



National Strategy on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence – 2016 - 2021

Information

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Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

Foreword by the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children

In 2010 we published our first Right to be Safe Strategy for tackling all forms of violence against women, which set out 4 key priorities: prevention and raising awareness, providing support for victims and children, improving the response of criminal justice agencies, and improving the response of health services and other agencies.

Six years on, this Strategy sets out our renewed commitment to tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence in Wales. We continue to work closely with the Home Office and criminal justice agencies in Wales to ensure all parties work together, across devolved and non-devolved responsibilities, to achieve our goals.

Public services need to work together to protect people experiencing violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence from suffering any further harm, and protect any children within the family.

The purpose of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 (“the Act”) is to improve prevention, protection and support for people affected by violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, and we are making good progress on implementation.

We have published the National Training Framework which will help professionals to deal with disclosures of abuse and ensure consistent training is available for specialist professionals. A key part of the Framework is the e-learning package, published in 2015. This e-learning will raise the awareness of a quarter of a million Welsh public service workers over the next 2 years.

We are developing “Ask and Act”. Our aim is that this will require professionals like Health visitors and Housing Officers to identify symptoms of abuse and to ask clients if they are being abused.

To enable us prevent violence and abuse in the future, we have to focus on children, to make sure they understand what constitutes a healthy relationship and how to recognise the symptoms of unhealthy relationships. So far we have published a Whole Education Approach Good Practice Guide, produced by Welsh Women’s Aid and awareness raising guidance for school governors, published in March 2016.

We have taken significant steps to reduce the incidence, and to protect victims, of Female Genital Mutilation, Forced Marriage and Honour Based Violence.

We know that working with, and listening to, survivors is a crucial element of all that we do and their experiences must shape our policy and services. Consequently, we are also working with victims and survivors to help us shape our ongoing approach.

For the future, we know that a big part of tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence will be to increase our focus on holding perpetrators to account and providing opportunities to change behaviours. We will work with relevant organisations on guidance for working with perpetrators.

Improving the quality of and access to services, as well as transforming societal attitudes and behaviours will not be easy. However, we hope the objectives identified in this Strategy

will continue to build on the foundations which have already been made and create a stronger, more resilient sector to support individuals and families who are either at risk, or are struggling with the consequences of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "Carl Sargeant". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'C'.

Carl Sargeant AM
Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children

1. INTRODUCTION

We want to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales to achieve a prosperous, resilient, cohesive, healthier and more equal nation and society. This can only be achieved if individuals and groups within our communities are able to live fear free from violence and abuse.

In 2010, the Right to be Safe Strategy set out an integrated, cross government programme of action to tackle all forms of violence against women and children.

Much progress has been made over the past six years to improve the way we work with those affected by violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. Multi agency working is commonplace and a strong, professionalised specialist third sector works alongside the public sector to deliver essential services across Wales.

There is still more to do however and the Act places a strategic, and statutory, focus on the issues, including the requirement to have a National Strategy.

This refreshed Strategy, which fulfils the requirement in section 3 of the Act, builds on our collective progress to date, and prioritises delivery in the areas of prevention, protection, and provision of support, in line with the purpose of the Act.

This Strategy is necessarily focused on matters that the Welsh Government has responsibility for; it does not, and cannot place obligations on others.

However, we acknowledge that action by Welsh Ministers alone cannot eliminate violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence and we recognise the invaluable contribution made by other organisations, including public services, devolved and non-devolved partners, independent specialist violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence and wider voluntary sector organisations who are integral to contributing to the pursuit of the purpose of the Act.

We will publish a delivery framework to complement this Strategy. This cross government framework, to be co-produced with key stakeholders, will set out how we will deliver the actions within the Strategy, which organisations we will work with and our expectations of Relevant Authorities in contributing to the delivery of our goals. We will target the resources we have available based on intelligence to ensure funding controlled by Welsh Government is effectively utilised to achieve the aims of the Act and the Strategy.

Alongside the publication of national indicators, the framework will also set out how we will measure whether we are achieving our goals.

This Strategy provides the leadership and direction which will promote consistency and best practice in the way in which violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence is prioritised and tackled across Wales, focusing on preventive, protective and supportive mechanisms with the aim of creating a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future, a Wales where everybody is able to live fear free in safe, equal, violence free relationships and communities.

Definitions – scope of this strategy

The Welsh Government recognises in Wales, consistent with the rest of the world, that violence against women is a violation of human rights and both a cause and consequence of inequality between women and men, and it happens to women because they are women and that women are disproportionately impacted by all forms of violence. Internationally, this has been specifically acknowledged by the Council of Europe, in the form of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, and the United Nations, in the form of their Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and most recently in the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

The UN Declaration defines violence against women as:

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

Whilst the Act covers all forms of gender based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence as defined in Section 24 of the Act, this Strategy and its delivery over the next 5 years is informed by the global and national evidence that women and girls are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse, rape and sexual violence, sexual exploitation (including through the sex industry), modern day slavery, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, child sexual abuse, stalking and sexual harassment.

References in the strategy to “violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence” or “violence and abuse” should be read to capture all forms of gender based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence has far reaching consequences for families, children, communities and society as a whole and requires a distinct and proportionate approach by public bodies in Wales.

Whilst it is important that this Strategy acknowledges and communicates the disproportionate experience of women and girls this does not negate violence and abuse directed towards men and boys or perpetrated by women. This Strategy recognises that anyone (women, men, children and young people) can experience and be affected by

domestic abuse, rape and sexual assault, sexual abuse, forced marriage, child sexual abuse, stalking and harassment, sexual harassment and exploitation. This can happen in any relationship regardless of sex, age, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, religion or belief, income, geography or lifestyle.

In recognition of this, section 2 of the Act contains provision to require persons exercising relevant functions under the Act to have regard, along with all other relevant matters, to the need to remove or minimise factors which increase the risk, or exacerbate the impact, of violence against women and girls.

Welsh Context

There are several pieces of Welsh legislation which impact on this area and objectives and actions identified in this Strategy take these into account.

These are:

- The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 sets out seven wellbeing goals which are relevant to prevention of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence and support of survivors, including an equal Wales, a healthy Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities, that public sector bodies have to take action to achieve.
- The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 provides a legal framework for improving the well-being of people (adults and children) who need care and support, carers who need support, and for transforming social services in Wales. This requires local population needs assessments to inform the development of local strategies (with the first due no later than 1 April 2017).
- The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 enshrines in legislation the role of the local authority in preventing and alleviating homelessness. This Act specifies that whether a person or a member of that person's household is at risk of abuse, including domestic abuse, is a factor in determining whether it is reasonable to continue to occupy accommodation.
- The Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 sets out a new approach to joint contracts which will help survivors by enabling perpetrators to be targeted for eviction.

The UK context

This Strategy sits within a wider UK and global context and we are committed to working with all of our partners, locally, nationally and internationally to achieve our goals.

Successfully tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence will not be achieved by action undertaken by the Welsh Ministers alone. The Welsh Ministers are committed to maintaining and developing close working relationships with other public sector partners, government and the voluntary sector in this endeavour. Partners include Local Government in the exercise of their various functions such as Social Services, Education and Housing, Local Health Boards, the Police, Police and Crime Commissioners, National Probation Services and National Offender Management Service, non- devolved organisations and the national network of independent specialist violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence providers.

The UK Government 'Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2016-2020' builds on a number of initiatives undertaken by the UK Government including the introduction of a new offence of controlling or coercive behaviour, the Modern Slavery Act, Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) under the Crime and Security Act 2010, the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), FGM Protection Orders under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 ("the 2003 Act") and an FGM mandatory reporting duty inserted into the 2003 Act by the Serious Crime Act 2015, and strengthening measures to manage people who commit sexual offences or those who pose a risk of sexual harm. The UK Government strategy sets out a number of actions which are applicable to Wales. These include actions relating to the National Statement of Expectations, commissioning resources and the introduction of the Home Office's Violence against Women and Girls Transformational Fund.

We will work with the Home Office to identify opportunities for Wales that will complement, enhance and support the delivery of this Strategy.

In 2014, the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) issued "*Domestic violence and abuse: how health services, social care and the organisations they work with can respond effectively*". This guidance, which applies across England and Wales, highlights that domestic abuse is a complex issue that needs sensitive handling by a range of health and social care professionals. The cost, in both human and economic terms, is so significant that even marginally effective interventions are cost effective.

In 2016, NICE issued further Domestic Abuse Quality Standards for healthcare providers. The Welsh Government has an agreement in place with NICE covering the Institute's guidelines, and there is an expectation that NHS bodies in Wales take full account of the recommendations made by the Institute when commissioning and delivering services to patients.

The NICE guidance is for everyone working in health and social care whose work brings them into contact with people who experience or perpetrate domestic violence and abuse. This includes: people working in criminal justice settings and detention centres, health and social care commissioners, including clinical commissioning groups and local authorities, and staff working for specialist domestic violence and abuse services. The latter could be working in local authorities, Local Health Boards and other organisations in the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. The guidance is also aimed at local strategic partnerships.

The Global context

Welsh Government supports the, principles of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence ('Istanbul Convention'), to which the UK is a signatory. This sets out minimum standards to prevent violence against women, protect victims and prosecute perpetrators including:

- a) protecting women against all forms of violence, and prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence;
- b) contributing to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and promote substantive equality between women and men, including by empowering women;

- c) designing a comprehensive framework, policies and measures for the protection of and assistance to all victims of violence against women and domestic violence;
- d) promoting international co-operation with a view to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence;
- e) providing support and assistance to organisations and law enforcement agencies to effectively co-operate in order to adopt an integrated approach to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence.

This Strategy further strengthens our commitment to the principles of the Convention by setting out further measures which are directly relevant to the provisions of the Convention. The purpose of the Act is to prevent, protect and support which links with the purposes of the Convention as noted above. By working to fulfil the purposes of the Act, this Strategy is directly linked to a number of the provisions of the Convention, including:

- a) by teaching and educating our children and young people about healthy relationships (articles 12 and 14);
- b) by training professionals and other public sector workers via the National Training Framework (articles 12 and 15);
- c) by raising public awareness (articles 12 and 13);
- d) by supporting and encouraging collaborative approaches between relevant authorities and other providers and by publishing commissioning guidance (article 7);
- e) by developing work on perpetrator programmes (articles 12 and 16)
- f) by supporting relevant authorities to provide immediate, short and long term support services to all women victims and their children based on local and regional needs (articles 22 and 25);
- g) by continuing to provide specialist support including refuge and floating support provision and support for victims of sexual violence (article 23 - 25); and
- h) by recognising children and young people as victims and witnesses and the provision of support (article 26).

Internationally, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has provided a platform for addressing discrimination against women. Work to fulfil the purposes of the Act links to the Convention purposes in that:

- a) raising awareness of healthy relationships, and public awareness campaigns to combat violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence will help to reduce discrimination against women;
- b) the National Training Framework will offer proportionate training to strengthen the response provided across Wales to those experiencing these issues, including women. It will formalise the requirements of those offering specialist and universal services and raise awareness and understanding of such violence and abuse.

Welsh Ministers are under a duty to comply with the European Convention on Human Rights¹ in the exercise of all their functions, as are all other public authorities. The Welsh Ministers also support the principles contained in the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This includes goal 5 - Achieve Gender Equality and empower all women and girls which includes a target in relation to violence against women and girls.

¹ See section 81(1) of the Government of Wales Act 2006.

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

Survivors

“...survivors’ experiences of protection and support services and systems in Wales are key to understanding their effectiveness and to informing practice and service improvements. Survivors’ voices and experiences are also essential to informing prevention work and to ensuring that legislative and policy developments, the National Strategy and National Adviser’s Plan place survivors’ needs and experiences at the centre.”²

This strategy has been informed by survivor voices and experiences. In early 2016, survivors of violence and abuse were invited to attend focus groups in every region of Wales to help inform national and local priorities. 66 survivors attended focus group across Wales, who had experienced a range of violence and abuse including domestic abuse, sexual violence, forced marriage, FGM, ‘honour-based violence’, sexual exploitation, trafficking and child sexual abuse. A report on the findings and their recommendations was provided to the Welsh Government.³

Survivors identified 10 key recommendations for Welsh Government:

1. Dedicated specialist services for children and young people impacted by or experiencing domestic abuse, sexual violence, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, sexual exploitation or harassment.
2. Specialist domestic abuse and sexual violence services for survivors that are accessible and resourced to meet the needs of specific survivor groups.
3. Improvements in family court and CAF/CASS Cymru practice and safe child contact for children in cases of domestic abuse and sexual violence.
4. Accessible ‘refuge service’ support in every area, accompanied by safe, affordable, longer-term housing options to provide flexibility and choice.
5. Women’s groups and peer support that reduce isolation and maximise independent spaces to increase confidence, esteem, and empowerment.
6. Equal access to safety, support, protection and justice, and finances to live independently, irrespective of survivors’ immigration status.

² Are you listening and am I being heard? Survivor Consultation: A report of the recommendations of survivors of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence in Wales, March 2016: Cymorth i Ferched Cymru / Welsh Women’s Aid

³ *Are you listening and am I being heard? Survivor Consultation: A report of the recommendations of survivors of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence in Wales, March 2016: Cymorth i Ferched Cymru / Welsh Women’s Aid*

7. Counselling and therapeutic services for survivors that is available when needed and is age-appropriate, and helps build resilience and recovery.

8. Greater focus on stopping perpetrators' behaviour and, where coercive control is a feature, on getting perpetrators to leave and end abusive relationships.

9. Improved training for all services on all aspects of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, informed by survivors' experiences.

10. Preventing violence against women from happening in the first place, through compulsory prevention education in all schools and increasing awareness of the issues and help available in local communities.

These recommendations and the principles outlined by survivors are key to underpinning this Strategy and will further inform the development of the Delivery Framework. Where matters fall outside responsibilities of Welsh Government we will identify and work with relevant partners to address the recommendations made.

Survivors' voices and experiences must be central to informing the continued development and delivery of legislation, policy and strategy in order to ensure systems and services best meet survivors' needs. It is important that we listen to survivors, and act upon what they tell us. We need to ensure that appropriate mechanisms are developed so that we can engage with all survivors, including individuals with complex, multi-faceted needs, men, LGBT+ individuals and children and young people. Survivor engagement should be a continuous process that informs the development of policies and services.

To ensure that survivor's voices and experiences continue to inform this work in Wales we will develop a sustainable national survivor engagement framework to ensure that the needs and experiences of the most marginalised survivors, those who face multiple disadvantage in accessing help and support are understood. A national engagement framework will ensure the voices of survivors are heard in the delivery and review of this Strategy and accompanying delivery framework and the design and delivery of services from their earliest stages.

2. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO TACKLE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, DOMESTIC ABUSE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence is a fundamental violation of human rights, a cause and consequence of inequality and has far reaching consequences for families, children and society as a whole.

Since the enactment of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, public bodies are required to think more about the long-term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and to adopt a strategic approach to improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.

To achieve our ambition for everyone to live fear free in safe, equal and violence free communities, we need to tackle the enduring social problems of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. Despite a significant amount of work in Wales by the Welsh Government and partners over the last few years, we know that many are still at risk of, or experiencing violence or abuse.

These issues affect both men and women but as the evidence below indicates, women and girls are disproportionately impacted by much of the violence and abuse covered by the Act:

- 1.4 million women and 700,000 men aged 16-59 report experiencing incidents of domestic abuse in England and Wales.
- Extrapolating this data to Wales, shows that 11% women and 5% men a year experience 'any domestic abuse', while rates of 'any sexual assault' in the last year were also higher for women (3.2%) than men (0.7%).⁴
- In 2011 an estimated 137,000 girls and women were living with consequences of FGM in the UK⁵ and in 2011 an estimated 60,000 girls under the age of 15 were living in the UK who were born to mothers from FGM practising countries and therefore could be at risk of FGM⁶. It is estimated there are 140 victims of FGM a year in Wales.
- 80% of cases dealt with by the UK Government's Forced Marriage Unit involved female victims; 20% involved male victims. It is estimated there are up to 100 victims of forced marriage a year in Wales⁷.
- In a study of young people in intimate relationships 25 per cent of the girls and 18 per cent of the boys experienced physical abuse; 75 per cent of the girls and 14 per cent of the boys experienced emotional abuse, and 33 per cent of the girls and 16 per cent of the boys experienced sexual abuse⁸. It found that not only do girls experience more abuse, but they also experience more severe abuse more frequently, and suffer more negative impacts on their welfare, compared with boys.
- 1 in 5 women aged 16-59 has experienced some form of sexual violence since the age of 16.
- 2/3 all women and 85% of younger women experience sexual harassment⁹.

⁴ Robinson et al., The Welsh Government's proposed 'Ending Violence Against Women and Domestic Abuse (Wales) Bill': Recommendations from the Task and Finish Group 2012.

⁵ Macfarlane, A. J. & Dorkenoo, E. (2014). Female Genital Mutilation in England and Wales: Updated statistical estimates of the numbers of affected women living in England and Wales and girls at risk - Interim report on provisional estimates. London: City University London.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office – Forced Marriage Units Statistics 2015.

⁸ NSPCC - Radford, L. et al (2011) Child abuse and neglect in the UK today. <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/pre-2013/child-abuse-and-neglect-in-the-uk-today/>

⁹ www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/news/234/85-of-young-women-in-uk-have-been-sexually-harassed-in-public

- Nearly half a million adults are sexually assaulted each year and around 85,000 women and 12,000 men are raped each year in England and Wales – 11 rapes of adults every hour¹⁰
- There are an estimated minimum of 11 million adult survivors of contact and non-contact sexual abuse in the UK¹¹
- 1 in 20 children have been sexually abused. Over 90% of sexually abused children were abused by someone they knew¹²

We also know violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence:

- Will often include lots of different types of abusive and controlling behaviour which are used together, intentionally to control another person or to have power over them;
- is rarely a one-off incident and usually gets worse over time. Where a person does experience a one-off incident the abuser is likely to do it again, and to others;
- can happen to people of all ages, sexualities, cultural, social and ethnic backgrounds; and
- perpetrators are most likely to be known to the person experiencing the violence and abuse.

Domestic abuse and sexual violence stand together as gender related crimes as, statistically; the vast majority of victims are women and girls. However, in determining the best way to tackle these issues it is crucial to acknowledge not only the links between the different elements of the VAWDASV sector but also the differences that exist. Domestic abuse and sexual violence are not always mutually exclusive and may both be prevalent within a pattern of abuse which consists of multiple characteristics. There are certainly links which should be acknowledged. For example, there is an established link between domestic abuse and childhood sexual abuse as power and control forms the basis of both abuses despite their contrasting generational and gender perspectives. However, sexual violence has the potential to occur within a greater range of settings and situations.

The experience of violence and abuse is often made up of a combination of different types of abuse. It isn't always physical. It often includes emotional, psychological and financial abuse and other controlling and manipulative behaviours. In many cases physical and sexual violence, or threats of physical and sexual violence, are used alongside these other types of abuse to control someone. It is a confusing, frightening and isolating experience.

Equalities and Human Rights implications

Equality is enshrined within how the Welsh Government's functions are exercised. Section 77 of the Government of Wales Acts 1998 and 2006 ensures the Welsh Ministers make appropriate arrangements for ensuring their functions are exercised with due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people. The public sector equality duty in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ensures that equality considerations are built into everything we do; to ensure they are not seen as an "add-on" after key decisions have already been taken.

¹⁰ RCEW statistics

¹¹ Radford NSPCC

¹² Child Abuse and Neglect in the UK today. Radford.L et al (2011)

The Welsh Government Strategic Equality Plan 2016-2021 contains a specific objective which relates to this area of work:

Objective 4

- Reduce the incidence of all forms of harassment and abuse, including (but not limited to) violence against women, hate crime, bullying, child abuse, domestic abuse, and abuse of older people.

The objectives within this Strategy will help us to fulfil that objective.

The following groups may require specialised approaches to service provision which should be considered by Local Authorities and Local Health Boards when undertaking needs assessments and in the development of Local Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategies as required by the Act

Women

There is a legal requirement on all public authorities, when carrying out all their functions, to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment on the grounds of sex, and to promote equality of opportunity between women and men. This requires public authorities to recognise that the two groups are not starting from an equal footing and identical treatment will not always be appropriate. Single sex services are lawful where there is a clear need, such as a women's refuge, and equality duties do not mean that single sex services should be cut, or that services should necessarily be provided on the same scale for both men and women, in recognition that women make up the majority of victims of domestic violence and rape and sexual abuse.

Consultations with women survivors over the last decade repeatedly and consistently provide commissioners and policy-makers with the same information: women want timely, holistic responses to their multiple needs, and for many women it is important that this is delivered in safe separate provision from men, by specialist support workers with significant understanding/knowledge and skills in violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, that are accessible for the most vulnerable groups, that are available out of hours, and that provide a safe space to engage with other women to reduce isolation, regain confidence, provide respite and recovery, share experiences and knowledge, and gain mutual support.

Children and young people

Since 2004 the Welsh Government has used the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as the basis of its work for children and young people.

Violence against women and children, including domestic abuse or sexual violence in any family unit is a child protection issue and should be dealt with using the relevant safeguarding procedures.

Many women who are the victims of violence have children, and ensuring the well-being of those children must be a priority for both public services and the victim.

We need to ensure that partner agencies are able to identify children who are at risk so that appropriate action can be taken. We already know that women and children are at increased risk when they are involved in family court proceedings. It will be crucial to ensure that age appropriate services and support are available for children who need them.

We are committed to tackling and preventing child sexual abuse in our society and supporting adult survivors of non-recent abuse. We will closely monitor the progress of the inquiry and once the findings are made, look at what actions the Welsh Government can take to address any recommendation.

Older People

There is sometimes confusion between the experience of domestic abuse in later life and “elder abuse” (a term which encompasses all forms of violence, abuse and neglect experienced by older people). Such confusion can result in victims of abuse falling between the systems which are designed to offer them protection and as a consequence do not receive appropriate support to help them to stop the abuse or make them safe.

Statistics bear this out. The latest Home Office data¹³ indicates that 28 older people (aged 60+) in England and Wales were killed by a family member. This represented 24% of all victims. However, the reporting of domestic abuse incidents involving older people represented less than 4% of all reported incidences.

As we work towards enhancing and strengthening the role of our Public Service in preventing these issues, it is crucial that we work to overcome such confusion and, instead, ensure our systems and working relationships are integrated and the knowledge and skill set of our employees is geared towards identifying potential abuse as early as possible and providing tailored, effective support as soon as possible. It is crucial that those working with older people are able to recognise signs of abuse and are able to offer appropriate advice.

The experience of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence can be even more damaging to victims where it is experienced alongside other complex needs or vulnerabilities. Whilst it is wrong to homogenise older people as “vulnerable” or “frail” it is important that Public Services and specialist providers are prepared and able to link safeguarding systems to offer a suite of support which addresses all of the issues which may be faced by an older person experiencing violence and abuse.

Black and minority communities

Research has found that:

“BME women are disproportionately affected by different forms of abuse e.g. forced marriage, “honour based” violence, FGM, sexual exploitation in the form of commercial sex work, trafficking etc. the multiple vulnerabilities from these overlapping contexts makes it harder for women to flee violence”¹⁴

Survivors may face additional barriers to seeking help, such as racial discrimination, religious stereotyping, fear of community dishonour and rejection, and an insecure immigration status, all of which may prevent them from accessing protection. Additionally, survivors from ethnic minority communities are likely to have barriers to receiving, or asking for, services, including:

- Lack of information and awareness about services and options due to language barrier and lack of familiar community networks.
- Insecure immigration status and no recourse to public funds

¹³ Homicide Index, Home Office, 2011/12 to 2014/15

¹⁴ Roy. S and Ravi.T (2012 Vital Statistics Key finding report on black, minority ethnic and refugee women’s and children’s experiences of gender based violence (London) Imkaan

- Involvement of family members in interpretation and support to access services that defeats the purpose of confidentiality and elevates risks of harm.
- Pressures of socialisation and from family on the pretext of honour and shame. In such cases, women fear that their experiences will not be validated in an alien, mainstream context.
- Concerns around suitable cultural environment for praying, specific socio-religious food habits and familiar environment for children in temporary accommodation.
- BME women not only fear the perpetrator, but racism and marginalisation in society that undermines their confidence to lead an independent life.
- Fear of isolation and racism within a mainstream service.
- Increased likelihood that perpetrators use other forms as part of the abuse e.g. threats of deportation and abandonment, isolation, entrapment, multiple interested parties and violence condoned by family and community.

Migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women

A major concern to service providers is their ability to assist migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women who have suffered, or are suffering violence against women and who have no recourse to public funds. This group can often be subject to issues such as FGM, so called 'honour' based violence and forced marriage, as well as the already complex issues of domestic abuse and sexual violence. Visa issues, cultural, language and communication barriers can further complicate and isolate these women.

Disabled people

Disabled people experience disproportionately higher rates of domestic abuse and also experience domestic abuse for longer periods of time, and more severe and frequent abuse than non-disabled people. Disabled women are twice as likely to experience domestic violence as non-disabled women¹⁵ and they are likely to experience abuse over a longer period of time and to suffer more abuse and injuries as result of abuse than disabled men¹⁶.

Abuse and the Workplace

Employees who suffer from violence against women, domestic abuse, or sexual violence often have related performance issues or are absent from work, and perpetrators can often target their victims in the workplace or seek to limit their access to work. A recent report found that 52% of women had experienced sexual harassment at work including inappropriate comments, unwanted behaviour or sexual advances¹⁷. This has an impact on the employer's business activity as well as the employee's wellbeing. Employers can therefore play an important role in addressing these issues in their own workforce.

Sex Industry, Exploitation and Trafficking

Our priority in this context is public protection; people involved in prostitution can be particularly vulnerable to sexual and other violent crime and may in fact be victims of child sexual exploitation or modern slavery. We want to increase protection and access to appropriate support services for this often vulnerable group and will work with the Wales 'Sex Work Group' to support the delivery of their work-plan; ensuring priorities and progress contribute to discussions at the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Advisory Group.

¹⁵ 1995 British Crime Survey

¹⁶ Welsh Women's Aid, Disability Wales and University of Glamorgan (2011) Domestic Abuse of Disabled Women in Wales

¹⁷ TUC and Everyday Sexism Report 2016

LGBT+

The Welsh Government funded research in 2014 which highlighted the barriers faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people when accessing domestic abuse and sexual violence services. The report highlighted individual, interpersonal and structural and cultural barriers and made a series of recommendations to improve accessibility to services, including flexibility, confidential access and inclusivity.

Female survivors who commit offences

We know that many victims of sexual, physical and emotional abuse can also be drawn into offending behaviour. Statistically it is shown that women involved in the criminal justice system are more likely to have experienced some form of abuse during their childhood, and many also report that their offending was to support their partner or someone else's substance misuse.¹⁸ Women tend to have shorter sentences than men and they are more likely to self-harm in custody. We are working with local areas and National Offender Management Scheme (NOMS) in Wales to ensure a more effective joined-up approach to addressing these women's complex needs.

The Welsh Government works closely with NOMS and the secure estate to prevent men and women from getting into the criminal justice system. However, there is much that can be done in other areas, such as health, education, housing and social services, to help and prevent people from getting into the criminal justice system in the first place.

Building Provision

We recognise that gaps remain in the provision of specialist services for survivors of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence across Wales. We know for example that some people living in more rural areas do not always have access to the same level of services, and may also experience difficulties with transport. Access to services can also be an issue for those suffering from forms of violence such as FGM or female genital mutilation that are focused within particular communities.

There needs to be a collaborative approach to identifying need in each area of Wales to underpin the development of Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategies and enable areas to meet this identified need. Welsh Ministers will support and direct commissioners it funds and will work with commissioners who hold their own funding to build a more integrated and strategic approach to providing services which address the needs in each area.

With our specialist partners, we will continue to address these gaps whilst continuing to support those that are already in place and will target additional resources where there is greatest need.

¹⁸ Corston. J. (2007) The Corston Report: The need for a distinct, radically different, visibly-led, strategic, proportionate, holistic, women-centred, integrated approach
<http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/docs/corston-report-march-2007.pdf>

3. WHO NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED?

Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence prevention is central to improving health and well-being, reducing crime and the harm caused by violent crime; safeguarding children and adults; promoting education and learning and promoting equality.

Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence happens in communities, in public spaces and workplaces, in families, behind closed doors and beyond the boundaries of organisations. To achieve our objectives we need to work together beyond those organisational boundaries or we will fail those that are most vulnerable in society.

We need an integrated approach to ending all forms of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, from leadership to frontline professionals which mainstreams and prioritises the issue making it “everyone’s business”.

We will publish an integrated delivery framework outlining how, across Welsh Government, we will contribute to the objectives of this Strategy.

As well as working with Relevant Authorities set out in the Act (Local Authorities, Local Health Boards, NHS Trusts and Fire and Rescue Authorities), we recognise the need to work with the Police, Police and Crime Commissioners, education services, housing organisations, the third sector, specialist violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence services, survivors, non-devolved crime and justice agencies the National Probation Service to meet the objectives of this strategy..

The National Adviser for Tackling Violence against Women, other forms of Gender Based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence will advise and support Welsh Ministers as we seek to implement the actions outlined in the Strategy, identify best practice and bring about improvements in service delivery.

4. VISION

Our overall vision for Wales is one which meets the seven well-being goals:

- A globally responsible Wales
- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of Cohesive Communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language

The enduring social problem of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence undermines our communities and remains a significant barrier to Wales achieving this vision and becoming a fair and prosperous society.

We must therefore aim to eliminate violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. We believe its existence is not inevitable and that it can be radically reduced and prevented with the necessary political will, collaboration and culture change. Public services need to work together and with the specialist violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence sector to prevent, support and protect people experiencing violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence from suffering any further harm and in order to best meet their needs.

Our approach to enabling individuals and groups within our communities to live fear free from violence and abuse in Wales is a demonstration of our application of the five ways of working outlined in the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 through; Involvement, Prevention, integration, Long Term and Collaboration.

In Wales the drive to eliminate violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence will contribute strongly to the well-being goals by:

- ending discrimination against women and girls and promoting equality between women and men;
- eliminating all forms of violence against all women, domestic abuse and sexual violence in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation such as child sexual exploitation; and
- eliminating harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and Female Genital Mutilation.

5. OBJECTIVES

This Strategy sets out what Welsh Government will do to contribute to the pursuit of the purpose of the Act, however the Act also places a duty on Local Authorities and Local Health Boards to prepare and publish joint local strategies for tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. These local strategies will need to take into account the objectives set out in the National Strategy.

Welsh Government will provide strategic leadership on these issues and on the implementation of the Act. The Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Advisory Group provides expert advice to Welsh Government to support the further development and implementation of the Act and supporting policy and programmes. This Group will also act as a checkpoint for progress against the outcomes in this Strategy.

The purpose of the Act is to improve:

- Arrangements for the **prevention** of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence;
- arrangements for the **protection** of victims of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence;
- **support** for people affected by violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

It is these three **purposes** upon which this Strategy is based and upon which we expect our partners to consider and develop their own strategies and policies.

This Strategy outlines six objectives which the Welsh Ministers consider will, if achieved, contribute to the pursuit of that purpose. These objectives cover many portfolio areas and the actions have been developed in conjunction with departments across Welsh Government. Further detail on the objectives and the actions that the Welsh Ministers propose to take to achieve those objectives is set out in the sections below and will be included in the cross government Delivery Framework.

We are also working with the National Adviser on the development of National Indicators to measure the effectiveness of these objectives.

The Welsh Ministers recognise that organisations across Wales will play a vital role in tackling the issues of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. These organisations include voluntary sector organisations, specialist violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence services, crime and justice agencies as well as the relevant authorities specified in the Act. Working with these organisations and with survivors to understand their experiences and how the system can be developed to prevent violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence and to support those who experience it will ensure the Welsh Ministers will successfully achieve the objectives.

This Strategy outlines six objectives that the Welsh Ministers expect to achieve by November 2021:

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

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

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

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 victims with equal access to appropriately resourced, high quality, needs led, strength based, gender responsive services across Wales

6. PREVENTION

Welsh Government through education, empowerment and engagement, are committed to challenging attitudes and behaviours across society which lead to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence and seek ways to prevent them from occurring in the first instance or repeating.

Three of the objectives support the purpose of preventing violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence:

Objective 1 – Increase awareness and challenge attitudes of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence across the Welsh Population

We will continue to challenge attitudes in order to prevent violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence happening in the first place. Ultimately we intend to build a society which does not tolerate violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Survivors have told us:

“In our communities women are even more scared to speak out or share their experience with others. We need to educate these communities so they can speak out, get help and support.” (Survivor)

“There’s an advert on TV about child abuse and they show the different things (forms of abuse) and things – you know – there’s a number. It’s on all the time. They should do something like that” (Survivor)

“Information about the help there is should be everywhere women go, like supermarkets, pharmacists, on local radio, in local community halls and every GP surgery, or if you work your employer should publish this as routine. We should be able to go somewhere and see what help there is” (Survivor)

What actions will Welsh Government take to achieve this objective?

We will:

- develop a National Communications framework in consultation with stakeholders to ensure a more coherent, long term approach to engagement and communication. The framework will continue to raise public awareness and change social norms, values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and practices in relation to all forms of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence;
- we will challenge cultural attitudes which can underpin traditional harmful practices like Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced marriage and Honour Based Violence by working with and supporting specialist BME violence against women services in Wales to engage and support community champions to improve community responses to survivors of violence and abuse;
- as part of the National Communications Framework we will positively engage men and boys in challenging all forms of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence; and

- we will fully implement the National Training Framework ensuring that relevant professionals are trained to provide effective, timely and appropriate responses to victims and survivors.

Objective 2 - Increased awareness in children and young people of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships and that abusive behaviour is always wrong.

Longer term, we know that violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence can have a huge impact on children and young people. It can affect their safety, health and wellbeing, educational attainment, family and peer relationships, and their ability to enjoy healthy, happy, respectful relationships in the future.

Raising awareness of children and young people about equality, respect, and consent is critical if we are to end violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

“I want my daughter and her friends to know...I wish I’d had more knowledge...we just didn’t have any education, any awareness.this should be taught in all schools” (Survivor)

“Children need to know what’s wrong and right in relationships – what’s acceptable and what help’s available – what services there are. It needs to be age appropriate, in primary school – it should be compulsory” Survivor

We also recognise that not all children and young people are educated within a school or similar environment, so we will consider how best to support learning in other settings, including higher education faculties.

In raising awareness of children and young people of safe, equal and healthy relationships and that abusive behaviour is always unacceptable it is crucial to ensure that safeguarding procedures are followed and specialist, age appropriate support services are available and accessible for any child or young person experiencing violence against women, domestic abuse or sexual violence.

“The children need support too. They need to be able to get help to help them understand what’s happening” Survivor

What actions will Welsh Government take to achieve this objective?

We will:

- work with schools, local authorities and regional education consortia to fully implement ,and monitor implementation of, the National Training Framework ensuring that teaching professionals are aware of the signs of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence and can respond appropriately;
- support schools in educating children and young people of the importance of respect and consent in relationships by building upon, and monitoring the implementation of, the Good Practice Guide: Whole Education Approach to Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence in Wales¹⁹;
- ensure that the development of the new curriculum, and specifically the Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experience, enables children and young people’s

¹⁹ <http://livefearfree.gov.wales/policies-and-guidance/good-practice-guide-a-whole-education-approach?lang=en>

education to be supported by a holistic approach to health and well-being and helps them to build the knowledge, understanding and skills that will enable them to develop positive and appropriate relationships.;

- instigate a thematic review to be undertaken by Estyn to understand current approaches and responses to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence and healthy relationships education within schools; and
- issue regulations to require Local Authorities to provide information on action taken by them to promote the purpose of the Act in the exercise of their education functions

Objective 3 - Increased focus on holding perpetrators to account and provide opportunities to change their behaviour based around victim safety.

We recognise that we cannot tackle violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence effectively without working to prevent perpetrators from abusing in the first place and this is an area of work that Welsh Government is committed to develop.

Evidenced and accredited programmes are an important element of prevention and all perpetrator interventions need to draw on what current research tells us about best practice and evidence of what works.

What actions will Welsh Government take to achieve this objective?

- working with relevant stakeholders we will develop and publish guidance. It is our intention that this guidance will include good practice principles from current research and evidence of what works and include minimum expectations for the commissioning of perpetrator programmes to ensure that safety, the management of risk and provision of support to partners/ex partners is integral to any programme being commissioned in Wales;
- establish a Wales learning panel to disseminate learning and good practice from Domestic Abuse Homicide Reviews and other safeguarding reviews to prevent further harm.
- we will work with the Home Office, Police and Crime Commissioners and Community Safety Partnerships in Wales to ensure that people are protected in circumstances outside the home where they are potentially vulnerable. This will include actions under the draft Substance Misuse delivery plan 2015-18 such as Area Planning Boards, Community Safety Partnerships, Police and Crime Commissioners, the Police and Trading Standards working together to share intelligence and deliver targeted harm reduction campaigns related to the Night Time Economy.

Objective 4 - Making early intervention and prevention a priority

Welsh Government recognises that intervening early is vital to stopping violence from escalating and reducing the harm to victims and their children. Identifying violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence at the earliest opportunity and providing an appropriate response to minimise impact and harm is critical to achieving the prevention, protection and support purposes of this Strategy.

“I did not even know that I could speak to my GP or tell anyone at the hospital what was happening to me” Survivor

“Women like us who have experienced child sexual abuse and are either now involved in offending because of that or need more support than there can be available and are now

victims of abuse as adults. Children need support at the time of being abused – what is there when it happens to us first time around?” Survivor

Professionals don't always know how to deal with disclosures and aren't engaging with women who seek help. Women only tell someone who they feel comfortable with most professionals only get minimal training on this” Survivor

We know that adults in Wales who were physically or sexually abused as children or brought up in households where there was domestic abuse, alcohol or drug abuse are more likely to adopt health-harming and anti-social behaviours in adult life.²⁰ Research is identifying the long-term harm that can result from chronic stress on individuals during childhood. Such stress may arise from the abuse and neglect of children but also from growing up in households where children are routinely exposed to issues such as domestic abuse or individuals with alcohol and other substance use problems.²¹

It is critical therefore, for the long term health and welfare of our nation that we intervene early to reduce and prevent the incidence of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, and reducing the harm to victims and their children.

Innovative approaches for early intervention are developing across Wales;

Ask and Act – a process of targeted enquiry to be practiced across the Public Service to identify violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. The terms targeted enquiry described the recognition of indicators of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence as a prompt for professionals to ask their client whether they have been affected by any of these issues.

IRIS is a general practice-based domestic violence and abuse training, support and referral programme aimed at improving the health care response to violence against women and domestic abuse. Core areas of the programme are training and education, clinical enquiry, care pathways and an enhanced referral pathway to specialist support services. It is aimed at individuals who are experiencing domestic abuse. IRIS also provides information and signposting for perpetrators.

IRIS is a collaboration between primary care and third sector organisations specialising in violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. An advocate educator is linked to general practices and based in a local specialist support service. The advocate educator works in partnership with a local clinical lead to co-deliver the training to practices.

The “**Change that Lasts**” model aims to transform the way that communities, trained trusted professionals and specialist services respond to violence against women. This model of early intervention to address violence against women has been developed in partnership with services and key stakeholders. It is needs-led, strengths-based, gender-responsive and trauma-informed and will support survivors and their children to access more effective support early in their help-seeking journey, and help them build resilience, achieve independence and freedom from abuse. In doing so, it will maximise safe

²⁰ Welsh Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study, Adverse Childhood Experiences and their impact on health-harming behaviours in the Welsh adult population: Mark A. Bellisi, Kathryn Ashtoni, Karen Hughesii, Katharine Fordii, Julie Bishopi and Shantini Paranjothy
Public Health Wales; Centre for Public Health Liverpool John Moores University

²¹ *ibid*

disclosure points in local communities and create more knowledgeable, resilient community responses to prevent violence and abuse.

Since 2013 Welsh Government has been working with NOMS and the Police and Crime Commissioners on the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) **Cymru Women's Pathfinder**, which was informed by the Corston Report (2007). This is an integrated, women-centred, multi agency approach to working with women who come into contact with the criminal justice system and has become known as a Whole System Approach. So far this includes a diversion scheme; Offender Managers being co-located in domestic abuse services; multi-agency case conference arrangements; and coordinated access into support / interventions for all women into local provision.²²

To achieve this objective we will;

- work across Government and with key stakeholders to scale up and mainstream evidenced based approaches to ensure that early intervention and prevention is happening consistently and is core business across Wales
- we will publish statutory guidance and fully implement the principles based “Ask and Act” supporting appropriate professionals within relevant authorities to understand the signs of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, to use targeted enquiry and to act by referring the person appropriately;
- promote opportunities for early intervention and prevention and development of innovative services; and
- we will work with the National Adviser, the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, specialist services, Public Health Wales, adult services and children’s services to ensure that families identified and needing support for living with adverse childhood experiences relating to domestic abuse and sexual violence, have access to existing interventions delivered by specialist services.

²² A further example of a prevention model is the Cardiff Model for Violence Prevention: Violence and Society Research Group; Prof Jonathan Shepherd, Cardiff University

7. PROTECTION

Protection is a critical aspect of our work; we need to work together as a public service to protect those who are currently experiencing violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence from suffering any further harm, and protect any children within the family setting.

This requires a coordinated and collaborative response where the expertise and experience of the specialist violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence sector and survivors will be critical if we are to get it right.

Survivors have told us:

"To go to a refuge service ... it was the best thing I've ever done, it saved my life."
(Survivor)

"The women in this service saved my life. I couldn't cope and they gave me my life back. I was living in an unreal situation and they understood. They made me feel less isolated and helped me find myself again." (Survivor)

In recent years there has been an effort to improve the responses of all criminal justice agencies in Wales to those who report a crime. We need to ensure that survivors of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence receive a quality service and to build confidence that they will be believed and supported by specialist services through the criminal justice system.

One of our objectives supports the purpose of protecting those currently experiencing violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence:

Objective 5 - Relevant professionals are trained to provide effective, timely and appropriate responses to victims and survivors

What actions will Welsh Government take to achieve this objective?

- we will fully implement the National Training Framework²³ ensuring that professionals across all relevant authorities (including health, local authorities, NHS Trusts and Fire and Rescue Services) are supported to increase their understanding and knowledge of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, resulting in improved responses to disclosures;
- we will explore links between our National Training Framework and training proposed by Police forces and the College of Policing identifying where gaps exist in knowledge, skills and understanding to tackle domestic abuse effectively;²⁴
- we will fully implement "Ask and Act" supporting appropriate professionals within relevant authorities to understand the signs of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, to use targeted enquiry and to act by referring the person appropriately;

²³ <http://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/commsafety/160317-national-training-framework-guidance-en.pdf>

²⁴ Increasingly everyone's business: A progress report on the police response to domestic abuse: HMIC 2015
<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/increasingly-everyones-business-domestic-abuse-progress-report.pdf>

- work alongside the National Safeguarding Board to further inform safeguarding approaches in Wales as they relate to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence;
- we will continue to work with the Police, Police and Crime Commissioners, the Crown Prosecution Service, lawyers and magistrates, the courts, probation and prisons, to improve the response of all the criminal justice agencies in Wales to those who report a crime to the police;
- we will work with the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS) CYMRU to ensure staff identify and assess the associated risks and impact and appropriately refer to local support services.
- Work with schools to ensure awareness of the [Keeping Learners Safe](#) guidance that states a school must 'maintain an ethos of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, and protecting staff';
- promote the use of locally-based integrated referral pathways to ensure people are directed to the service they need when they need them;
- monitor and report on the implementation of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016, which will enable perpetrators of domestic abuse to be targeted for eviction, enabling the victim and other family members to remain in their home where it is safe to do so; and
- develop and publish multi-agency guidance to encourage and support greater collaboration and information sharing.

8. SUPPORT

Providing support for people affected by violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence can be complex, as people's experiences and needs can be vastly different. However, we need to promote a supportive culture, underpinned by a range of services that are best placed to respond to the needs of individuals and families.

Survivors have told us that support is vital:

"The group was the most helpful thing as it made me feel less isolated. I had contact with other women and realised for the first time in years that I wasn't the only one living with this." (Survivor)

"We need more support for us so we're not seen as a case to be closed or passed on to someone else, we have needs in our own right, and support should be available for as long as we need it, not time limited." (Survivor)

"It was so difficult to get help – people don't believe that men suffer too"

"We all need agencies to see us as individuals with needs, sectors and agencies take over and we need to fit into them, it should be turned around so that we have a beginning to end service built around our needs and is joined up"

"The worse thing was the children didn't have the option of speaking to someone. They wouldn't say anything to a teacher or a police officer... but if there was a support worker there for children they'd have spoken to them." (Survivor)

It is the aim of Welsh Government to encourage services which are effective, maintained and of a consistently high standard across Wales. Evidence-based interventions are key to ensuring those experiencing violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence are getting the most effective services possible.

We know that *how* services are delivered is as important as *what* is delivered. Timely responses which respond to multiple needs without judgement are needed. We need to support survivors to navigate an often complex route to services and support them to develop positive coping strategies, and enable empowerment and self-protection.

Public services, community and voluntary organisations and independent specialist violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence services all have a key role to play in the provision of a range of support options. A collaborative approach will ensure greater focus on the delivery of services and will facilitate greater value for money and flexibility of funded services to meet local need.

Survivors do not experience violence in silos and neither should agencies respond in silos; accessible and holistic provision is needed; all forms of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence need to be addressed by services and partnerships in an integrated and coordinated way²⁵.

The following objective underpins the purpose of supporting those experiencing violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence:

Objective 6 - Provide victims with equal access to holistic, appropriately resourced, high quality, needs led, strength based, gender responsive services across Wales

What actions will Welsh Government take to achieve this objective?

We will:

- continue to fund the Live Fear Free Helpline providing 24 hour confidential help and support for those experiencing violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence;
- publish guidance to Local Authorities and Local Health Boards to inform the development of local strategies required under the Act, including needs assessments;
- we will work with Local Authorities and Local Health Boards as they develop their local strategies under the Act and undertake needs analysis, including mapping their existing services, and developing new commissioning approaches, to ensure that the services they provide meet the need of their community;
- publish statutory guidance for relevant authorities on the commissioning of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence services building on the good practice guide “Tackling Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence – A Collaborative Commissioning Toolkit for Services in Wales”;
- work with stakeholders to develop a model for sustainable funding for the provision of specialist violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence services to underpin the delivery of this Strategy;
- review existing Welsh Government funding that contributes to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence to ensure that we are making the best use of available funding to support individuals and families experiencing violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence and deliver the objectives of this Strategy;
- continue to promote relevant quality service standards and accreditation framework for specialist services
- ensure integrated pathways of support to meet the needs of victims experiencing multiple disadvantages; and
- continue to encourage organisations to adopt work place policies on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence across Wales.

9. MEASURING PROGRESS OF THE STRATEGY

Welsh Ministers are required by the Act to publish annual reports of the progress made towards achieving both the objectives in the National Strategy and achievement towards the purpose of the Act. The annual report will also report progress of the delivery framework that will underpin this strategy.

Section 11 of the Act requires Welsh Ministers to ‘publish national indicators that may be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the purpose of this Act.’

The national indicators will measure collective national progress in achieving the purpose of the Act. The development of National Indicators presents an opportunity to work towards a coordinated and coherent measurement framework and mainstream violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence data across wider policy areas.

The national indicators will be measures of progress not targets. We want to measure the most important aspects which will enable us to better understand and articulate progress that is being made in Wales. We want to focus on where we want to be, which is why we are taking this outcome-based approach.

The National Indicators will help the specified public bodies, together with wider stakeholders, to understand the extent to which the shared vision, as set out in the National Strategy, is being achieved.

Local data, which may be a disaggregation of any national data, should be used to measure the success of local strategies.

The national indicators, together with the progress reports referred to above, will demonstrate how effective we have been in achieving the objectives set out in this Strategy.

1. The language used within the national strategy

Section 24 of the Act provides the definitions for Wales

- 1) “abuse” means physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or financial abuse.
- 2) “domestic abuse” means abuse where the victim of it is or has been associated with the abuser.
- 3) A person is associated with another person for the purpose of “domestic abuse” if –
 - They are or have been married to each other;
 - They are or have been civil partners of each other;
 - They live or have lived together in an enduring family relationship (whether they are of different sexes or the same sex);
 - They live or have lives in the same household; and for this purpose a person is a member of another person’s household if –
 - The person normally lives with the other person as a member of his or her family; or
 - The person might reasonably be expected to live with that other person;
 - They are relatives;
 - They have agreed to marry one another (whether or not that agreement has been terminated);
 - They have entered into a civil partnership agreement between them (whether or not that agreement has been terminated);
 - They have or have had an intimate personal relationship with each other;
 - In relation to a child, each of them is a parent of the child or has, or has had, parental responsibility for the child.
- 4) If a child has been adopted or falls within (5) below, two persons are also associated with each other for the purposes of the definition of “domestic abuse” if –
 - One is a natural parent of the child or a parent of such a natural parent; and
 - The other is –
 - The child; or
 - A person who has become a parent of the child by virtue of an adoption order, who has applied for an adoption order or with whom the child has at any time been placed for adoption.
- 5) A child falls within this entry if –
 - An adoption agency, within the meaning of section 2 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002, is authorised to place the child for adoption under section 19 of that Act (placing children with parental consent) or the child has become the subject of an order under section 21 of that Act (placement orders); or
 - The child is freed for adoption by virtue of an order made –
 - In England and Wales, under section 18 of the Adoption Act 1976; or
 - In Northern Ireland, under article 17(1) or 18(1) of the Adoption (Northern Ireland) Order 1987; or

- The child is the subject of a Scottish permanence order which includes granting authority to adopt.

In this section —

- “adoption order” means an adoption order within the meaning of section 72(1) of the Adoption Act 1976 or section 46(1) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002;
 - “child” means a person under the age of 18 years;
 - “civil partnership agreement” has the meaning given by section 73 of the Civil Partnership Act 2004 (c.33);
 - “female genital mutilation” means an act that is an offence under sections 1, 2 or 3 of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (c.31);
 - “financial abuse” means —
 - (a) having money or other property stolen,
 - (b) being defrauded,
 - (c) being put under pressure in relation to money or other property, and
 - (d) having money or other property misused;
 - “harassment” means a course of conduct by a person which he or she knows or ought to know amounts to harassment of the other; and for the purpose of this definition —
 - (a) a person ought to know that his or her conduct amounts to or involves harassment if a reasonable person in possession of the same information would think the course of conduct amounted to or involved harassment of another person, and
 - (b) “conduct” includes speech;
 - “sexual exploitation” means something that is done to or in respect of a person which —
 - (a) involves the commission of an offence under Part 1 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (c.42), as it has an effect in England and Wales, or
 - (b) would involve the commission of such an offence if it were done in England and Wales;
 - “parental responsibility” has the meaning given by section 3 of the Children Act 1989 (c.41);
 - “relative”, in relation to a person, means that person’s parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, brother, half-brother, sister, half-sister, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece (including any person who is or has been in that relationship by virtue of a marriage or civil partnership or an enduring family relationship).
- 6) gender-based violence means:
- (a) violence, threats of violence or harassment arising directly or indirectly from values, beliefs or customs relating to gender or sexual orientation;
 - (b) female genital mutilation;

(c) forcing a person (whether by physical force or coercion by threats or other psychological means) to enter into a religious or civil ceremony of marriage (whether or not legally binding);

- sexual violence means sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, or threats of violence of a sexual nature.

The Act provides a relatively wide definition of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence which will enable functions under the Act to be exercised in respect of violence or abuse which evidence suggests is an issue in Wales.

Coercive control is captured within the definition of abuse, as exercise of coercive control requires some form of physical, emotional, psychological or financial abuse.

2. Glossary

Abuse (as defined by the Act): Physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or financial abuse

Ask and Act: A process of targeted enquiry across the Welsh Public Service in relation to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence

Collaboration: The term “collaboration” refers to a co-ordinated interagency response via a formal structure, or fora, where the primary focus is to safeguard the victim, reduce secondary victimisation and hold perpetrators to account.

The fora should:

- (a) adopt consistent, joint policies and procedures, including an agreed risk assessment and risk management and safety plan, which co-ordinates and standardises the professional interventions to all those at risk and which reduces the risk of harm;
- (b) share information to increase the safety, health and well-being of victims/survivors - adults and their children;
- (c) work together to reduce repeat victimisation;
- (d) improve agency accountability;
- (e) improve support, including training, for all staff involved in domestic abuse cases; and
- (f) determine whether the alleged perpetrator poses a significant risk to any particular individual or to the general community.

Domestic abuse (as defined by the Act): Abuse where the victim of it is or has been associated with the abuser. A person is associated with another person for the purpose of the definition of “domestic abuse” if they fall within the definition in section 21(2) or (3) of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015.

Female Genital Mutilation: an act that is an offence under sections 1, 2 or 3 of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (c. 31)

Gender-based Violence (as defined by the Act):

- (a) violence, threats of violence or harassment arising directly or indirectly from values, beliefs or customs relating to gender or sexual orientation;
- (b) female genital mutilation;
- (c) forcing a person (whether by physical force or coercion by threats or other psychological means) to enter into a religious or civil ceremony of marriage

(whether or not legally binding);

Harassment: A course of conduct by a person which he or she knows or ought to know amounts to harassment of the other; and for the purpose of this definition:

(a) a person ought to know that his or her conduct amounts to or involves harassment if a reasonable person in possession of the same information would think the course of conduct amounted to or involved harassment of another person; and

(b) “conduct” includes speech.

Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA): Trained specialist worker who provides short to medium-term casework support for high risk victims of domestic abuse

Local Authority (as defined in the Act): A county council or county borough council

MARAC: Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference

Public Service: Public services are services delivered for the benefit of the public. This can include services delivered through the third sector, through social enterprise or through services that are contracted out.

Relevant authorities: county councils and county borough councils, Local Health Boards, fire and rescue authorities and NHS trusts.

Sexual exploitation (as defined by the Act): something that is done to or in respect of a person which

(a) involves the commission of an offence under Part 1 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (c. 42), as it has an effect in England and Wales,

or

(b) would involve the commission of such an offence if it were done in England and Wales;

Sexual Violence (as defined by the Act): sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, or threats of violence of a sexual nature.

The Act: The Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015.