negate violence and abuse directed towards men and boys or carried out by women. This strategy recognises that anyone (women, men, older people, children and young people) can experience and be affected by VAWDASV and this can happen in any relationship regardless of sex, age, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, whether someone is a disabled person, religion or belief, income, geography or lifestyle.

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