



Cymorth i Ferched Cymru
Welsh Women's Aid

Time to Act on Sustainability

State of the Sector 2020

About Welsh Women's Aid

Welsh Women's Aid is the national charity in Wales working to end all forms of violence against women. We are a federation of specialist organisations (*Appendix A*) in Wales (working as part of a UK network of services) that provide lifesaving services to survivors of violence and abuse - women, men, children, families - and deliver a range of innovative preventative services in local communities.

We have been at the forefront of shaping coordinated community responses and practice in Wales since we were established in 1978. We do this by campaigning for change and providing advice, consultancy, support and training to deliver policy and service improvements for survivors, families and communities. We also deliver services including the Welsh Government funded Live Fear Free Helpline and a National Training Service partnership. We champion survivor engagement in all aspects of our work so that the many voices and lived experiences of those impacted by abuse are amplified and understood. Our success is founded on making sure the experiences and needs of survivors are central to all we do.

We also deliver the Wales National Quality Service Standards (NQSS), a national accreditation framework for domestic abuse specialist services in Wales (supported by the Welsh Government) as part of a UK suite of integrated accreditation systems and frameworks.

This report is dedicated to all the staff in our national network of specialist services who have worked tirelessly before and during COVID-19 to support change in so many survivors lives and continue to work to bring an end to violence and abuse, for good.

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Introduction

These are unprecedented times for all, the VAWDASV sector are working extremely hard to maintain their provision as an essential service during and following the COVID 19 pandemic. From week one of social distancing and shielding guidance, specialist services adapted provision to ensure they were still available to support all who needed it whilst also responding to reduced staffing levels due to sick leave, staff vulnerability or limited childcare provision. Specialist service frontline workers are providing key frontline work to keep refuge provision open, to ensure adult and child survivors are supported in safe accommodation wherever possible. Therapeutic support providers have moved their support online or on the phone, connecting with survivors regularly to ensure they are supported during a time when trauma and anxiety is heightened by social restrictions. The specialist sector continues to work tirelessly to ensure all survivors are supported, meeting the predicted increase in women and children accessing services with an easing of lockdown measures and planning for the long-term impact on individuals and communities.

The full impact of the pandemic on demand for specialist services as well as the ongoing consequences for statutory services, such as health, housing, schools and social services, is not yet known. Specialist services require sustainability of funding to enable them to be flexible and responsive in their provision with the confidence that this will be backed by a structure of stable resources and swift mechanisms for increased investment where and when its needed.

Pre COVID-19, 1 in 3 women were experiencing some form of VAWDASV across their lifetime, this is not a 'normal' we wish to return to. The pandemic created new challenges for the specialist sector and new dangers for survivors, but it also shone a light on existing gaps and failures in the system. At the heart of the national response must be enabling communities to break the silence on VAWDASV and give helpful responses to survivors who reach out by raising awareness of support that is available to them. The impact will increase the need for a cultural shift to prevention and early intervention across statutory and specialist services.

Currently in Wales there is no overall understanding as to what is spent (nationally or locally) on preventing VAWDASV or in responding to survivors and holding perpetrators to account. The Wales Audit Office report *Progress in implementing the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act 2019*¹ which concludes that funding of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) services is generally fragmented, complex and short term, and commissioning is too inconsistent to ensure public bodies are always getting value for money. Mapping currently is focused on what is the current investment into specialist services rather than looking at what is spent as a whole across statutory, generic and specialist provision. There has been little analysis of how budgets across government agendas invest in preventing VAWDASV and protecting and supporting survivors. Currently the investment decisions are not joined up, making it impossible to evaluate if we are effectively investing to achieve the common goal of eradicating VAWDASV.

¹ https://www.audit.wales/system/files/publications/VAWDASV_eng.pdf

The Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence 2015 (Wales) Act was introduced five years ago. In our last three annual *State of the Sector* reports²³⁴, we demonstrated through data collected from our membership and wider specialist services a trend in limited funding, an increase in women accessing specialist services, and an overall more challenging environment in which to deliver services and support survivors. Funding remained consistently one of the biggest concerns for specialist services.

This report will demonstrate the case for sustainable funding for specialist services⁵, the practicalities around developing a workable model, and include specific actions for responsible agencies. The current situation with COVID 19 has demonstrated that we need to see impetus in ensuring sustainability of the VAWDASV sector as its provision of essential services in normal times, becomes even more critical during and post national crisis times. Until we address these collective, ongoing sustainable funding issues in a meaningful way, with adequate funding and resources along with robust leadership, the 'state of the sector' is never going to change. In this year's report we are looking forward to the future, setting out what we need to do to ensure we are not in the same position in another 5 year's time.

Violence against women and girls occurs within a context of traditional power relations, perpetrators' behaviour stems from a sense of entitlement supported by sexist, racist, disablist, homophobic and other discriminatory attitudes, behaviours and systems that maintain and reproduce inequality.

If we are to achieve our goal in eradicating all forms of violence against women and girls we must ensure we invest in prevention and early intervention across all institutions and communities, with the aim of realising equality and human rights for every woman and girl.

² <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/State-of-the-sector-report-2016-FINAL.pdf>

³ <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/WWA-State-of-the-Sector-2017-ENG.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/State-of-the-Sector-2018-Eng.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/State-of-the-Sector-2018-Eng.pdf>

The state of a COVID-19 specialist support sector

A shadow pandemic has been declared by the United Nations in light of the increases globally of VAWDASV during COVID 19.⁶ Evidence has shown that violence against women tends to increase during every type of emergency, including epidemics.⁷ The pandemic has exacerbated already existing inequalities. Older women and women with disabilities are likely to have additional risks and needs.⁸ Imkaan has reported that services led 'by and for' black and minoritised women have reported significant increases in demand – particularly for refuge spaces.⁹

Specialist services have been at the frontline in responding to the shadow pandemic in Wales.

Impact of COVID 19 on specialist services in Wales¹⁰:

Changes to demand

- There were over 12,000 contacts to the Live Fear Free helpline during the first half of 2020/21.
- There was a 70% increase in contacts by concerned others (friends, family and neighbours) following the publication of the [Stand with Survivors Bystander toolkit](#).¹¹
- 3 times the number of webchat contacts to the Helpline in April – June compared to Jan – March 2020 – and similar increases in contacts via text and email.
- Complexity of cases reported to the helpline significantly increased (by 240%). This led to the average call duration doubling since March 2020.
- There was also a doubling in the number of referrals from the helpline to other agencies including a 47% increase in referrals to the police and 5 times the number of safeguarding referrals.
- 266 children and young people were supported through refuge-based support services during March to June 2020, however specialist services also reported drops in the number of children supported in the community as lockdown restrictions presented barriers to support.
- Specialist services reported increases in demand as lockdown was lifted. Services, especially sexual violence services expect increases to happen over a long period as many survivors take 6 months or more to disclose or access support.

Self-isolation and staffing levels

- In June 2020 31% of all staff members employed by VAWDASV services were absent during the COVID-19 lockdown. With local and fire breaker lockdowns, and rising cases of COVID

⁶ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/4/statement-ed-phumzile-violence-against-women-during-pandemic>

⁷ <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/pandemics-and-vawg-april2.pdf>

⁸ <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/331699/WHO-SRH-20.04-eng.pdf?ua=1>

⁹ Imkaan, The Impact of the Two Pandemics: VAWG and COVID-19 on Black and Minoritised Women and Girls, May 2020 https://829ef90d-0745-49b2-b404-cbea85f15fda.filesusr.com/ugd/2f475d_6d6dea40b8bd42c8a917ba58ceec5793.pdf

¹⁰ Data taken from Welsh Women's Aid (2020) *Annual Membership Report: Data from specialist services in Wales, 2019/20*. and Welsh Women's Aid (2020) *Impact of COVID 19 on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Specialist Service: June Report*

¹¹ <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/campaigning/covid-19-bystander-toolkit/>

19, services are reporting continued reduction in staffing levels due to self-isolation requirements and limited access to swift testing.

- Childcare difficulties were the cause of 35% of staff absences, highlighting the issues presented for VAWDASV key workers in accessing childcare during school closures.
- 53% of services reported the changes had impacted on staff wellbeing. Many services have put in place additional support for staff, including increased clinical supervision, to support their wellbeing.

Additional costs

- 100% of specialist services reported that they had experienced additional costs due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 41% stated in June 2020 that they had lost funding due to the pandemic. This was noted to be due to the cancellation of fundraising events and loss of housing benefit due to adhering to social distancing and cleaning requirements in refuges increasing the “void” levels.
- Specialist services raised significant concerns of the sustainability of the resources which have been made available in response to the pandemic emergency and the lack of planning for long-term effects.

What survivors deserve: A holistic approach to ending violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV)

In a time that has been so devastating and uncertain, a resolve to build back better is growing and solidifying across the country. The pandemic has starkly highlighted the unavoidable truth that VAWDASV is everyone’s business, and an enthusiasm for meaningful collaboration, shared learning and stronger commitments to prevent abuse, protect and support survivors, and sustain those services supporting them has grown.

A sustainable funding model for specialist services, is the foundation for ending all forms of violence against women. Funding services to run sustainably would not only enable the VAWDASV specialist sector to support women and children in immediate need and living with long term trauma, but also enables the sector to tackle the root, systemic causes of VAWDASV by rolling out and embedding effective policy and practice in preventing it from happening in the first place. Alignment of policy, practice and funding is the most effective way to bring about real change.

Building back better with a sustainable funding model could enable a holistic model including:

Prevention

There is widespread recognition among experts and key stakeholders that all forms of violence against women, including domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV), are preventable. Tackling the norms, practices and structures associated with gender inequality and which serve to legitimise or condone VAWDASV requires a multi-level strategic response – one which recognises the intersection of factors occurring at the societal, community, relationship and individual levels which increase the likelihood of VAWDASV.¹²

In Wales we have ambitious legislation in the VAWDASV (Wales) Act 2015 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 that means our public bodies can be ambitious in prioritising the prevention of VAWDASV. This includes investing in public health campaigns that challenge and change

¹² Hagemann-White et al. (2010) ‘Review of Research on Factors at Play in Perpetration’;
<https://www.humanconsultancy.com/assets/understanding-perpetration/bin/Review%20of%20Research.pdf>

attitudes, high-quality relationships and sexuality education for all children and young people, and community engagement programmes that increase communities' knowledge and confidence to enable them to address the root causes such as gender inequality and intersecting discrimination.

Early Intervention

Communities, workplaces and services such as GPs, schools or housing providers are often first to know about abuse; survivors have told us that they have previously reached out for support in communities from family and friends or professionals in a various services prior to getting specialist support. Our Change That Lasts whole systems approach provides a model of prevention, response and support intervening at the earliest possible opportunity to limit harm by perpetrators of abuse, reducing tolerance to abuse in communities and services and increasing resilience for survivors by building on their strengths and addressing their needs. Learning from delivering the Ask Me and Trusted Professional elements of Change that Lasts also saw how communities engaged in early intervention contribute to increasing the space for survivors to take action and limits the opportunities perpetrators have to continue abuse. This is proven to enable long term freedom from abuse making it a cost-effective investment.

Children and Young People

Over their lifetime, 1 in 5 children have experience domestic abuse, and 1 in 20 children have been sexually abused.¹³ Where specialist children's services are available, they have a particularly effective role in early intervention to combat the impacts of violence and abuse and significant improvements are seen in the health, safety, wellbeing and achievements of children and young people who have had these adverse experiences. Specialist services support children and young people with the range of their experiences as well as supporting non-abusive parents. This includes play therapy and therapeutic counselling, family and parenting interventions, child specific refuge-based support, advice and guidance sessions, and prevention work in schools, youth clubs and wider communities.

4,466 children and young people were supported in refuge and community-based support in 2019-20. Specialist services also engaged with 6,661 children and young people in awareness raising sessions on VAWDASV in their schools.¹⁴ However the Welsh Women's Aid [Children Matter Report](#) published in November 2019, highlighted that over three quarters of those children experiencing abuse may not be able to access the specialist support that they deserve due to a postcode lottery of provision and referral routes.¹⁵

Sexual Violence Services

Dedicated rape crisis and sexual violence services provide specific responses to recent, historic and childhood survivors of rape, sexual assault and sexual abuse recognising the long-term trauma of these experiences. Through counselling, therapeutic sessions, individual or group support focused on survivor need they enable the opportunity to cope and recovery. Trained professionals are also available to provide information and advocacy with health services, housing, finances, well-being, parenting, education and employment, as well as providing support through the legal process, should survivors choose to report or not.

¹³ <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Children-and-Young-People-participation-report-FINAL.pdf>

¹⁴ Welsh Women's Aid (2020) *Annual Membership Report: Data from specialist services in Wales, 2019/20*

¹⁵ <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Children-and-Young-People-participation-report-FINAL.pdf>

Across four member services providing specialist sexual violence support 1,443 survivors received support from dedicated sexual violence services in 2019-20. However, at the year-end 251 survivors were on waiting lists for rape crisis support across these services.¹⁶ The recent campaigns such as #MeToo and Time's Up, a series of high-profile cases of childhood sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation have significantly increased those accessing support, but funding has not matched the increases in demand for support.¹⁷

Refuge and accommodation-based support

Refuges fulfil a vital role in responding to domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women. Their functions go far beyond just providing crisis shelter and a safe place to stay. The support and respite provided by refuges enables survivors to deal with traumatic experiences, to recover from the abuse, to regain their self-esteem, and to lay the foundations for a self-determined and independent life. They offer a planned programme of therapeutic and practical support, and access to peer support from other survivors. The majority of refuges offer an element of communal environments in which women and children become acquainted with a different way of living together. Survivors of abuse suffer from being isolated and low in self-esteem as a result of the abuse, and refuges help increase survivors' ability to lead an active and self-determined life.

The support offered by specialist services also includes resettlement support which helps survivors move on to rebuild their lives and establish themselves in local communities.

2,522 survivors (adults and children) benefited from refuge-based support from Welsh Women's Aid member services in Wales in 2019-20 however 574 were unable to access the support they needed due to lack of space, capacity and resources.

'By and For' service provision

Organisations at a regional/national level led by and for Black and minoritised communities are supported to meet the needs of Black and minoritised survivors across Wales. 'By and for' specialist services are skilled in identifying needs and experiences of specific forms of VAWDASV that may be missed by services not led by and for women within these communities. They offer a range of services and are able to reach women who may not even recognise their experiences as abusive and create flexible and diverse support systems, sensitive to the fact that for many BME women, refuge, counselling or other support services may be unfamiliar and/or stigmatised.

COVID-19 disproportionately impacted diverse communities and exacerbated existing racialised inequalities due to structural inequalities. This needs to be recognised in the planning of funding for the long-term response, bringing the margins to the centre.¹⁸

No recourse to public funds

No recourse to public funds (NRPF) acts as a serious barrier for survivors experiencing violence and abuse with restricted or insecure immigration status in the UK and must be considered as part of any funding plan to completely end VAWDASV for women in Wales.

¹⁶ Welsh Women's Aid (2020) *Annual Membership Report: Data from specialist services in Wales, 2019/20*

¹⁷ <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/media/1914/appgreportfinal.pdf>

¹⁸ https://829ef90d-0745-49b2-b404-cbea85f15fda.filesusr.com/ugd/2f475d_6d6dea40b8bd42c8a917ba58ceec5793.pdf

As part of the Welsh Government response to the COVID-19 pandemic, ministers lifted restrictions on a specific pot of money which enabled services to support survivors with NRPF¹⁹. This action from Welsh Government was warmly welcomed by specialist support services and enabled survivors who would have otherwise been trapped in a dangerous situation to seek safety. During the lockdown period, 50% of specialist services reported supporting one or more women with NRPF.²⁰ The Wales Homelessness Action Group has echoed Welsh Women's Aids call for Welsh Government to ensure safety and support for survivors with NRPF beyond COVID with a dedicated fund for services.²¹

Welsh Government are a self-proclaimed feminist Government, and nation of sanctuary with a commitment to ensuring the safety of every woman living in Wales regardless of immigration status. The model for sustainable funding must include support for survivors with NRPF to be effective in supporting *all* survivors.

Survivors exploited by the sex industry

Survivors who are exploited by the sex industry often face multiple disadvantage and it is not always a case of being able to access support, rather, whether the right support is available to begin with. Wales is in need of developing a model which supports women exploited by the sex industry facing multiple disadvantage.

Women exploited by the sex industry need access to safe, suitable accommodation which takes into account additional support they may need. For example, specialist services report that accommodation providers will not accept a woman unless she is on a script (for drug dependency) creating additional barriers to safe and appropriate accommodation. Specialist accommodation with a health and substance component is needed to facilitate better joined up working across the support sector. There is a commitment within the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015, that relevant authorities will lead in their areas of expertise, and work collaboratively with other agencies in fulfilling the objectives of the Act.

Perpetrator interventions

For a number of decades now there has been growing evidence that if we are to successfully tackle VAWDASV we need create attitudinal and behaviour change as well as hold those who perpetrate violence and abuse to account effectively. If done constructively, this not only increases the safety of survivors (including children) but also prevents future victims of abuse and violence. Accredited perpetrator interventions ensure survivor support and safety is central to the programme. There are a range of programmes, interventions and projects currently being provided in Wales, however work is still predominantly focused on domestic abuse, and investment must be made in perpetrator interventions across all forms of VAWDASV.

Regional strategies produced by local authorities and health boards, under the duties of the Act, have identified gaps in the provision of accessible perpetrator interventions in Wales. Many have made it a priority for needs analysis and commissioning, however there is a need to ensure that in taking this forward they are informed by research and evidence-based practice. Local regions would benefit from a national strategic approach to perpetrator intervention that joins up the duties across legislation

¹⁹ <https://gov.wales/10-million-emergency-support-rough-sleepers-wales-during-coronavirus-outbreak>

²⁰ Welsh Women's Aid (2020) *Impact of COVID 19 on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Specialist Service: June Report*

²¹ https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-03/homelessness-action-group-report-march-2020_0.pdf

focused on prevention and ensures alignment across policy contexts that aim to enable early intervention and safe practices which keep the need of survivors at the heart of provision.

Current costings

At a glance:

The Welsh Government has committed to implementing the relevant articles of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) within their competency and the UK Government is in the process of delivering the Domestic Abuse Bill that aims to ratify the convention. The Convention sets out the principle that “immediate, short and long-term specialist support services” be accessible to “any victim subjected to any of the acts of violence covered by the scope of [the] Convention”, provided in an “adequate geographical distribution”, and that “all women victims and their children” be provided with such services.²² Based on the standards set out in the Convention, Welsh Women’s Aid have calculated what it would cost to provide the minimal level of support across domestic abuse and sexual violence, based on the population of the country.

- Costings for refuge along with community based provision: Based on population size Wales needs 314 refuge spaces. These need to be fully accessible and fully supported including support for children and young people in refuge. A proportion should be ring-fenced for specialist ‘by and for’ services that understand the particular barriers to reporting and help-seeking among those who are marginalised.
Delivering fully funded refuge support across Wales will cost £22,035,958
- Costings for sexual violence: Based on population size Wales needs 16 rape crisis centres and sexual assault referral centres. These need to offer support to recent and historic survivors of sexual violence, as the impact of sexual violence can be life long and survivors often seek support a period of time after the experience. They provide specialist therapeutic support, practical and emotional support as well as support through the criminal justice system where a survivor wishes to report.
Delivering fully funded sexual violence support across Wales will cost £20,800,000.
- Children and young people experience VAWDASV in their own right and are recognised as victims. They have a right to support that can specifically address their experiences of abuse and violence and enable them to have healthy relationships in the future.
Investing in provision for children and young people including support for children living in refuge, community based support and specialist therapeutic support for children exposed to domestic abuse would cost £11,088,416.

The why’s and how’s of a sustainable funding model

VAWDASV specialist support services are currently funded through a patchwork of local, regional and national commissioning and grants as well as charitable funding pots - often with short contracts. Welsh Government continues to provide each local authority with grant funding to invest in VAWDASV, however, this grant represents a very small part of the overall resources that will be invested across Welsh Government and the wider statutory sector. There remain differing funding levels and processes according to different local authorities, Health Boards and Police and Crime

²² Article 22

Commissioners. Significant areas of government—economic policy, health, education, employability, poverty, addressing serious violence, for example—have evidenced little commitment to investing in preventing or responding to VAWDASV to date. Others such as social services, children and communities invest in responses relevant to VAWDASV but are not joined up to the strategic approach to VAWDASV, posing the danger of ineffective responses being funded, duplication and siloed approaches. The way the specialist VAWDASV sector is currently funded has created a number of growing issues and concerns including:

- **Security for survivors.** The number one goal of all VAWDASV specialist services is to be there to offer safety and support for survivors. Membership surveys consistently show that due to funding circumstances, many services are unsure of how they will be operating the following year. Survivors deserve to know that support for them is consistent and will always be there for them if they need it.
- **Firefighting and capacity for future planning.** Short funding cycles only allow services to focus on the crisis right in front of them, and leaves little room for strategic planning, prevention or wider work which would benefit survivors' experiences and enable long-term freedom from abuse.
- **Limited activities and bureaucracy.** Funding coming from an uncoordinated variety of sources means services have to dedicate a lot of time and resources to writing applications and reporting to multiple outcomes frameworks. These different pots are also often for specific activities and limits wider strategic thinking.
- **Staff retention.** Uncertain funding means an increase in short-term contracts, making it more difficult for services to recruit and retain their workforce. Specialist services require staff with specialist skills, meaning a lot of time and resource is invested in training and support. Having to retrain multiple new-starters due to difficulties in retaining workforce is unsustainable.
- **Competitive tendering.** Current tendering processes are pitting specialist services against each other as competitors rather than allies. Members constantly report wanting to share knowledge, skills and resources, and though this is the case, services also have to consider how they will survive to continue vital work supporting survivors and staff when time comes to tender for contracts.
- **Postcode lottery.** Services are not funded consistently across Local Authorities and this lack of an overall view of how the specialist sector is funded makes it difficult to identify gaps in provision and think strategically on ending VAWDASV as a whole.

VAWDASV has impact on budgets across health, social services, housing, education, criminal justice, community services and the economy as a whole. Government departments, local authorities, health boards, police forces and the criminal justice system are all spending considerable money on the impacts of VAWDASV.

A sustainable funding model is about the right level of investment, about effective investment and allocation of funds to ensure a holistic response to VAWDASV.

A sustainable funding model would:

1. Know the prevalence of all forms of VAWDASV in Wales and seek to invest in evidence-based approaches that not only reduce the prevalence but aim to eradicate VAWDASV.
2. Listen to and be led by the needs of survivors, aiming to invest in responses that achieve long term freedom from abuse.

3. Have a clear picture of all relevant agencies, including Government, local authority and health boards, current spending on VAWDASV across prevention, protection and support. Acknowledge the duties and contributions of agencies where VAWDASV prevention or support is not their primary focus but is part of their wider work.
4. Work with non-devolved bodies to have a picture of their spend and how it would align.
5. Clearly understand the benefits of investing in a holistic approach (outlined above) would have on health, education, communities, housing and the economy and drawing investment from across portfolios to reflect this.
6. Match the investment to the need and prevalence levels, whilst building in flexibility which recognises that all forms of VAWDASV are underreported, recognising that investment in prevention and early intervention will initially increase demand for support.
7. Set out a plan that draws on proportionate investment from across government grants and portfolios. This would ensure that each grant was effectively utilised and a fairer distribution of the costs of VAWDASV.
8. Create common understanding of the quality of provision and enable effective needs assessment. Ultimately leading to more effective investment of grants.
9. Utilise the Welsh Government VAWDASV commissioning guidance, *Statutory Guidance for the Commissioning of VAWDASV Services in Wales*²³ to promote collaborative commissioning that delivers more consistent and effective services to prevent VAWDASV and protect and support victims of VAWDASV across Wales.
10. Build good commissioning of services of specialist sector that is informed by robust understanding of VAWDASV and the importance of by and for services which are needs-led, gender responsive and specific.
11. Provide robust monitoring to ensure the guidance is being implemented effectively ensuring this guidance applies to the commissioning of both specialist and non-specialist VAWDASV services, whether commissioned from the public, third or private sectors.

A national framework for secure sustainable funding for specialist services should comprise the following 5 elements:

1. National oversight and accountability
2. National principles for implementation
3. Delivery of statutory commissioning guidance that requires high quality joint strategic commissioning of VAWDASV specialist services and other interventions
4. Adequacy of funding: National, regional and local funding
5. Accessibility and quality of services

²³ <https://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/sub-ld12217/sub-ld12217-e.pdf>

Actions – making sustainable funding for specialist services a reality

To deliver secure and sustainable funding for VAWDASV specialist services, working within the above framework, the following actions are required:

Welsh Government

	<i>Action</i>
1.	Create a national mechanism to have oversight of funding provision at national and local level
2.	Use the prevalence of VAWDASV in populations and further evidence into social impact to inform calculation of the resources that would be needed to respond to that need nationally and locally
3.	Continue to allocate ring-fenced VAWDASV grant to local authorities
4.	Ensure additional cross-Government commitment to invest into VAWDASV interventions
5.	Conduct a national mapping of service provision in the regions for all forms of VAWDASV
6.	Ensure that VAWDASV specialist services are adequately resourced to meet known levels of current demand for support
7.	Model effective commissioning by ensuring all Government departments know how much they are spending on VAWDASV, and publish what they spend on VAWDASV and what difference that money makes
8.	Ensure cross-departmental responsibility to allocate at least a portion of their budget to create a pooled Government budget to commission VAWDASV specialist services provision that is required nationally, in collaboration with commissioners
9.	Model effective commissioning by ensuring all Government departments and Responsible Authorities also embed VAWDASV delivery into mainstream commissioning mechanisms
10.	Clarify who is actually responsible and accountable for commissioning the range of services to meet the various needs, and ensure every region has mechanisms in place to deliver and coordinate strategic VAWDASV commissioning collaboration
11.	Ensure systems are in place to quality assure and monitor regional commissioning strategies and hold commissioners to account for implementing the statutory commissioning guidance across Wales
12.	Produce an agreed performance framework and requirement for public reporting on progress

Commissioners

	<i>Action</i>
1.	Collaborate with specialist services, survivors and statutory bodies to develop a VAWDASV commissioning plan for their region, informed by the regional strategy encompassing all forms of VAWDASV
2.	Pool budgets to make best use of existing resources, utilising existing grants
3.	Agree contracts for a minimum of 3-5 years
4.	Ensure that any specialist services commissioned already hold or will work towards nationally recognised and accredited quality standards
5.	Ensure work to address ACEs and “Serious Violence” being developed across Wales embeds responses to VAWDASV

Responsible authorities

	<i>Action</i>
1.	Ensure that the statutory commissioning guidance is adhered to and that a regional commissioning strategy is produced in consultation with specialist services and survivors.

VAWDASV Specialist Service Providers

	<i>Action</i>
1.	Participate in local or regional commissioning groups, and seek to influence regional commissioning strategies and the needs analysis

Conclusion

We cannot continue to fund services in the way we have been doing so for long. Ending violence against women is everyone's business, a cross-government, cross-sector approach funded sustainably is needed to enact change in a meaningful way and end violence against women, in all its forms.

In Wales, we have a national commitment from Government to deliver a model for sustainable funding for specialist services. As a sector, as ministers and government officials, as a country we have talked extensively surrounding ending violence against women in all its forms through implementation of the Act. We appreciate the continued work of partners in Wales who contribute to achieving a model for sustainable funding, either through the National Task and Finish Group, campaigning or their wider work. However as outlined in this document, leadership and full commitment to our suggested actions is needed to turn discussions into reality. Particularly when it comes to prevention, sexual violence, children and young people, support for migrant women, and sustainable funding for specialist services.

Appendix A

Context and terminology

What is VAWDASV?

When we refer to VAWDASV in this document we acknowledge the definitions aligned to 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. These are acknowledged in the Welsh Government National VAWDASV Strategy 2016-2021.²⁴

Violence against women is a “violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women, and shall mean 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 includes rape, domestic violence, forced marriage and so-called ‘honour’ crimes, female genital mutilation, stalking, trafficking and sexual exploitation.

The Istanbul Convention defines **domestic violence** as “all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former and current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim”.

Sexual violence includes any behaviour perceived to be of a sexual nature which is unwanted and takes place without consent or understanding. This includes rape and sexual assault, sexual violence and abuse, sexual harassment, child sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation, including associated with trafficking and the sex industry. The sex industry includes prostitution, pornography, and other commercial sex-based activities such as lap-dancing, often but not solely associated with the ‘night-time economy’. Trafficking into and within the UK is internationally recognised as linked to prostitution; facilitating movement for prostitution within and across borders constitutes trafficking.

What are VAWDASV specialist services?

The accepted definition²⁵ of VAWDASV specialist services in Wales is:

Services that are delivered independently from the state (i.e. third sector) and whose core business it is to support survivors and/or perpetrators and/or children and young people impacted by any form of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (i.e. rape and sexual assault including child sexual abuse, domestic abuse, sexual harassment, forced marriage, FGM, sexual exploitation including through the sex industry, trafficking and modern day slavery and so-called ‘honour’ based violence);

²⁴ [Violence against women and domestic abuse | GOV.WALES](#)

²⁵ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-05/statutory-guidance-for-the-commissioning-of-vawdasv-services-in-wales.pdf>

Whose delivery is needs-led and gender-responsive, recognising the continuum of violence against women and ensuring interventions and prevention work connects VAWDASV to wider patterns of sex and other intersectional inequalities, including ethnicity, class, gender identity, age, ability, sexuality, religion and belief;

Whose understanding and delivery is informed by analysis of VAWDASV being gendered and a cause and consequence of inequality between women and men, which intersects with factors such as ethnicity, age, class, sexuality and disability to impact on experiences of abuse and routes to recovery. VAWDASV specialist services recognise that these forms of violence are entirely preventable, they happen to women and girls disproportionately because they are women and girls as a means of social control, which maintains and reproduces unequal power relations and presents an obstacle to achieving equality and human rights for women and girls;

That differ from 'general support' services in that the organisations/services have a gender and culturally responsive and holistic service delivery model, in accordance with the UK quality standards frameworks for such services, and are run by and for the communities they serve. In doing so they offer a uniquely empowering experience particularly to women and children and to BME communities, as the client group is reflected in staffing, management and governance structures of these organisations.

Appendix B

Sustainable funding actions expanded detail²⁶

- **Welsh Government to create a *national mechanism to have oversight of funding provision*** at national and local level – the mechanism should be responsible for understanding the costs of legislative and commissioning requirements, joining up gaps between national and local funding, and holding commissioners to account for developing and delivering effective and integrated commissioning strategies as a means of ensuring sustainability of services.
- **Welsh Government to use the prevalence of VAWDASV in populations and the evidence into social, financial and environmental costs of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence to extrapolate to local areas, to inform *calculation of the resources that would be needed to respond to that need nationally and locally***. Consideration should be given to the extent to which existing funding formulas identify this need and provide funds to meet them.
- **Welsh Government to continue to *allocate ring-fenced VAWDASV grant to local authorities to enable provision of specialist services and delivery of the obligations within the Act***. Further work is required with local authorities to understand the costs of implementing the Act and the resources required to deliver its requirements.
- **Welsh Government to ensure *additional cross-Government commitment to invest into VAWDASV interventions*** and in support of this, to deliver gender-responsive budgeting which should identify and release funds; this would enable pooling of resources nationally to be allocated to local areas for VAWDASV commissioning.
- **Welsh Government to conduct a *national mapping of service provision in the regions for all forms of VAWDASV*** (domestic abuse, sexual violence, FGM, trafficking, so-called ‘honour-based violence’, supporting exit from prostitution, sexual harassment, child sexual abuse, stalking and harassment) to ensure services have sufficient capacity to meet need, and no unintended consequences or significant loss of provision following commissioning. This should be carried out in close collaboration with specialist umbrella organisations and specialist services which already hold essential data on core costs associated with running services that meet accredited quality standards and equalities requirements, level of need and gaps in funding.
- **Welsh Government to ensure that *VAWDASV specialist services are adequately resourced to meet known levels of current demand for support*** presented in every local authority area, as identified in needs assessments and by specialist services and commissioners working together. Priority should be given to ensuring those most marginalised and discriminated against (who have “complex needs”) are able to access services and meet their support needs. Additional funding (e.g. through grants, charitable sources, donations, selling goods and services) can then be sourced to address unmet need, additional and specific local needs, and community prevention work. Consideration should be given to establishing a national emergency *fund to alleviate the crisis in funding shortfall for frontline services* until a more robust model is developed.

²⁶ Extract from *Achieving Secure and Sustainable Funding for VAWDASV Specialist Services* A Discussion Paper By Eleri Butler, Karen Jones and Natalie Southgate

- **Welsh Government to** model effective commissioning by ensuring *all Government departments know how much they are spending on VAWDASV*, and *publish what they spend on VAWDASV and what difference that money makes*, covering the identification and response to VAWDASV by that Department and how much they spend commissioning external provision that addresses VAWDASV, through grants or contracts.
- **Welsh Government to** ensure cross-departmental responsibility to allocate at least a portion of their budget to create a *pooled Government budget to commission VAWDASV specialist services provision that is required nationally*, in collaboration with commissioners, ie:
 - National VAWDASV umbrella organisation
 - National Helpline for survivors of VAWDASV
 - National destitution fund to enable survivors with “no recourse” to access safety and support.

And also resource and retain oversight of regional and local commissioning to ensure Wales sustains:

 - A national network of refuges (funded nationally and locally to deliver cross-authority support)
 - Services ‘by and for’ Black and minority women
 - Services that deliver sexual violence specialist support independent of the state
 - Services that deliver targeted support for children and young people
 - Effective perpetrator intervention services
- **Welsh Government to** model effective commissioning by ensuring all Government departments and Responsible authorities also *embed VAWDASV delivery into mainstream commissioning mechanisms* (commissioned from specialist services and within public service delivery) in order to maximise investment into VAWDASV provision locally (e.g. Housing Support Grant, Children and Communities Grant, other grants to meet the needs of communities in Wales, like education and regenerating areas of deprivation). This would include ensuring VAWDASV outcomes, that align with the ‘wellbeing of future generations’ priorities and mainstream grants (HSG, CCG), are embedded into exiting national, regional and local commissioning processes.
- **Welsh Government to** clarify who is actually responsible and accountable for commissioning the range of services to meet the various needs, and ensure every region has *mechanisms in place to deliver and coordinate strategic VAWDASV commissioning collaboration* across Area Programme Boards, Commissioning Groups and Public Service Boards.
- **Welsh Government to** ensure systems are in place *to quality assure and monitor regional commissioning strategies and hold commissioners to account* for implementing the statutory commissioning guidance across Wales, through e.g. Wales Audit Office, public reporting on VAWDASV expenditure and delivery of statutory requirements, and a national forum for practitioners/commissioners to work through the implementation requirements.
- **Welsh Government to** produce an *agreed performance framework and requirement for public reporting on progress* by responsible authorities to ensure that the way in which legislative and statutory guidance duties have been met is reported in annual reports that can be periodically externally audited (as with current obligations to publish gender pay gaps, for example).
- **Commissioners to** collaborate to develop a VAWDASV commissioning plan for their region, informed by the regional strategy, commission in accordance with the statutory commissioning guidance and in accordance with the above principles.

- **Commissioners to** pool budgets to make best use of existing resources, utilising the Hosing Support grant, Children and Communities grants, Police and crime funds, resources to deliver children’s services, education services, youth services, health services
- **Commissioners to** agree contracts for a minimum of 3-5 years, adopting flexible principles for ongoing funding and ability to extend the term of contract.
- **Commissioners to** ensure that any specialist services commissioned already hold or will work towards nationally available and accredited quality standards (from the suite of standards available for sexual violence, domestic abuse, BME and perpetrator specialist services in Wales) that the voices of survivors inform service design and that ongoing service user engagement is maintained throughout the life of any contract.
- **Commissioners to** ensure work to address ACEs and “Serious Violence” being developed across Wales embeds responses to VAWDASV, to in recognition of its cross-cutting priority and of the need to maximise investment into VAWDASV prevention in Wales.
- **Responsible authorities to** ensure that the statutory commissioning guidance is adhered to and that a regional commissioning strategy is produced, involving extensive consultation with all partners, based on the needs identified through a comprehensive needs assessment. The regional commissioning strategy should be reviewed every 3 years, ensure that funding is prioritised to address the needs identified in the commissioning strategy, and assist with sourcing and prioritising funding for VAWDASV services.
- **VAWDASV Specialist Service Providers to** participate in local or regional commissioning groups, and seek to influence regional commissioning strategies and the needs analysis, specifically to inform what is working on the ground and any emerging needs.

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