

2nd September, 2014

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee
 CELG(4)-26-14 Paper 5 (Consultation response GBV41)

Dear Sir/Madam,

Consultation on the Gender-based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Bill

Thank you for inviting South Wales Police (SWP) to contribute to the inquiry into the above Bill.

The terms of reference of the inquiry have been considered and whilst South Wales Police acknowledge that the Bill will not directly impact upon the Police Service, it is noted that a number of the legislative proposals could indirectly impact upon our working practices with devolved Public Services, due to the key role Police play in the multi agency response to Domestic Abuse (DA) and Sexual Violence (SV).

Of the 5 key points for consideration, we support the publication of national and local strategies and the appointment of a Ministerial Advisor, as both of these will provide an increased focus and accountability for Public Authorities to engage in a robust co-ordinated response to DA and SV processes.

However, whilst SWP welcome the proposal to “formalise and standardise existing good practice” around Multi Agency Fora in order to assess *all* cases, regardless of the level of risk, we would recommend that this process be taken one step further.

Currently there are no statutory responsibilities placed on agencies that support the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) model. If MARAC was to be legislated for, greater scrutiny could be placed on the process alongside statutory requirements for relevant agencies to provide a more effective quality of service to victims of abuse. This could then be supported by Welsh Government led funding for the consistent commissioning of services or permanent employment of key roles such as MARAC co-ordinators and Independent Domestic /Sexual Violence Advocates (IDVA/ISVAs), around which there is great inconsistency.

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The benefits of implementing statutory requirements of agencies will enhance and strengthen the current process as well as maximising resources. The advantages of this legislative

structure is clearly evident in other business areas of protecting vulnerable persons, including All Wales Child Protection Procedures, Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements and the All Wales Protection of Vulnerable Adults.

Therefore, Option 3 – Introduce an Assembly Bill to address the Policy Objectives (pages 50 – 53) for both National and Local Strategies along with statutory guidance is strongly supported.

Placing a duty on devolved public services will also enhance existing information sharing protocols amongst partner agencies, which on occasions can prove challenging. Improved outcomes via effective prevention, appropriate protection and high quality support for service users are all highlighted as outcomes sought from this Bill and as best practices are currently being utilised in the South Wales areas (through MARAC and WASPI), it is anticipated that information sharing will continue to improve.

It is evident that the consistency and common quality standards being sought through this Bill could provide a good opportunity for All Wales collaboration in terms of responding positively and corporately to DA and SV in Wales.

Yours faithfully

Lian Penhale
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Head of Public Protection
South Wales Police