



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

REPORT, DOCUMENT

# Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence: national advisers annual report 2021 to 2022

Summary of progress made on domestic abuse and sexual violence annual plans from April 2021 to March 2022.

**First published:** 29 July 2022

**Last updated:** 29 July 2022

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# Introduction

This report is our final report and covers the formidable work and progress achieved in Wales in partnership with the specialist providers, key stakeholders including Police, local authorities, and partner agencies. The voice and needs of the survivors must remain integral as we continue to ensure violence against women, domestic abuse, and sexual violence (VAWDASV) receives the commitment and priority we need in Wales to eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales shows that in 2019 to 2020 2.3 million people are known to have experienced domestic abuse, 1.6 million of the victims being women. A third of domestic abuse cases involve rape and/or sexual abuse. These figures, we can safely assume do not reflect the scale of violence against women and girls or those at risk of harm. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the dangerous impact of domestic abuse and exposed its complexities through the rise of on-line abuse in the public's conscience. We must continue to provide clear, ambitious objectives throughout this final report and ensure where possible violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence is eliminated. The Welsh Government rightly recognises the interlocking systems of discrimination and oppression. Gender inequalities drive violence against women and girls.

To successfully prevent VAWDASV there needs to be a greater emphasis on the wider determinants. The pandemic has highlighted the disparities and reinforced the need to address them. Recent events including the tragic murder of Sarah Everard and Sabina Nessa to name but a few, compel a renewed approach to tackling the most violent crimes against women and girls. However, we must also consider the trauma and experiences of those experiencing years of emotional and psychological abuse which has significant impact on the recovery for the victim and the children who are victims to domestic abuse. We cannot under-estimate the long-term impact of domestic and sexual abuse, the

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economic cost and also the cost to our society, now is not the time to take stock, it is time to drive forward with ambition, clarity and purpose to embed the cultural and societal change we need in Wales to ensure all those at risk can be protected, abuse is prevented and perpetrators are held to account in a system which provides the assurances and outcomes victims deserve.

This intersects with other forms of discrimination and oppression such as racism, homophobia, disability discrimination and immigration status. For example, women from black and minority ethnic communities reporting rape face additional barriers in accessing criminal justice systems due to systemic racism. Women with no recourse to public funds may be reluctant to report domestic abuse and violence due to fears about immigration status. In addition we must consider other aspects of discrimination and how they intersect with disability, gender, race and LGBTQ+.

The Welsh Government also rightly recognises that violence is strongly associated with the social determinants of health; that is the conditions and environments where people are born, grow, live, learn and work. These include early childhood development, quality of housing, educational attainment and employment and income. Disparities in the social determinants of health mean that some people are more vulnerable to being a victim and/or perpetrator of violence. To successfully prevent VAWDASV there needs to be a greater emphasis on the wider determinants.

The Pandemic has highlighted the disparities and reinforced the need to address them. Here in Wales, the VAWDASV specialist services alongside public services have worked in partnership to provide a resilient, coordinated response to victims at this critical time. As a result, there are many lessons to learn and good practice to be shared. There is also growing evidence of the nature and scale of VAWDASV in online spaces including social media. This includes threats of sexual violence, digital surveillance and cyber stalking, sexual harassment, and non-consensual sharing of intimate images.

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The complexities surrounding abuse must be considered, abusers have a way of infiltrating the most vulnerable within our society and therefore a bold response to hold perpetrators to account is needed. Through our report we will prioritise and consolidate Wales' needs to ensure the safety of those at risk as well as prevention. Our annual plans have highlighted the need for a more joined-up approach within Wales to eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls with the emphasis of responsibility to be placed upon holding offenders to account and to encourage bystanders to support victims who need help. Our final report reflects on the significant progress made in Wales, but quite rightly highlights the key areas which we must now focus on to ensure VAWDASV remains a National priority recognising that women and girls are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse. Only by understanding the gendered nature of this crime and recognising the specific needs of all victims and survivors can we truly thrive as a strong, healthy, and prosperous society.

Within our report we must also recognise the landscape across England and Wales has changed, no more so with the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 but a host of imminent legal measures and changes which will bear significance for Wales in the next 12 months.

## England and Wales context

Historically, the onus has too often been placed on the victim and survivor to act. Our work in Wales to prevent, protect and support must set a new course. In doing so, we must set clear objectives going forward targeted at those who perpetrate domestic abuse to prevent first-time, repeat, and serial offending.

Our final annual report calls for improved systems that will aim to prevent VAWDASV from happening in the first place, deliver better outcomes for victims and survivors, as well as one that is unrelenting in the pursuit of perpetrators. It is perpetrators who need to change their behaviour and it is society that must

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stand against unacceptable behaviour, in digital spaces, at home and in public places.

A better coordinated approach in Wales must include a more coherent dialogue with England and the introduction of new legislation, including incoming Victims Bill, raising legal age of marriage and the introduction of the criminalisation of virginity testing and hymenoplasty, all of which are in our sight, but which Wales must continue to be included within as a devolved Government. In addition, changes in legislation for England and Wales must be considered within our National VAWDASV priorities and landscape.

## Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The legislation was reintroduced in March 2020 as the **Domestic Abuse Bill 2019-21**, and **received royal assent on 29 April 2021**.

We welcomed the government's commitment to tackling domestic abuse.

The act:

- creates a statutory **definition of domestic abuse**
- establishes the office of **Domestic Abuse Commissioner**
- prohibits offenders from **cross-examining their victims in person** in the family courts
- creates a **domestic abuse protection notice (DAPN) and domestic abuse protection order (DAPO)**
- provides a statutory basis for the **Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare's law) guidance**
- creates a new domestic abuse offence in Northern Ireland to criminalise controlling or coercive behaviour
- creates a statutory presumption that victims of domestic abuse are eligible for **special measures in the criminal courts**

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- enables domestic abuse offenders to be subject to polygraph testing as a licence condition following release from custody
- places a **duty on local authorities to give support to victims** of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and safe accommodation
- requires local authorities to **grant new secure tenancies** to social tenants leaving existing secure tenancies for reasons connected with domestic abuse
- extends the **extra-territorial jurisdiction of the criminal courts** of England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to further violent and sexual offence

## Victims Bill consultation

The Victims Bill and accompanying measures will form a crucial pillar of the wide-ranging work across Government to ensure that the needs of victims are prioritised, through increased investment, targeted legislation, and improved ways of working across operational partners.

## Violence against women and girls (VAWG) strategy

The elements of this Strategy which relate to crime, policing and justice apply to both England and Wales. The elements relating to health, social care, and education are devolved to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and therefore apply to England only.

## Domestic abuse (DA) strategy

The UK Government's online safety laws were brought before parliament on 17 March. **The Online Safety Bill** marks a milestone in the fight for a new digital age which is safer for users and holds tech giants to account. It will protect

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children from harmful content such as pornography and limit people's exposure to illegal content, while protecting freedom of speech. We welcome the new bill and the accompanying toolkit from Department for Culture, Media and Sport, we must ensure this is communicated effectively for our Welsh landscape and its implementation.

The Domestic Abuse Commissioner is currently undertaking a comprehensive mapping and monitoring exercise, covering the provision of specialist domestic abuse services in England and Wales. Through various mapping projects she hopes to identify gaps in provision and help to address the current 'postcode lottery'. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) has recommended the Government would benefit from a similar undertaking for specialist sexual violence and abuse services. A dedicated commissioner for rape and serious sexual offences would be well placed to propel this forward. Much work is being done across UK Government, the police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to tackle the current situation and bring more perpetrators of rape to justice. But the fact remains that charging, prosecution and conviction levels are shamefully low. We owe it to victims and survivors, who deserved protection and who should now be supported and enabled to access justice. Although justice is currently not devolved, the Welsh Government is committed to working with partners to ensure victims and survivors have access to appropriate and timely outcomes and that perpetrators are held responsible for their actions.

In 2021, an inspection from HMICFRS concluded that, while great improvements have been made in the policing response to VAWG over the last decade, these were not enough. The report also found significant inconsistencies in the service that forces provide to women and girls across England and Wales. The inspectorate recommended a fundamental shift in prioritisation, aimed at bringing greater consistency and universally higher standards. With various England and Wales strategies, action plans and frameworks it is essential we do not lose sight of the need to coordinate our efforts here in Wales, its imperative we keep sight of the UK landscape, but we must ensure our efforts and actions

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for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence remains evidence and needs-led. To do this, we must continue to include the devolved authorities and be able to have our voice and influence heard at a UK level wherever possible.

One can quickly conclude that the UK government has woken up to the urgency of the need to address the problems within the UK VAWDASV agenda. In our view, it is the urgency within Wales that has driven the UK government to accelerate their pace. Wales passed the all-encompassing VAWDASV Act 7 years ago. Wales is into the second of its 5-year National Strategies. Wales has had its equivalent of the DA commissioner, us, for several years.

The new powers contained within the UK new and proposed legislation including the new criminal offences and new protective tools will directly impact on the citizens of this country. There is considerable overlap with current Welsh Government initiatives. We must, therefore, ensure that services are trained and equipped to deliver them. We must ensure that victims and survivors are fully engaged. In doing so, that all our citizens are aware of what they can access and what services must offer. The National Advisers will continue to convene the relevant stakeholders together to address the steps required whilst maintaining the voice of the victim and survivor is front and centre.

## Progress against priorities

In our 2021 to 2022 annual plan we outlined several key priority areas that we would wish to progress as National Advisers. With our terms as National Advisers ending on 31 July 2022, we have also considered progress against our 2022 to 2023 priorities to date. The following section updates on our progress against these priority areas and highlights our recommendations for the Welsh Government going forward.

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# Embedding a public health approach

## Our progress

Our Annual plans provide continuous reference for Wales to adopt a public health approach to raising awareness of VAWDASV amongst the public as a whole and ensuring that should people need services at a point in the future, they have knowledge about what they or those around them are experiencing and know where to go for help and support. Understanding the root cause to determine associated risks enables the implementation of effective interventions which should include monitoring the effects on risk factors. Education settings are crucial to identifying abuse in early years, interventions within a school setting to prevent VAWDASV as part of a whole school approach, including healthy relationships, education and bystander skills. Children and young people remain a key area priority and as such have been featured in all our plans.

## Recommendations

Education settings are crucial to identifying abuse in early years, interventions within a school setting to prevent VAWDASV as part of a whole school approach, including healthy relationships, education and bystander skills. Children and young people remain a key area priority and as such have been featured in all our plans, we recommend this to be an area of focus in all strategic plans and local actions.

# Exploring a blueprint approach for rolling out the next 5-year VAWDASV national strategy

## Our progress

The enduring social problem of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence remains a significant barrier to Wales achieving the vision set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 the aim to make Wales more resilient, healthier, more equal and a country of more cohesive communities and becoming a fair and prosperous society. We continue to work with Public bodies, key stakeholders, specialist providers and are committed to ensure there is a strong survivor perspective which influences prevention strategies with the collaborative, whole-system approach set out in the National Strategy and subsequent blueprint.

Although the delivery of the Strategy sits with the VAWDASV team, delivery of the blueprint approach involves both devolved and non-devolved partners. Work has already begun between Welsh Government, the police and Police and Crime Commissioner's offices and will be taken forward with survivors, specialist providers and other public bodies to design the blueprint and put in place some of the governance structures which enabled the plan delivering as soon as the strategy was published in May 2022. We provide independent advice to both England and Wales strategic groups so we can truly embed a coordinated approach across all key policy areas and within Government departments.

## Recommendations

With so many plans and strategies, it is essential we provide clear links and references going forward to measure the impact of the blueprint approach and the effectiveness of outcomes for victims of domestic abuse, sexual violence

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and all harms associated with violence against women and girls.

## **Continuing to engage with sexual violence specialist services to ensure victims and survivors have the support they need**

### **Our progress**

This is ongoing and follows our survey of sexual violence service providers. One new aspect has been the Welsh Women's Aid facilitated group which is considering actions that can assist sexually exploited women, which the National Advisers Chair.

### **Recommendations**

It may be timely to re-survey providers in the post COVID restrictions era to understand if fresh challenges need addressing. Additionally, the relatively poor criminal justice response latterly to rape and sexual offences has driven considerable effort to deliver improvements, but this needs to be kept under review so that any good practice identified can be quickly rolled out across the country.

## **Survivor engagement**

### **Our progress**

We continue to work with specialist sector organisations, victims and survivors across Wales to ensure intersectionality and equalities is considered in the

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services which are provided and help identify the gaps which still exist. The emphasis on the importance of representative voices remains a key priority, the newly appointed National VAWDASV Partnership Board have also included a Survivor Voice scrutiny and involvement Panel which will now provide further assurance to ensuring survivor voices can influence national policy.

## **Recommendations**

A review of survivor engagement is necessary particularly given the new national strategy commitments, as well as adequate support and resources set aside for meaningful, sustainable engagement. The impact of VAWDASV is not uniform, affecting different people in different ways, and so we will be focused on our response, to ensure our outcomes promote equality.

## **Sustainable funding and effective commissioning**

### **Our progress**

Currently, there is a wide range of contractual arrangements between commissioners and service providers in Wales, presenting a complex funding picture. Added complexity arises due to the funding crossing devolved and non-devolved boundaries in Wales, often with differing arrangements and requirements. In recognition of already existing integrated and collaborative approaches between relevant authorities and other service providers, the All-Wales VAWDASV Commissioning group should build upon these where they are working and develop formal links with reporting arrangements to regional partnership. We continue to work to ensure there is better alignment with local, regional and National commissioning frameworks.

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## Recommendations

The VAWDASV Commissioners group will help meet the objectives of the Statutory Guidance for the Commissioning of Services in Wales to help promote high quality collaborative commissioning that delivers more consistent and effective services to prevent VAWDASV and protect and support victims across Wales. Commissioning partnerships should be alert to changing landscapes, the Covid-19 pandemic crisis has highlighted the importance of effective collaboration for long-term prevention, protection and support for victims and survivors experiencing violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. Future objectives set within the development of a VAWDASV blueprint will need to be considered when developing a long-term approach to survivor engagement and commissioning of services.

## Ensuring the needs of victims and survivors are reflected within the local strategies

### Our progress

We are grateful for the regular provision of information from those delivering local strategies. There remains an inconsistent approach to the provision of services to victims and survivors with pockets of good practice. We are committed to highlighting good practice and identifying key priorities for improvement. Once such area is the clarity required for support to migrant women affected by VAWDASV and the inconsistent approach to funds within local authorities.

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## Recommendations

The identified good practice needs to be routinely and robustly shared and it's implementation monitored to reduce the chances of a postcode lottery.

## Improving communication with the UK Home Office and Ministry of Justice

### Our progress

Given the substantial legislative agenda in the UK Government and the formalisation of the DA commissioners office, this has involved constant engagement to ensure that the views of the Welsh Government and specialist services working in Wales are considered

## Recommendations

There is still outstanding proposed legislation which will require continuing engagement and also in respect of the implementation of that which has already been enacted. Our strong relationship with the DA commissioner and her office needs to be maintained within a wider UK context. Consideration of emerging legislation should form part of the blueprint governance structure to ensure all partners are able to input and shape what this looks like for Wales.

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# Supporting the work of the All-Wales Honour-Based Abuse Leadership Group and tackling virginity testing and hymenoplasty

## Our progress

The VAWDASV Act 2015 legislative and non-legislative programme highlights the importance of preventing, protecting and supporting all victims of abuse and harm, including those at-risk of honour-based abuse, violence and harm. In Wales, the work of the HBA Leadership Group provides a platform for statutory, non-statutory and specialist providers to create a greater understanding of the scale and prevalence through the combination of data, research and frontline expertise to help services improve and to influence policy across Wales.

In 2022, in line with the refresh of the National Strategy it is imperative we continue to address the barriers experienced by victims of honour-based abuse and violence and re-invigorate our joint efforts through the All Wales HBA Leadership Group

As members of the Department of Health and Social Care Expert Panel we considered a variety of evidence and ensured the Wales landscape was considered leading to the legislation to ban virginity testing and hymenoplasty. A ban on virginity testing is undermined without a ban on hymenoplasty as the two practices are inextricably linked. So long as the option of hymenoplasty is available, women will be placed under pressure to undergo the procedure. Only criminalisation will make it safe for them to refuse.

## Recommendations

Leadership across Wales requires a broader understanding of the key

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indicators; how agencies are recording incidents, where referrals are coming from and how agencies respond to them collectively. HBA training and comprehensive risk assessments lead to better Management of cases and reduce emergency/crisis interventions. With respect to the guidance for the criminalisation of hymenoplasty and virginity testing, Public Health Boards and NHS Wales will require guidance and the introduction of multi-agency guidelines and safeguarding pathways. We must continue to engage communities affected and increase our understanding of barriers to reporting.

## **Providing expert advice on the issue of those fleeing VAWDASV who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF)**

### **Our progress**

We have chaired the majority of the meetings of the Welsh Government's NRPF stakeholder group ensuring that the issue receives the highest level of attention. Our representation within the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's Office expert group- Supporting Migrant Survivors group is helping to shape support models for NRPF interventions. This includes identification of evidence within Wales of existing support for migrant survivors, challenges and benefits of diverse costing models, special domestic abuse visas for victims who are undocumented as well as a range of proposals currently under consultation.

### **Recommendations**

The stakeholder group is due to consider both research from the DA Commissioner's office and the Home Office's own evaluation of recently run pilots addressing some of the challenges that NRPF causes to those fleeing VAWDASV and feeding into the UK wide research to ensure Wales landscape and survivors are included in the development of new proposals.

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# Ensuring the needs of children as victims and witnesses are considered and appropriately addressed

## Our progress

Through engagement, particularly with specialist services expert in the field, we have continued to maintain that children are considered appropriately we will continue to promote healthy relationships in the way we support 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 and work with the Children's Commissioner in identifying thematic approaches to keeping children and young people safe.

## Recommendations

The new National strategy will assist in ensuring that the needs of children are always front and centre. We will monitor its effects and promotion of supporting healthy relationships is a key part of our approach and, recognising the long-term nature of our ambition, has already informed the new Curriculum for Wales. 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. 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. Increase our understanding of ACEs in Wales and taking a trauma informed response should therefore inform service design, commissioning, and evaluation to ensure successful outcomes.

## Supporting the government in further awareness-raising

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## **campaigns**

### **Our progress**

The Welsh Government's excellent communication campaigns continue to raise awareness, particularly the focus on male violence and misogyny that drives it; this will remain a key tool to facilitate prevention and the Programme for Government commits to expanding this communications work.

### **Recommendations**

The opportunities presented by the refreshed national strategy and blueprint approach must be taken and that will include carefully created campaigns to raise awareness, in addition 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.

### **Criminal justice**

The police force response is important to addressing violence against women and girls. The police forces continue to record incidents, provide enhanced training and ensure a robust response to hold perpetrators to account. In addition, they are working in partnership with local authorities and health to provide a joined up and coherent response.

Although policing in Wales is not devolved under the current settlement, we are pleased to report the strong relationship with our Welsh police forces which hosts regular engagement at both Ministerial and official level on a broad range

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of issues. More specifically, we fully supported the Wales Policing VAWDASV task force and look forward to seeing this joined up working continuing as part of the VAWDASV blueprint. Family courts are essential in protecting children and victims.

## **Raising public awareness**

Victims and survivors need to access a wide range of support and information of how and where to seek help. Providing information through the pandemic remained a key priority and as such the Welsh Government provided targeted and sustained campaigns including 'Call out only' campaign, calling on the public (males particularly) to call out challenge assumptions about harassment against women - often wrongly seen as 'harmless' with their peers, friends and colleagues. Aims to help people identify behaviours associated with street harassment and acknowledges that the experiences of women and girls are serious and prevalent and can cause fear, alarm and distress. We must remain steadfast in our approach to meet the needs of all victims and therefore communication through public awareness remains a key priority throughout our plans and must remain one of our objectives.

The Bystander research, funded by Public Health Wales, explored the experiences and behaviours of bystanders to domestic abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic, to help inform policy and bystander intervention training programmes considering the changes to daily lives brought about by COVID-19 restrictions. Further bystander work is being explored to ensure the societal change we need in Wales to eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls is developed and tested included the development of tool-kits and training programmes.

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## Survivor engagement

Survivor voices are essential to identifying gaps and improving services, meaningful engagement should remain a priority and must be heard at the highest level if we are to effectively tackle VAWDASV. We are pleased with the progress of the Survivor Engagement Framework which has strived to ensure input from a diverse group of survivors of all types of VAWDASV. The development of a National Survivor Engagement Framework will combine multiple ways in which survivors can influence the work of the Welsh Government. It will also provide a vehicle for survivors to advocate for themselves and to educate their peers, communities, and colleagues.

We have continually reported on the developing blueprint approach across Wales and the progress partners, VAWDASV specialist sector and the Survivor engagement framework will seek to embed survivor voices from the spectrum of VAWDASV experiences and those already engaged with pre-established groups. We aim to create a national, consistent and inclusive pathway that enables those with lived experiences to shape policy direction.

## Leadership

The Minister for Social Justice Jane Hutt and the Welsh Government have demonstrated formidable drive and commitment to addressing VAWDASV across Wales to the extent of establishing a VAWDASV National Partnership Board.

## Progress and future planning

For Wales to continue the efforts and actions to eliminate violence against

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women, domestic abuse and sexual violence we require strong infrastructure and governance which is fit for purpose. As such, the formation of the blueprint and the National Partnership Board and subsequent work for other groups to align efforts and commitment will help shape the societal change we need in Wales.

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 so many, made so by those who they should be able to trust, but who instead abuse the power they hold. It is evident that the new strategy and the blueprint approach will bring together the various agencies, devolved and non-devolved, who have a stake in tackling this issue to ensure we achieve our shared aims of preventing VAWDASV and protecting and supporting victims and survivors.

The VAWDASV Act is clear in its pursuit of improving public sector responses for victims, but in doing so we must recognise the formidable work of the specialist sector, membership of which are included in all of the strategic platforms required to make the necessary changes at a local and national level. This consistent approach will improve outcomes and ensure accountability in leadership remains a key priority going forward.

We support the creation of a 'central repository of knowledge' as a staffed body to co-ordinate and disseminate what is known about VAWDASV and what works and to 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 user-friendly information to measure success and inform what we do, including identifying gaps in existing provision.

In doing so, a review and refresh of the role of Regional VAWDASV Boards will

ensure 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.

The re-purposing of the VAWDASV National Advisors Commissioning Group and its plan to form the sub-group of the National Partnership Board will help to 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. Therefore, creating better coordination of action plans and highlighting gaps in existing provision and the scope to develop a model for local and regional engagement to inform planning and commissioning.

## **Single Unified Safeguarding Review**

The introduction of the Single Unified Safeguarding Review (SUSR) Ministerial board further cements the commitment and drive to improve outcomes and learning for domestic homicides in Wales. The overarching purpose of the sub-group which is chaired by us is to create a process whereby the recommendations from a Single Unified Safeguarding Review are implemented on a Pan -Wales basis, thematic learning from reviews are embedded into policy and procedures and well-defined communication channels used to communicate learning with all partners, devolved and non-devolved. We are pleased to report the significant progress achieved with the implementation stage now being designed.

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# Conclusion

Throughout our term we recognise the significant progress Wales has made. The legislation was the catalyst for extraordinary activity which has very much changed the landscape. The first National Strategy and its update are ambitious, particularly in its focus on prevention.

Progress has continued through a worldwide pandemic and can accelerate now that we begin to live with it. The successful emergency response supporting VAWDASV services is indicative of a Strategy that is resilient and adaptable.

A recognition that communication is essential has been demonstrated by highly regarded public information campaigns and remains key to making VAWDASV everybody's business.

Prevention requires some tough messaging to men given that male violence is at the centre of VAWDASV, but Wales does not shy away from it.

Those who have been victims and survivors have been placed at the heart of the Welsh Government response. Their journeys have informed every development and influenced system changes required for protecting those who are at risk. It is evident that there is more to do, but they will drive the change that we need to see to ensure our ambition and vision for creating the safest place for women and girls can be achieved.

As this is our last report, we would like to close by thanking the Welsh Ministers for the opportunity to serve in these roles. We also want to thank the Welsh Government VAWDASV team members past and present for their support in helping us to achieve our ambitions in these roles as well as the dedicated and passionate VAWDASV specialist services we have been privileged to work alongside. However, our final thanks must go to victims and survivors of VAWDASV – your voices have been central to our work and we thank you for

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sharing your experiences, your advice and your suggestions for improvements so that we can all work together to make Wales the safest place in Europe to be a woman.

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