



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

GUIDANCE

Ask and Act guidance: addendum

Addendum to outline changes to the delivery of the Ask and Act Programme.

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Introduction

The purpose of this addendum is to outline changes to the delivery of the Ask and Act Programme. This addendum should be considered with the current [Ask and Act guidance](#) and be considered for future implementation and delivery of the programme within your regions.

Ask and Act going forward

The Ask and Act Programme continues to be a key priority for the Welsh Government. Following the Senedd election in May 2021, the Welsh Government published its Programme for Government (Welsh Government, 2021) identifying its key commitments and priorities for the next 5 years. One of the key priorities is to continue the rollout of the Ask and Act programme, including the delivery of the programme to non-relevant authorities within Wales.

Implementation of Ask and Act

Ask and Act is now being delivered nationally within all the relevant authorities in Wales. The initial aim was to train more than 35,000 public service professionals over five years, via the regional training consortia. At the time of writing 12,000 individuals have been trained through the programme and as the roll-out of the project continues this will rise. The change to virtual learning within relevant authorities has meant that the COVID:19 pandemic this has had little effect upon the delivery of training.

Ask and Act training continues to be delivered via a regional dissemination model. As such, there are two types of training; Train the 'Trainers' (TtTs) and the Awareness Training which the TtT's then deliver to the workforce within the remit of its training consortia. The training for those accessing the Train the

Trainer program continues to be accredited by Agored Cymru.

The “Ask and Act” Train the Trainer course has been developed and will be delivered on behalf of the Welsh Government by a central provider. The same course (adjusted to local need) will be delivered in each region; to create regional training consortia. Thereafter the regional training consortia will roll out “Ask and Act” training in their local area/relevant authority in a structure and pattern that suits local need.

It is important to acknowledge that “Ask and Act” may not look the same in each relevant authority. Client groups and structures vary, as will prioritised audiences.

Each relevant authority should consider how best to offer “Ask and Act” within its varying functions and professional roles.

However, each variation should be based on the same foundation: Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence require a public service response. Professional confidence to identify these issues, to ask about them and to respond effectively is fundamental for good clinical and social care practice.

Aims and Objectives of the Ask and Act Evaluation

The Welsh Government tendered the opportunity for the independent **evaluation of the Ask and Act Programme** in 2020 and the successful contractor was from the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) a leading policy research centre within Sheffield Hallam University

The aims of the evaluation were to:

- explore the effectiveness of the implementation of the training to date
- explore the impact of the Ask and Act training on individuals and consequently to assess how successful it is in meeting the aims of Ask and Act
- explore how effectively the training is contributing to the National Strategy objectives

Outcomes of the Evaluation

There was overwhelming agreement about the importance and need for Ask and Act. Placing VAWDASV on the agenda within organisations was felt to be a priority and many saw Ask and Act as an effective way of achieving this. Ask and Act was felt to fit in well alongside current VAWDASV training and the consistency that the approach would bring across Wales was felt to be valuable.

Ask and Act is seen as an important and valuable programme which is having an impact across Wales for those participating, both individually and at an organisational or sector level. Continued support and investment in the rollout of Ask and Act across Wales is needed to ensure that all relevant professionals receive this training.

The Train the Trainer model was deemed the most appropriate method for delivering and disseminating the training.

In order to ensure the sustainability and positive impact of Ask and Act going forward a number of recommendations were made.

The 15 recommendations within the evaluation covered all aspects linked to delivery and rollout, course content, training materials and evaluation. This addendum has been issued to embed the recommendations into the suggested means of delivering Ask and Act.

Recommended changes

A number of the evaluation recommendations will be included as part of the new contract specification in delivering the Ask and Act over the next 3 years.

Changes will include:

- provision of mixed regional training sessions for both Group 2 and 3 of the Train the Trainer model with advanced notice of when sessions will be delivered
- the continuation of online Ask and Act training, face to face training can also take place and this would be a regional preference to how sessions would be delivered
- online refresher courses will be made available for all Train the Trainers after a 2 year period.
- quarterly monitoring meetings of regional progress of the delivery of the Ask and Act programme
- the Ask and Act Steering Group will continue as a support mechanism for all regions
- the development of a mechanism to allow trainers (non-specialist and third sector specialists) to review evaluation forms on a regular basis to support them with continuously developing awareness training
- a review of the content of the current Train the Trainer and awareness sessions
- a review of the microteach element of the Train the Trainer sessions
- a review of supplementary materials in collaboration with members of the Steering group
- ongoing monitoring and evaluation nationally to monitor longer-term outcomes will be managed within the steering group and quarterly monitoring meetings with the contract holder

Changes to the Train the Trainer requirements

As part of the previous contract a number of changes have been made to the Train the Trainer model to allow for further flexibility, this has included the following:

- prerequisites have been placed on the Group 2 Train the trainer course. Learners must have a minimum of 6 months training delivery experience and or accredited learning in education or training. **The revised Group 2 Train the trainer Unit** is available to view
- to maintain consistency within the units and groups, prerequisites have been added to the group 3 Train the trainer course. Learners must have a minimum of 6 months delivery experience and or accredited learning in education or training and should have attended the group 2 Train the Trainer course
- those who are expected to deliver the group 3 (“Ask and Act” champion) training must have also completed the group 2 (“Ask and Act”) Train the Trainer course

Ask and Act Delivery to Non-Relevant Authorities

Since the implementation of the programme in 2016, there has been several requests made to Welsh Government to expand the remit of the training to include the workforces outside of those named within the relevant authorities”. As a means of expanding Ask and Act to any professional in Wales, this has now been agreed as part of the Programme for Government priorities and commitment.

Regional training consortia should consider the following:

- only accredited “Ask and Act” trainers will be permitted to deliver training to

non-relevant authorities and should be offered only through the regional training plans

- accredited trainers should ensure that they have use of the most up to date training package, incorporate any amendments and ensure any refresher training is completed within the appropriate timescale
- providers with accredited “Ask and Act” trainers will only be able to advertise as able to take part in this work if they are supporting the relevant authorities as part of the national “Ask and Act” rollout
- work to support the regional training plan should continue to be prioritised and staff within relevant authorities are still deemed priority by the Welsh Government

Access for non-relevant authorities to “Ask and Act” training should be facilitated through the relevant regional team to ensure that access is non preferential or interested non relevant authorities should be provided with a list of available training to attend within their regions.

In order to determine this further reach of Ask and Act training delivery, these numbers should be included within the submission of the annual training plan submitted by regional consortia to monitor how many additional people are being reached through the delivery of “Ask and Act” training to non-relevant authorities.

Subsidy Grant Funding Allocation

The Ask and Act Subsidy Grant is designed to allow relevant authorities to pay for third sector involvement in co-delivery and therefore determines how much training can be delivered regionally. Since the programme was introduced, the grant is often under-utilised and regions raised issues with the amount they received and the way the grant was administered.

In order to improve the use of the Subsidy Grant, it has been agreed that an

additional and equal allocation will now be provided to all regions to continue the support of roll out. The revised grant terms and conditions have been amended to allow for more flexibility. Relevant Authorities and training leads are responsible for managing and allocating the grant based on needs within the region and through discussions with the regional training sub group. The Grant must be used for delivery of group 2 and 3 of the NTF only.

Welsh Government officials will continue to work closely with regional coordinators to ensure that key principles are still met through quarterly grant monitoring meetings. This will include:

- specialist sector staff are utilised wherever possible to ensure RA staff have the support, additional knowledge, and background whilst they increase their own knowledge
- Third Sector specialist agencies continue to be partners within training consortia and given every opportunity to co-deliver and continue to have access to the subsidy grant

Policy background

The 2nd reiteration of the **Welsh Government's National Strategy on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence was published in May 2022**. The duty to publish is outlined in the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act (2015). The National Strategy sets out 6 objectives based on the three purposes of the Act prevention, protection and support.

The objectives of the 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

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.

One of the key mechanisms for delivering the VAWDASV Act is the **VAWDASV National Training Framework (NTF)**. The NTF (Welsh Government, 2019) aims to ensure that consistent, proportionately disseminated training is available for the relevant authorities identified under the Act with the key principle of improving understanding of VAWDASV in the general workforce, and therefore improving the response to survivors. Overall, the NTF applies to all relevant authorities who are differentiated in relation to their professional role and contact with VAWDASV victims. Relevant authorities are defined as local authorities, local health boards, fire and rescue authorities and NHS Trusts, relevant authorities have a statutory duty to provide consistent training to all staff as stated within the **VAWDASV Act 2015**.

The NTF describes Ask and Act as “A process of targeted enquiry across the Welsh public service in relation to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence and a process of routine enquiry within maternal and midwifery services mental health and child maltreatment settings (page 3). Ask and Act is particularly relevant to Objective 1, 4 and 5 of the Act.

The ‘Ask and Act’ element of the National Training Framework relates to Groups 2 and 3 of the NTF. Training for those in Group 2 and Group 3 is aimed at professionals who are likely to come into direct and frequent contact with potential victims of domestic abuse, gender based violence, including violence against women and sexual violence and will aim to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to fulfil their duty of ‘asking’ and ‘acting’.

The Ask and Act training aims to improve the understanding of the general

workforce, including public sector staff. Group 2 training should support staff to identify the indicators of several forms of VAWDASV and take appropriate action. Whereas Group 3 training is for 'Ask and Act' champions who can support colleagues who have been trained to "Ask and Act". These "champions" will have enhanced knowledge to advise those trained to "Ask and Act" on whether they have taken all appropriate action, considered the needs of all family members and done all they can to improve the safety and wellbeing of the victim of abuse.

The aims of "Ask and Act" are:

- to increase identification of those experiencing violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence
- to offer referrals and interventions for those identified which provide specialist support based on the risk and need of the service user
- to begin to create a culture across the public service where the importance of addressing violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence is understood, where disclosure is accepted and facilitated and support is appropriate and consistent
- to improve the response to those who experience violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence with other complex needs such as substance misuse and mental health
- to pro-actively engage with those who are vulnerable and hidden, at the earliest opportunity, rather than only reactively engaging with those who are in crisis or at imminent risk of serious harm

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