

PLVAW 14

Ymchwiliad ôl-ddeddfwriaethol i Ddeddf Trais yn erbyn Menywod,
Cam-drin Domestig a Thrais Rhywiol (Cymru) 2015
Post legislative inquiry into the Violence against Women,
Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015
Ymateb gan: Dinas Cyngor Caerdydd
Response from: City of Cardiff Council

- **To what extent the approach to tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence is improving as a result of the obligations in the Act?**

1.1 It is our opinion that it is too early to say as local authorities have been awaiting the national strategy to be able to inform the local strategy. Given that we have only recently received the national strategy document and are now engaged in a consultation process, it will be some time before the main objectives of the legislation become actions within local strategies and delivery plans.

1.2 The act has been useful in raising awareness of VAWDASV however, it is our opinion that the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2015 has been more widely publicised and this has been the main focus for partners. A document from Welsh Government that aligns both pieces of legislation alongside the Future Generations Act would be very useful.

1.3 In relation to the NTF, while the supplementary guidance has been useful, the rollout has been problematic due to IT issues and licences. Some issues surrounding the practicalities of training all staff as required by the legislation have yet to be resolved and the deadlines initially set by Welsh Government for completion of Group 1 were unachievable. Similarly the learning from Group 2 (pilot sites) is unlikely to be available until January 2017. This means the training delivery plan date of May 2017 may be unachievable also. During a meeting between City of Cardiff Council and the Welsh Government VAWDA team it was mentioned that these dates would be moved back. We are awaiting formal notification of this.

1.4 VAWDASV team at Welsh Government has undergone a number of significant staff changes since the legislation achieved Royal Assent and this has affected the momentum of the delivery. Key messages and policy changes have stalled affecting the ability of local authorities to plan and take matters forward.

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1.5 In Cardiff, the role of the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator has been instrumental in raising awareness of the Act and the implications for statutory services. The future funding of this post remains unclear. In our opinion, more staff and resources are required to support the implementation of the act, not less.

1.6 A number of third sector agencies are fully committed to the Violence Against Women Agenda. In our opinion some elements introduced by the Act such as the e-learning should be made available to all third sector organisations.

1.7 In Cardiff, the White Ribbon Campaign has been an excellent way to raise awareness of the Act with both professionals and members of the public. A White Ribbon Cymru, supported by Welsh Government, would certainly be useful in helping to push forward the Violence Against Women Agenda which would include raising awareness of the Act and the supporting guidance.

- **What are the most effective methods of capturing the views and experiences of survivors? Are arrangements in place to capture these experiences and to what extent is this information being used to help inform the implementation of the Act's provisions?**

2.1 In Cardiff, all of the specialist service providers engage with service users via groups, feedback forms etc however there is little consistency, information collated is organisation specific and it is not often shared more widely.

2.2 Cardiff Council welcome the opportunity to work with Welsh Women's Aid who are piloting the SEEDS model in Cardiff. The Domestic Abuse Coordinator has met with the co-ordinator of the project and are considering ways in which survivors can contribute to the re-commissioning process of domestic violence services in Cardiff.

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2.3 Many survivors are unaware that the Act exists. In Cardiff, we use the White Ribbon Campaign to raise awareness of the Act with the general public. White Ribbon events will also provide an opportunity to raise awareness of the SEEDS pilot, the CHOICE research project (older people) and the Live Fear Free Helpline.

- **Whether survivors of abuse are beginning to experience better responses from public authorities as a result of the Act, particularly those needing specialist services?**

3.1 Given that the rollout of the NTF is still in its infancy and we are still awaiting statutory guidance in respect of Ask and Act along with the learning from pilot sites, again it is too early to assess the impact.

3.2 In Cardiff, the Act has enabled us to review our existing Cardiff Domestic Abuse Partnership Executive group and we are currently reviewing the Terms of Reference to enable us to consider a broader strategic approach that considers the wider Violence Against Women agenda.

- **Whether the National Adviser has sufficient power and independence from the Welsh Government to ensure implementation of the Act?**

4.1 It is not possible to assess the power and influence that this post has until there is a situation where a challenge has been brought to light. However, it is noted that the National Adviser has been proactive in meeting with local authorities and other bodies to raise awareness of the VAWDASV legislation and has offered to support development of local strategies.

4.2 The post is funded by Welsh Government and the post is part-time and there is no identified budget. All of these things may impact upon the effectiveness of this post.

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4.3 What sanctions have been set in place for LA's or responsible authorities for non-compliance?

- **To what extent the good practice guide to healthy relationships is successfully influencing the development of a whole school approach to challenging violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence?**

5.1 This is again too early to assess. The take up of the Spectrum Project, funded by Welsh Government, has been slow. In Cardiff there has been low take up in the special schools in particular. In Cardiff the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator, along with City of Cardiff Council Policy and Development Manager, briefed over 100 Head teachers and Deputy Head Teachers about the Act, their obligations, and promoted the 'Whole School Approach' guide. Many of the teachers were unaware of role of education and what is required. More work is required to align the requirements of the Act to other pieces of legislation and guidance that affects education in Wales.

5.2 The Welsh Women's Aid Children Matter project was highlighted as a free resource however there is a significant cost attached to the initial purchase of the STAR manual and training. Given the STAR programme is a more in-depth programme than the Spectrum programme provides it would be a very useful resource. It would be helpful if the costs attached to the purchasing of this programme could be reviewed.

5.3 The Estyn Thematic Review mentioned by Welsh Government to take place during 2016/17 has not as yet been undertaken? This review will be key to the success and focus of schools going forward.

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