

# **National Advisers for Violence against Women, Gender based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence**

## **Annual Plan 2020-21**

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

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**National Advisers for Violence against Women, Gender-based Violence,  
Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.**

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# **Violence against Women, Gender based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence National Advisers Annual Plan 2020 -21**

## **1. Introduction**

As National Advisers pursuant to our statutory responsibilities, under section 23 of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 (the VAWDASV Act), we are required to produce an Annual plan by 30 November in each financial year which will be published by the Welsh Ministers.

Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) affects every community and local area across Wales. During the period ending 31 March 2017, domestic abuse is estimated to have cost over £66 billion in England and Wales<sup>1</sup>. This includes direct costs to the economy, with an estimated £14 billion arising from lost output due to time off work and reduced productivity as a consequence of domestic abuse.

The VAWDASV Act demonstrates the Welsh Government's commitment to tackling and eradicating all forms of violence against women experiencing, and at risk of domestic and sexual abuse and all forms of gender-based violence. Recognising the overwhelmingly gendered nature of these harmful behaviours is not to ignore the impact on male victims however, but to highlight the fact that women and girls are disproportionately the victims.

## **2. Context and Challenges**

The Welsh Government is keen to build a society that has zero tolerance towards VAWDASV and empowers communities to challenge and confront it. The means ensuring services across Wales are accessible to all; supporting victims and survivors to seek help and ensuring professionals have the tools and knowledge to act; improving awareness of VAWDASV and the support available; and helping children and young people to understand inequality in relationships and that abusive behaviour is always wrong.

Our aim is to ensure VAWDASV remains a cross-cutting area of work which demands commitment across all the Welsh Government departments. We have therefore convened an Expert Stakeholder Group which includes Directors General. The Group is intended to identify specific gaps in meeting the objectives of the VAWDASV Act 2015. Although we are aware of the duties within the Act for Welsh Government, we are clear in our message - this is not a single authority responsibility.

The UK Government's Domestic Abuse Bill 2019 has been delayed by the dissolution of Parliament in the run up to the general election on 12th December. It is

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<sup>1</sup> *The Economic and Social Costs of Domestic Abuse*, Oliver, R. Alexander, B., Roe, S. and Wlasny, M, for the Home Office, January 2019

widely regarded as necessary to transform the response to domestic abuse, helping to prevent offending, protect victims and ensure they have the support they need. Nazir Afzal, one of the National Advisers has given oral evidence to both the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the draft Bill, and the Public Bill Committee which was scrutinising amendments to the Bill. A number of proposed amendments based on our experience in Wales were being considered by the Committee. It is, of course, anticipated that the Bill will be resurrected in the next Parliament, and will proceed at pace.

The Bill creates the position of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner whose role has some similarities with that of the National Advisers in Wales. Having met with her, she is clear that the powers of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner in the Domestic Abuse Bill are applicable only in relation to reserved matters and non-devolved bodies in Wales. We anticipate that we will form a close working relationship with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner.

The prevalence of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence remains largely hidden, but it is more complicated than that. For example, the Wales Children Receiving Care and Support Census, 2018 shows domestic violence to be a notable common factor for the category of children previously referred to in Wales as "children in need" - much more so than issues such as abuse, gangs, trafficking or anti-social behaviour. There were over 16,000 children in Wales receiving care and support included in the CRCS census as at 31 March 2018 where there were concerns about their health or development and where they were at risk of being "significantly impaired" without extra support.

The number of people killed as a result of domestic violence in the UK is at its highest level in five years. Last year 173 people were killed in domestic violence-related homicides, according to data obtained by the BBC from 43 police forces across the UK - an increase of 32 deaths in 2017.

There is therefore absolutely no room for complacency. It is important, however, to appreciate what has been put in place in Wales since the VAWDASV Act came into force.

As required by the VAWDASV Act, the Welsh Government published its five-year national strategy in 2016. This was followed last summer by publication of its national delivery framework and this year (2019) the Welsh Government has published national indicators for measuring progress against the Act.

The Welsh Government has published a number of guidance documents and national standards to help deliver commitments within its five-year strategy including:

- Whole Education Approach to Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence in Wales Good Practice Guide
- Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence – Guidance for Governors
- Information and guidance on domestic abuse and sexual violence: Safeguarding older people (60+) in Wales
- National Training Framework Statutory Guidance

- Ask and Act Training Guidance
- Local Strategies Statutory Guidance
- Commissioning Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Services Statutory Guidance
- National Standards for working with Perpetrators

The Welsh Government's National Training Framework raises the importance of developing confident, appropriate and positive responses to those suffering domestic abuse. It up-skills public services to react more effectively to those experiencing this trauma. Around 167,200<sup>2</sup> people in Wales have accessed training under the National Training Framework. More than 4300 have been trained to 'Ask and Act'. This is training for front-line professionals in health, Welsh Ambulance Services Trust, local authorities, and fire and rescue services, to enable them to recognise signs that someone may be a victim of VAWDASV and know how to signpost them to appropriate support. Welsh Ministers have asked that this also be made available for all Assembly Members and their support staff.

More than 151,000 workers in relevant authorities have undertaken e-learning awareness training and 96% of those who undertook training reported that they were confident to recognise the signs of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

The Welsh Government has developed a National Survivor Engagement Framework to ensure that those with lived experience inform policy development and delivery. The framework also supports survivors of abuse to educate their peers and raise awareness.

The Welsh Government recognises that working with perpetrators to give them the opportunity to change their behaviour is an essential element of prevention and rehabilitation. To this end it is taking forward work on perpetrator policy through a collaborative arrangement with Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service.

The UK Government Domestic Abuse Bill includes provision for Domestic Abuse Protection Notices (DAPNs) and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs). These will include the option for 'positive requirements' to be imposed, which will rely on the regional availability of specialist perpetrator services that are evidence-based, safe and effective. This must be effectively resourced, with checks in place to ensure that such services adhere to recognised service standards (i.e. those of the Correctional Services Accreditation and Advice Panel, Respect, and Welsh Government).

Any perpetrator services developed to deliver the positive requirements of the DAPO must include a suite of interventions that meet the various risk, need and responsivity requirements of perpetrators. There cannot be a 'one size fits all' approach.

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The Welsh Government published a Rapid Evidence Assessment on “what works with domestic abuse perpetrators” in December 2018 and subsequently launched Standards for Perpetrator Services on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.

The Welsh Government funds strategic coordination of services at a local level - training and preventative work, including healthy relationship education in schools and awareness raising campaigns. It also funds local authorities and third sector organisations to deliver services to support and protect victims of VAWDASV.

Through consultation, the Government produced the first set of National Indicators which will inform and influence national, regional and local strategic policy and service delivery decisions in accordance with the purpose of the Act and will be based upon the three pillars of prevention, protection and support. Statutory Guidance for the Commissioning of Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Services in Wales was laid in February 2019, under Section 15 of the VAWDASV Act. The indicators bring complex data together in a format that is meaningful for people working in the field, policy makers and the general public.

Welsh Government published the National Indicators at the end of June 2019. Identifying appropriate data sources that can be disaggregated to Wales and are consistently applied across Wales has, however, proven very difficult. This has been a key obstacle to developing national indicators sooner. The Welsh Government is committed to further develop the published National VAWDASV indicators, including identifying new data sources or developing its own relevant data sets across Wales.

Welsh Government officials have established a working group made up of key stakeholders to deliver this commitment. The finalised indicators will be published during the summer of 2020 and will be used to report progress against the current National VAWDASV Strategy 2016 – 2021. Furthermore, Welsh Government aims to utilise the National Indicators to inform any revised strategy from 2021 onwards.

We have taken every opportunity to publicly commend this excellent, and often ground -breaking work but there is still more to do.

### **3. Objectives**

In our last annual plan, we set out a very ambitious set of objectives which we felt were necessary to keep the momentum for change going. This year, our last as National Advisers, we propose to review the previous objectives which are progressing but not yet fulfilled. It would be remiss of us to simply develop a completely brand new set of objectives without reflecting on those from the last plan which are work in progress. We will be working with the National Expert Stakeholder group to identify how we can take this forward.

## **PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH**

Addressing violence is not a single agency issue, as it is the culmination of many different issues. It is only by pursuing a strategic, coordinated approach involving a range of agencies, including partnerships between public bodies and key stakeholders that violent crime can be addressed.

We are working with strategic partners who play a key role in reducing violence, bringing together partners through their strategic and operational role spanning enforcement, early intervention, prevention in relation to violent crime and provision of support to victims of violence. Although there are different ways to reduce violent behaviour, a public health approach is being increasingly discussed, using an evidence-led methodology to reduce and prevent violence in communities. We look forward to developing a framework in 2020 providing a legacy for embedding a cultural change to tackling the root cause.

**Objective 1: We will explore how a Public Health Approach can be developed and make recommendations to Welsh Government on implementing this approach**

## **NATIONAL APPROACH TO REFUGE & SARC SERVICES**

We welcomed the previous First Minister's announcement to take steps to transform refuge provision and sexual violence services in Wales. This included a review, led by the Wales Centre for Public Policy to examine some of the best international examples of services and support. In addition it is important to engage service users to develop a "made in Wales" model that provides a world-leading standard of support to victims of sexual violence.

**Objective 2: We will continue to work with Local Authorities, Local Health Boards and Third Sector and SARC Service providers to ensure the needs of victims and survivors are reflected within the Local Strategies**

## **REPORTING & MONITORING/EVALUATION**

There is very little impact monitoring of initiatives including training and, because of the way the services have developed, little cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness analysis. Local strategies and action plans will need to be analysed against feedback we and others generate from interaction with victims, survivors, young people and children. There are several sources of data in existence and where it doesn't exist, we need to consider how it can be obtained and utilised. Through this multi-level analysis, we can quickly identify what works, what is good practice and what needs to be improved

**Objective 3: We will continue to review work on identifying gaps in research data and data collection and identifying best practice in evaluation**

## **NATIONAL INDICATORS:**

The VAWDASV Act National Indicators have been published and are now in detailed stakeholder consultation with a view to being fully implemented in the summer of 2020. These indicators are using current existing datasets, but where needed, will require

consideration of new sources of information which cannot be obtained elsewhere. We will continue to work with Welsh Government officials and key stakeholders to further develop the National Indicators to ensure their relevance and help recommend improvements to existing data sets.

**Objective 4: We will work with the Government to implement the Final Agreed Set of Indicators**

**We will continue to serve in an advisory role to support the workshops and feed in the views of our key stakeholders and survivors to ensure the finalised indicators will be used to report against the National Strategy and help inform any revised strategy thereafter.**

**SUSTAINABLE FUNDING GROUP:**

One of the key remaining challenges is moving towards a sustainable funding model for VAWDASV provision. For this reason we have re-established the Sustainable Funding Group.

The aim of the Sustainable Funding Group is to produce a sustainable funding framework and to assist and advise on the implementation of the Statutory Guidance for the commissioning of VAWDASV services across Wales. This area of work is crucial to ensure services are funded based on need. The Sustainable Funding Group will seek to influence all relevant funding streams which support VAWDASV specialist service provision in Wales.

The Sustainable Funding group, chaired by Yasmin Khan, one of the National Advisers, has agreed a set of funding principles and has debated the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) definition of sustainable funding, recognising the need to encourage organisations to diversify their funding sources to avoid over reliance on a single source. The group has recognised the need to improve Wales's performance in successfully applying for funding from outside Wales.

**Objective 5: We will continue to Chair the Group and work with the Government and stakeholders to progress this work.**

**UK GOVERNMENT:**

The UK Government through its policy and legislative programme, for example, through measures proposed in the Domestic Abuse Bill, will continue to have implications for services within Wales. None of this should stifle the progress being made in Wales, but we will work to improve implementation of the legislation and policy so that it takes Wales-specific considerations into account. We will also share learning with the other devolved jurisdictions

**Objective 6: We will work with Welsh Government colleagues to improve communication with the UK Home Office and Ministry of Justice and collaborate with the new Domestic Abuse Commissioner to ensure UK policy and legislation take into account the Welsh context.**

## **SEXUAL VIOLENCE:**

We recognise there are specific challenges for the sexual violence sector across Wales. We aim to ensure that sexual violence services are no longer seen as a poor relation to the other strands of VAWDASV.

**Objective 7: We will continue to explore with sexual violence service providers how capacity can be built and collaboration enhanced.**

## **ILLEGAL CULTURAL HARMS:**

They may be crimes and behaviours hidden in plain sight but we recognise the lack of understanding of forced marriage, honour-based abuse and female genital mutilation (FGM) which still exists, we need to do more to protect vulnerable groups and ensure the abuse experienced by specific black and minority ethnic groups is understood and victims are supported with specialist provision.

**Objective 8 We will support the work of the All Wales Honour-based Abuse, Forced Marriage and FGM Leadership Group to formulate clear objectives**

## **CHILDREN:**

It is the view of many including the NSPCC and Barnardos that children as victims and witnesses of abuse are often neglected or seen as an after-thought. We recognise that child victims require a bespoke approach and that, historically, they have been let down by all agencies.

**Objective 9: We will work to review ongoing policy development to ensure the needs of children as victims and witnesses are considered and appropriately addressed and make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.**

## **ACCESS TO SERVICES**

We recognise the difficulty which faces many victims who often need to travel across Wales and from rural parts of the country to access specialist provision or access emergency services as a result of domestic and sexual abuse/violence. This can lead to making a choice of being either safe or sustaining the damaging effects of harm for victims and their children.

Research by the National Rural Crime Network<sup>3</sup> in seven police force areas in England found victims stay with their abusive partners on average three years before seeking help compared to 2.6 years in urban areas.

The research claims that while the number of domestic violence offences recorded per 1,000 people in rural areas is lower, this is because victims are less likely to report the crime to police. The report said it was more difficult to access support

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<sup>3</sup> *Living on the edge*, Report and Recommendations from the 2018 National Rural Crime Survey

services in the countryside, which often had poor public transport, and that abusers were drawn to rural areas so that they could keep their victim isolated.

**Objective 10: We will work with the Government and specialist providers to explore how accessibility to services for those living in rural areas can be improved**

## **AWARENESS RAISING**

Ultimately it is through education that we will prevent, protect and support. The Welsh Government's communication campaigns have been hugely successful and we hope to work with them on future campaigns.

The biggest impact will be through the curriculum. The new curriculum will not provide a comprehensive list of detailed content which would quickly become complicated and overcrowded. Instead it will allow professionals the flexibility to choose content which meets the needs of their learners in their specific context such as harmful cultural practices or other related matters.

Sex and Relationships Education will be renamed as Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). This will be made a statutory part of the new curriculum for all learners between the ages of 3 and 16 and updated guidance will be produced for the current curriculum.

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) has also consulted on guidance on tackling VAWDASV which will be published by April 2020.

**Objective 11: We will partake an active role in awareness raising and contribute to the Government's development of strategies to inform through the curriculum and guidance**

It is our belief, we have made some progress in Wales to understand how victims' experiences of domestic abuse and sexual violence can create the changes needed at a National, Regional and Local level, however we must also consider how we can bring a critical lens to understanding the multiple vulnerabilities individuals face.

**Nazir Afzal OBE and Yasmin Khan  
National Advisers  
15 November 2019**