



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

REPORT

# Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence: national advisers annual report 2019 to 2020

Making Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual  
Violence Everybody's Business.

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# Introduction

There were 750,000 reports of domestic violence to police in the United Kingdom in the year ending March 2019. Although domestic abuse can happen anywhere and to anyone, women are disproportionately affected. In a three-year period, 2015 to 2018, 270 women were killed by their partners. This, in itself is the tip of the iceberg; the British Crime Survey indicates that there were more than 2 million victims and add to that the tens of thousands of sexual assaults and other types of violence against women and girls. It is fair to say this remains the epidemic of our times, where despite our progress there is much to do.

None of this is a surprise to those working with victims and survivors. We are honoured to be able to engage with the diversity of the sector and to report on the continuing progress being made by the Welsh Government in tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV).

We highlighted in our annual report last year that the plan this report is based on was very ambitious and we misjudged the resources available for such an ambitious programme. Nevertheless we are very pleased to demonstrate below that many of our objectives were met and those that were not met will be rolled over into our next plan. We sincerely believe that the objectives we set last year are helping to transform the VAWDASV landscape.

## Progress during the financial year 2019 to 2020

### Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP) review

The previous First Minister commissioned the Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP) in November 2018 to review both domestic abuse and sexual violence

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provision. The WCPP'S report on domestic abuse has been deferred until Autumn 2020 and there has not been a review for sexual violence. The draft WCPP report recognised significant progress in Wales since the 2015 Act and identified areas where more could be done. We engaged with WCPP both during the process of their review and subsequently discussed their findings with officials and stakeholders. A number of the recommendations were due to be discussed at the national conference we had planned to organise this spring but which had to be postponed because of the pandemic.

## **Needs of victims and survivors to be reflected within the local strategies**

This is an ongoing annual activity. Local strategies are being reviewed to identify best practice which is then shared appropriately. We have identified key themes within the strategies which will be included in the feedback we provide for each of the VAWDASV areas. In our view, it no longer needs to be reported on in our annual report as it has been mainstreamed in to the department's work plan. We do however recognise there is a need for improved data and evidence underpinned by service users identifying the gaps in provision.

## **Review work on identifying gaps in research data and data collection and identifying best practice in evaluation**

This is an ongoing annual activity. Significant progress has been made by Welsh Government officials. Examples include:

- Facilitating Master's students being matched with perpetrator services to evaluate as part of their research projects, and providing ongoing support and co-supervision for these projects
- Identifying and sharing pieces of National and International research with the

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Integrated Offender Management Cymru Board's multi-agency workstream for work with perpetrators of VAWDASV, which is also led by Welsh Government

- Applying learning from Bristol University's evaluation of the Drive Project and the regional deep dive
- Requiring Welsh Government funded projects related to work with perpetrators to include evaluation where applicable
- Promoting the use of Welsh Government Perpetrator Service Standards, which include information on how perpetrator services should be evaluated.

We have developed a SWOT analysis for the sexual violence sector which will provide information on specific challenges they face. The All Wales Women in Justice Board has also developed a survey to help understand the current service delivery landscape for women who are in, or at risk of entering, the criminal justice system in Wales. Alongside the perpetrator work led by Dr Cerys Miles, we must consolidate our knowledge base and bring data and evidence which underpins the different perspectives relating to current and existing gaps in the system.

## **Work with the Welsh Government to publish final national indicators**

The national indicators were consulted upon in workshops throughout 2019. We chaired some of these workshops which were set up to agree a final set of indicators to be developed and issued for consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders, both internal and external. The indicators were refined through this process. The anticipated publication of final national indicators this spring was delayed by the pandemic.

## **Play an active role in the Cross-Government Group and**

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## **will ensure that victims and survivors voices are heard at a national level**

We agreed with the Permanent Secretary that the best way of engaging across Government was to meet regularly with the four Director Generals on VAWDASV matters and this has been a significant new governance mechanism which has generated greater cross-Government understanding and working. These meetings preceded the formal stakeholders meetings so that cross-Governmental approaches can be fed directly into discussions with our stakeholders. Additionally, each Director General has ensured either their attendance or that of a senior member of their team at these stakeholder meetings which has been well received by the sector and enabled us to inform work plans across Government. Last December, we met formally with the Permanent Secretary herself on VAWDASV issues and this has been immensely productive.

## **Chair the Expert Academic Panel**

The Expert Academic Panel was intended to ensure that we properly understood international obligations under both the Istanbul Convention and CEDAW. Early on, the group itself decided that it did not need to meet formally and that its members were content to provide advice on an ad hoc basis. That is how we have proceeded. The governance framework has been amended accordingly.

Members of the now defunct group continue to engage with us as and when required, for example, on how the Istanbul Convention commitments are being met.

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## Chair the Expert Stakeholder Group

We set up the Expert Stakeholder Group in September 2019. The primary purpose we identified for the group was to utilise expert knowledge and advice to influence and support the further implementation of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015. Our anticipation was that the group would highlight what was working and what was not, and identify emerging priorities in Wales with respect to the VAWDASV landscape. Membership was mainly from external representatives as well as from the Welsh Government Director Generals and Directors. The role of the latter was to interact with external partners and stakeholders and identify links with the work carried out by their respective groups and departments; encourage and foster cross-government working on VAWDASV; keep stakeholders abreast of recent developments in government and help them to see the big picture.

The group met twice in September and January and we were beginning to establish relationships and common ground. The third meeting was scheduled for April but unfortunately had to be cancelled due to the pandemic.

## Chair the Sustainable Funding Group

Meetings of the Sustainable Funding Group have made a significant contribution to our understanding of the challenges faced by the VAWDASV sector. Initial meetings were useful in identifying issues, but less good at finding workable solutions. However, a work plan was decided upon and agreed at our most recent meeting.

As Chair for the Sustainable Funding Group we have undertaken specific actions to explore what established sources of funding provision are available to the third sector and what other funding sources may be accessed. The current landscape in Wales is vastly different from when the exercise was first

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undertaken by Welsh Women's Aid in 2017, and it is important that we have an up-to-date current picture for Wales, both from the public sector commissioners and also directly from VAWDASV specialist services across the whole of Wales.

## **Integrate lessons learnt into practice**

This work has so far been led by officials, and has included a survey to identify preferred methods of engagement in order to reach survivors who have not previously engaged, and piloting a panel.

## **Improve communication with the UK Home Office and Ministry of Justice**

We have twice provided oral evidence to scrutiny committee for the Domestic Abuse Bill and highlighted the work that has been taking place in Wales. This has been well received. We also took part in a round table event, chaired by the Home Secretary. We regularly meet with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner Designate and have agreed how we can work together in the future, with her recognising the areas of devolution which are outside her remit but also identifying areas where joint working will be productive.

One of the key areas of work which is strengthening the collaboration between Government departments is the Welsh Government's Single Unified Safeguarding Review. Yasmin Khan is a member of the steering group as well as the chair of the Learning and Training Sub Group. The reviews described a desire for a more centralised, proactive, structured approach to facilitate learning from reviews of fatal incidents which, although is focussed in Wales, provides a platform to share practice across England and Wales.

In order to achieve this, governance and oversight from an overarching body is necessary to take ownership of collating reviews, extracting and placing learning

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into themes, disseminating the learning and ensuring it is acted upon.

Our role as Independent National Adviser affords us opportunities to create a process whereby the recommendations from a Single Unified Safeguarding Review are implemented on an all-Wales basis, thematic learning from reviews of fatal incidents are embedded into policy and procedures and well-defined communication channels used to communicate learning with all partners, devolved and non- devolved.

## **Robust mapping and gap analysis of VAWDASV perpetrator services to effectively plan and commission services that meet risk and need**

There is a lack of a joined-up understanding of the risk and need profile of VAWDASV perpetrators across Wales, as well as the services in place to adequately meet their needs to address risk effectively. Mapping and gapping exercises are being supported pan-Wales and some regions have completed these. The exercises are intended to identify the current perpetrator programmes (and wider services) being run by statutory and non-statutory organisations (devolved and non-devolved), to establish what resources are in place regionally and what resources are needed, to inform future commissioning for VAWDASV perpetrator services. Learning from this has been shared with regions across Wales in order to inform their approach.

## **Develop a consistent approach to identifying and signposting individuals to specialist services**

Officials have led on the development of good practice guidance which includes a multi-agency work stream for VAWDASV perpetrator work under the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Cymru Board's 'framework to support

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positive change for those at risk of offending in Wales'. This work stream has overseen task and finish group projects, such as informing commissioners about perpetrator services and creating a guidance document for engaging with service users.

## **Support the work of the All Wales Honour-based Violence, Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation Leadership Group**

The Welsh Government co-chairs the FGM / Honour based Violence and Abuse / Forced Marriage Leadership Group and has worked to refine the terms of reference, attendance and delivery plan. We attended the meeting on 9 December.

It is important to ensure forced marriage, honour based abuse and FGM are classified correctly to ensure prevalence and referrals reflect the scale of abuse. Although the National Training framework provides an overview, it is imperative we continue to work in partnership with referral agencies and public bodies to identify the risks and earlier intervention.

## **Work with the children's commissioner to review ongoing policy development to ensure the needs of children as victims and witnesses are considered and appropriately addressed**

We met with the children's commissioner for Wales and have identified the need for the work of the Welsh Government to be sufficiently joined up resulting in the best outcomes for children.

Our regular meetings with the NSPCC inform our understanding of issues and

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ensure that the children are seen as victims in themselves.

## **Explore further the additional rights to which victims of abuse should be entitled**

The National Strategy on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence 2016 to 2021 contains a Welsh Government commitment to develop a sustainable national survivor engagement framework to ensure that the needs and experiences of survivors, including those most marginalised and who face multiple disadvantages in accessing support, are understood. We are encouraged to see the depth of work where voices and experiences are central to informing the continued development and delivery of legislation, policy, strategy and communications in order to ensure systems and services best meet survivors' needs.

The UK Government Domestic Abuse Bill introduces new rights for survivors, including a presumption that special measures should be provided in the courts for victims of domestic violence, and a prohibition on perpetrators cross-examining victims in person in the courts, although these two amendments were introduced outside the timeframe for this report.

## **“Partnership route way for victims”**

We attended the NHS Wales Safeguarding Network meeting in July 2019 to discuss how VAWDASV referral pathways within health, especially for victims of sexual abuse and historical abuse could be improved. The improvement of health outcomes for diverse groups was stressed and continues to be a priority going forward. The Learning Panel is yet to meet, this will explore the case management for BAME victims, terms of reference and expected learning outcomes. The initial meeting will engage survivor and specialist providers.

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We also took a lead role in 'Moving from Strategy to Action: A Workshop for VAWDASV' on 10 December. The intention of the workshop was to challenge current thoughts and ideas around Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence by putting the South Wales Police Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy into Action through aligning a Public Health Approach and adopting the Future Generations Act Sustainable Development Principle to develop a VAWDASV Framework.

## **Host a national VAWDASV event**

It was not possible to hold an event because of the Coronavirus pandemic and subsequent lockdown; however, this may be a possibility for next year. The VAWDASV Expert Panel has been consulted to identify key messages for a National Conference. We will also work with Welsh Women's Aid and sexual violence providers to ensure we capture emerging needs and challenges for the sector. Our aim is to ensure the voice of the survivor is included; to this effect we will seek their views and involvement at the early stages of planning.

## **National advisers' assessment of Welsh Government achievements 2019 to 20**

The National Strategy sets out what the Welsh Government and partners will do to contribute to the purpose of the VAWDASV Act. The strategy outlines six objectives which the Welsh Ministers aim to achieve by 2021.

Leading up to and during this the fifth anniversary year since the Act came into force, there have been achievements against each of the objectives in the strategy. Some examples of these are provided below, along with our assessment of the overall work in achieving each of the objectives.

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## **Objective 1: Increase awareness and challenge attitudes of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence across the Welsh population**

‘This is Sexual Abuse,’ the last phase of the ‘This is not love: this is control’ campaign; ‘was launched on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020 during sexual violence awareness week. Control is a key element of sexual abuse, violence and rape. This phase highlights how exploitation, grooming, manipulation and fear are involved in sexually abusive intimate relationships.

In our assessment, this campaign, like all previous Welsh Government VAWDASV campaigns, has been very effective in reaching the target audience. The sexual abuse phase of “This is not love: this is control” provided key messages to illustrate the distinctions between physical abuse, coercive control and sexual abuse. Their reach to new audiences is key to ensure those who need help recognise the different forms of abuse. Survivor engagement has been at the heart of the approaches developed by the Welsh Government and their stakeholders. This area of work continues to shine the light on harms for different groups. In addition, work with the specialist providers in the design of the campaigns has provided a valuable insight into the considerations for increased referrals arising from specific campaigns.

## **Objective 2: Increased awareness in children and young people of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships and that abuse behaviour is always wrong**

The “This is not love: this is control” communications campaign included a phase aimed at young people, their parents and carers. This year has also seen the development of the Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) part of the new curriculum following the Welsh Government’s announcement of its decision to

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roll it out.

We are confident that the work undertaken to protect children and young people is progressing to ensure services and pathways are aware of the risks and early intervention. We would also like to see better provision for asylum seeking and refugee children. A new report by Public Health Wales provides insight to the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences on these children and provides resources for education settings which are clear, concise and extremely informative; an area of good practice which should be rolled out where possible.

### **Objective 3: to increase focus on holding perpetrators to account and to provide opportunities to change their behaviour based around victim safety**

The Welsh Government has published guidance on working with perpetrators and continues to lead the IOM Cymru Board's multi-agency work stream for working with perpetrators of VAWDASV, which meets quarterly.

We are impressed with this area of work within Wales which continues to drive forward innovation and collaboration between established programmes and interventions which are based on evidence and highlight good practice.

### **Objective 4: make early intervention and prevention a priority**

The All Wales Honour-based abuse Leadership Group is co-chaired by Welsh Government, the Crown Prosecution Service and Bawso. The Group is compiling a training matrix for partners to identify where knowledge gaps exist.

We believe that early intervention and prevention of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence is key to ensuring where harms are

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presented they are acted upon. The Government's approach to ensure survivors are empowered to participate in the development of a framework which provides peer support through collaboration and experience demonstrates commitment for change and service improvement.

## **Objective 5: relevant professionals are trained to provide effective, timely and appropriate responses to victims and survivors**

The National Training Framework (NTF) up-skills public services to respond more effectively to those experiencing abuse. During the past year there has been significant work to meet the statutory requirements of the NTF for training to raise basic awareness of VAWDASV in the relevant authorities.

We are pleased with the drive and commitment to engage workforce in their development, the targets and completion rates continue to provide confidence in professionals responding to the needs of victims and survivors of abuse.

## **Objective 6: provide victims with equal access to appropriately resourced high quality needs led, strength based, gender responsive services across Wales**

The Welsh Government published statutory guidance on Commissioning VAWDASV services in May 2019 to promote high quality collaborative commissioning that delivers more consistent and effective services to prevent VAWDASV and protect and support victims of VAWDASV across Wales.

Although there has been some delay in the implementation of a sustainable funding approach, work within regions has adapted to the new commissioning framework. We are pleased with the support provided to each Regional Board to

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ensure they can transition to the new arrangements.

The National Indicator workshops have engaged a wide range of stakeholders and helped to ensure the proposed indicators provide data which are measurable. We have been involved in the workshops which were well attended and engaging.

## Challenges and responses

2019-20 was a year of consolidation where the new governance provisions for VAWDASV were commenced and the process of embedding was undertaken. It was also a period of great change within the sector as some stakeholders transformed and others prepared for new leadership and new challenges.

The Welsh Government had a new First Minister and Cabinet, but the commitment to this work remains undiminished and actually reinvigorated. The Welsh Government VAWDASV officials team continue to work tirelessly to support them, us and the sector. The new engagement with Director Generals across the Government has quickly established itself as a conduit for greater awareness and delivery.

Welsh Government communications team working with officials has developed and pushed out highly effective messaging with ground-breaking campaigns. The thing about awareness raising which quickly became evident is the need to prepare the sector so that it can respond to the substantial increase in reporting that results. Pleasing to see that the campaigns became more collaborative and that the sector was heavily involved in the quality and timing of them.

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# Conclusion

We focused this reporting year on embedding the new governance structure for VAWDASV and establishing the new arrangements for consultation with stakeholders. We also assisted in ensuring that the excellent communication initiatives from the Welsh Government made the impact they did. Much of the year has been involved supporting the change being led by officials and continuing to identify best practice wherever it exists.

It is imperative we continue to be steadfast in our approach to ensure survivors' voices and experiences become central to informing the continued development and delivery of legislation, policy and strategy in order to ensure systems and services best meet survivors' needs.

The UK Government's Domestic Abuse Bill 2019 to 20 requires engagement with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner Designate to ensure that opportunities for collaborative working are identified and pursued. We have a strong and productive relationship with her and have already recognised how jointly commissioned research might be undertaken.

The fact that some of our objectives have rolled over into 2020 to 21 is a recognition that there is much work to do but we are confident that the direction of travel is the correct one.

## **Yasmin Khan and Nazir Afzal OBE**

National advisers for violence against women, gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

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