

Welsh Government - Tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence

Question 1 - Do you agree with the priorities under prevention? Do you have any further suggestions? Please include any evidence (data, research or anecdotal).

Objective 1: The priority to raise awareness is excellent. Women's Aid is currently delivering a pilot of 'Change that Lasts', which includes training members of the public and creating 'hubs' within community settings where those experiencing DVA can approach and receive a sensitive and informed approach. This could be very effective in Wales.

Objective 2: The increased focus on working with children to understand more about healthy relationships and gender equality is to be welcomed. It is especially important that sex education in schools discusses respect and consent, not just the physical aspects. However, working with schools to change the curriculum and raise awareness is not enough - there is currently a lack of funding available to organisations working with children who have experienced or witnessed domestic and sexual abuse. There is a danger that children's voices, about what they find helpful, will be lost as a result of this.

Objective 3: We appreciate there will be efforts to increase the amount of effective perpetrator work being delivered, however we are concerned whether there will be adequate funding available to deliver both this and the protection and support work for victims. There are currently a number of gaps in terms of perpetrator work – there is not sufficient focus on the harm to the victim whilst the intervention is being delivered with no uniform risk assessment of perpetrators. There are also insufficient psychological and therapeutic interventions that look at long term change. This also impacts on future risk.

Question 2 - Do you agree with the priorities under protection? Do you have any further suggestions? Please include any evidence (data, research or anecdotal).

There is a lack of consideration in the strategy that protection could also involve removal of the perpetrator from the environment, rather than always expecting women and children to leave. The Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 already enables perpetrators to be targeted for eviction, and perpetrator 'refuges' could be set up - with perpetrators removed to that location and prevention work delivered, reducing the risk to the victim whilst perpetrator work is in progress. High Risk Offenders could also be bailed to these centres – with a requirement to engage in therapeutic interventions and curfews as part of bail conditions.

Moving the perpetrator is cost effective and beneficial to families, as it involves moving one person, rather than a whole family and enables women and children to maintain existing links with services and their community. This improves safeguarding as it ensures that women are not falling through the gaps, and signs of risk are not missed, which can happen when women and children are moved between Local Authorities.

Objective 4: It is excellent to see that Ask and Act is included in the strategy, as it is an excellent initiative.

Question 3 - Do you agree with the priorities under support? Do you have any further suggestions? Please include any evidence (data, research or anecdotal).

Objective 5: It would be good to see the training plan extended to smaller, more specialist organisations. This could include BME groups, those working with the LGBT+ community and disability rights groups.