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Providing confidential support
and information on domestic
abuse, sexual violence and
violence against women in Wales

**Llinell Gymorth
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trais rhywiol a thrais yn erbyn merched
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Welsh Government Finance Committee: Consultation on the Proposals for the Draft Budget 2017-18

Consultation Response by Welsh Women's Aid

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These are the views of:	<i>Welsh Women's Aid (Third Sector) - the national charity in Wales working to end domestic abuse and all forms of violence against women.</i>

1. About Welsh Women's Aid

- 1.1 Welsh Women's Aid is the national charity in Wales working to prevent domestic abuse and all forms of violence against women and ensure high-quality services for survivors that are needs-led, gender-responsive and holistic.
- 1.2 Established in 1978, we are an umbrella organisation that represents and supports a national federation of 23 local independent charities delivering specialist domestic abuse and violence against women prevention services in Wales, as part of a UK network of provision. These specialist services constitute our core membership, and they provide lifesaving refuges, outreach, and community advocacy and support to survivors of violence and abuse - women, men, children, families - and deliver innovative preventative work in local communities. We also deliver direct services including the Welsh Government funded Live Fear Free Helpline; a National Training Service; refuge and advocacy services in Colwyn Bay and Wrexham; and the national Children Matter project which supports local services to help children and young people affected by abuse and to deliver preventative STAR group-work in every local authority in Wales.
- 1.3 We have been at the forefront of shaping coordinated community responses and practice in Wales, by campaigning for change and providing advice, consultancy, support and training to deliver policy and service improvements for survivors, families and communities. As a national federation, our policy work, consultancy, training and advocacy is all grounded in the experience of local specialist services and service users. Our success is founded on making sure the experiences and needs of survivors are central to all we do.



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1.4 Summary of recommendation for the Finance Committee to inform scrutiny of Government Department budgets and the forthcoming draft 2017-18 Budget

1.4.1 Welsh Government protects funding for independent (third sector) specialist domestic abuse and sexual violence services in Wales and establishes a model for long term sustainable funding for these specialist services, for the duration of the Government. Investment should be targeted at prevention and early help, developing needs-led and strengths-based services, and achieving systems change and transformation ('change that lasts').

1.4.2 Welsh Government ensures budgets support delivery of statutory guidance associated with the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act, and that budgetary investment targeted at promoting the well-being of future generations, reducing poverty and mitigating welfare reform, proactively addresses violence against women prevention and alleviating adverse childhood experiences.

1.4.3 All Government Departments (Finance and Local Government; Health, Well-Being and Sport; Environment and Rural Affairs; Communities and Children; Economy, and Education) prioritise investment into the protection and support of victims and the prevention of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence as a strategic cross-cutting priority, and provide leadership to ensure this is core business for public service boards.

1.4.4 Welsh Government promotes the business case for violence against women prevention amongst all providers/contractors in receipt of Government investment, requiring them to:

- Ensure they demonstrate corporate social responsibility by creating workplace policies, and training and educating employees on domestic and sexual abuse.
- Promote and/or provide access to support for victims, and take action against perpetrators.
- Exert leadership in local communities by supporting specialist services and promoting preventative campaigns and equality between women and men.

2. Welsh Women's Aid's response to consultation questions



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Our response to this

consultation builds on our *Submission to the National Assembly for Wales Finance Committee scrutiny of the draft 2016-17 Wales budget* (February 2016) and is also informed by our recent 'state of the sector' survey of the 23 specialist domestic abuse/violence against women services in Wales (who constitute our membership) and our own direct service provision.

2.1 What, in your opinion, has been the impact of the Welsh Government's 2016-17 budget?

2.1.1 At a strategic level, we appreciate Welsh Government has had some difficult financial decisions to make, and we agree with the focus on prevention and early intervention across priority areas: health and social services; educational attainment; supporting children, families and deprived communities, and growth and jobs. At a national level, we were pleased that the Supporting People Programme was recognised as a key priority and protected for 2016-17, as this is one of the key sources of funding for supporting survivors of abuse accessing refuge-based services in Wales. We support Cymorth Cymru and Community Housing Cymru's Supporting People Campaign and the need for appropriate protection of the Supporting People budget for 2017-18.

2.1.2 In 2015 we called on Welsh Government to make a commitment to ensure funding for vital lifesaving domestic abuse and sexual violence services in Wales would be protected in 2016/17, and that sufficient resources are identified to deliver a sustainable funding solution for specialist services in the longer term. Last year, we highlighted that **284 women in Wales could not be accommodated by refuges in Wales in 2014/15 because there was no space available when they needed help**. These services already exist on shoestring budgets we advised that specialist services cannot afford to face more funding cuts and survivors of abuse cannot continue to be turned away by specialist services, or be held on waiting lists for support, because they are unable to meet demand for help

2.1.3 In 2016/17 Welsh Government national grant for delivering Welsh Women's Aid core service provision to deliver a range of preventative, early intervention, and strategic work across Wales, was maintained. We welcomed Ministerial commitment in 2016 to sustain services in 2016/17 and work with the sector to find a sustainable solution to funding specialist services in Wales from 2017.

2.1.4 However, In 2016/17, 46% local domestic abuse/violence against women services, told us they received cuts to their funding, resulting in reduced capacity or loss of their children's support, counselling and refuge-based support services. **In 2015/16 388 women could not be accommodated by refuges in Wales because there was no space available**



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when they needed help. These

cuts have deeply worrying implications for the safety and support available for survivors of abuse, and for the sustainability of services that offer a lifeline to women, children and families across Wales. We remain concerned that local specialist domestic abuse and sexual violence services in Wales in the third sector, and the survivors that rely on them, face a postcode lottery dependent on whether local commissioners prioritise these services in response to local and national need.

2.1.5 The lack of secure funding for specialist domestic abuse support services for children and young people has been raised as a particular concern. For 45% of domestic abuse /violence against women services who had cuts to their 2016-17 funding, these cuts were made to (or included) projects that support children and young people affected by domestic abuse. Continuation funding for domestic abuse support for children and young people is also a concern for services that did not receive funding cuts this year.

2.1.6 It is important to note that the impact of previous budgets is still being felt by specialist services in Wales. Our survey revealed that 58% of domestic abuse services had their funding cut in 2015/16. Of these, 50% went on to receive cuts in 2016/17 budgets. This has led to reduced salaries, reduced support hours in refuge services, a reduction in capacity across whole organisations and services being unable to take on new staff.

2.2 What expectations do you have of the 2017-18 draft budget proposals?

2.2.1 Following the enactment of all provisions in the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015, which includes statutory duties to prevent violence against women and requirements for referral pathways between public authorities and specialist third sector services, we expect that budget proposals will prioritise domestic abuse and sexual violence service provision from 2017/18. This expectation is also founded on previous Ministerial commitments to identify a solution for the sustainable funding of specialist domestic abuse and sexual violence services in Wales from 2017.

2.2.2 Across Wales, uncertainty remains around the provision of services: only 33% of domestic abuse services are confident their funding will continue from March 2017. Two thirds of domestic abuse services reported having little or no confidence that current funding will continue and not knowing what funding levels they will have from March. Of these, six services have less than 35% of their total income secured for 2017/18. This includes two



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services that have nothing confirmed, one service that has less than 10% confirmed, and two services that have less than 25% confirmed.

2.2.3 Domestic abuse services state that they either fear or face being subject to competitive tendering during the year ahead with a likely loss of their service to a large non-specialist provider, as a possible outcome.

- One service commented: “budget cuts are frequently spoken about, as the internal [council] Supporting People team is largely financed from the Supporting People Grant...the Council continues to absorb much of the grant for its own running purposes.”

2.3 How financially prepared is your organisation for the 2017-18 financial year, and how robust is your ability to plan for future years?

2.3.1 The ability to plan for future years is challenging and limiting, if we rely on successive annual grants. Whereas policy and legislation focusses on long-term approaches to decision-making, this is not supported by a corresponding long-term approach to funding the third sector. At present we do not know what funding we have, if any, from March 2017 to deliver our core services.

2.3.2 Welsh Women's Aid core service delivery (funded by Welsh Government) is vital for the continuance of support to specialist domestic abuse/violence against women services in Wales. The funding enables us to help specialist services and local partnerships to develop and improve service delivery to survivors in Wales. This is achieved by providing policy and service updates, support on commissioning frameworks and service models, learning and development courses/materials and updates, statistical information and data reporting to inform needs assessments, consultation opportunities, survivor engagement, Children Matter preventative programme, and quality standards and accreditation for specialist services in Wales. We also support Welsh Government and statutory authorities with regards to expert feedback on all aspects of violence against women issues. This includes development of guidance to support legislative delivery; needs assessments and commissioning models for effective early intervention and prevention work; and on needs-led service delivery models, such as the new service model - Change that Lasts - developed and being piloted by Welsh Women's Aid.

2.3.3 Our highly experienced team have been successful in proactively raising additional funding to support the Welsh Government strategy to improve services to survivors through capacity building for specialist services. Together, we aim to maximise financial and social



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value whilst ensuring specialist

services enable survivors to achieve independence and freedom from abuse in Wales. We continue to make every effort to diversify our income but would not be able to continue with the level of support and development work we provide without core funding from Welsh Government.

2.3.4 As outlined above, local domestic abuse services are still uncertain about their funding position from 2017/18 and the majority do not know what their funding will be from March. Despite awaiting publication of national guidance on commissioning of domestic abuse and sexual violence services, some areas are beginning competitive tendering processes before guidance is published, which places the continuation of specialist services at risk. Planning for future years in domestic abuse/sexual violence services that are reliant on annual public authority funding is impossible to achieve for many services. Whereas policy and legislation focusses on long-term approaches to decision-making, this is not supported by a corresponding long-term approach to funding the third sector. The current funding climate for small specialist providers presents significant challenges with regards strategic business planning, service delivery and development and income diversification.

2.4 The Committee would like to focus on a number of specific areas in the scrutiny of the budget, do you have any specific comments on the areas identified below?

2.4.1 Approach to preventative spending and how is this represented in resource allocation

2.4.1.1 The short-term false economy of cutting funding to specialist services at a local level fails to recognise that the cost of dealing with just one domestic violence homicide exceeds most of these services' annual budgets. Each domestic abuse homicide is estimated to cost public services in the region of £1.1million. The cost of domestic abuse alone in Wales is £826.4m annually (in service costs, lost economic output and human and emotional costs).

2.4.1.2 This short-term false economy also fails to acknowledge that these specialist services collectively have expertise in protection, provision and prevention, built up over four decades. It is these services that the public sector are reliant on to refer survivors to when they identify violence and abuse; to support and advocate for survivors to help them navigate the myriad of statutory systems that fail to meet their needs; to advise public services on how prevention can be achieved and to deliver community engagement work to promote prevention.

2.4.1.3 Investing in tackling violence against women prevention, therefore, is a cost effective approach and resources to do this should be protected nationally. Even a small increase in the



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cost of providing specialist services is outweighed by the decrease in the costs to public services, lost economic output and the decrease in the human and emotional costs¹.

2.4.2 Welsh Government policies to reduce poverty, mitigate welfare reform and prepare for an ageing population

2.4.2.1 We support a vision for a more equal Wales, and action to tackle the causes and effects of poverty, the creation of cohesive communities where everyone has the support they need to live healthy, prosperous and independent lives.

2.4.2.2 However we recommend that Welsh Government should ensure budgetary investment targeted at reducing poverty and mitigating welfare reform proactively addresses violence against women prevention and the negative impacts these have on women and children. Evidence shows that female lone parents and single pensioner households will experience the biggest drop in living standards as a result of cuts to public services compared to other households Analysis by the House of Commons library which shows that of the £16bn in savings announced since the 2015 general election, three quarters will come directly from women.²

2.4.3 Sustainability of public services, innovation and service transformation

2.4.3.1 We are concerned that investment in core budgets rather than through ring-fenced grants has the potential to have a detrimental impact on public authority grants to violence against women third sector services. Several specialist services in Wales have told us that local authority cuts to their grant funding are made in order to prop up statutory provision. They have also said that the value of partnerships with specialist independent providers like domestic abuse services is not recognised in many local authorities, where they are either quick to cut services and deliver similar provision in-house, or reduce specialist provision in order to contract with one large generic provider. Funding for domestic abuse and sexual violence services needs to be protected in the current financial climate.

2.4.3.2 We strongly recommend that the budget prioritises the sustainability of the independent third sector (as well as the public sector), especially small specialist providers like domestic abuse/violence against women services. Women supported by specialist services

¹ Walby, S. (2009) The Cost of Domestic Violence: Update 2009. Lancaster: Lancaster University.

² Women's Budget Group response to spending review, 2015.



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often face multiple

discrimination and disadvantages based on their identities and life experience, including unemployment, low pay, housing problems, poverty or mental health issues. Women with severe and multiple disadvantage value women-only services to help them build resilience and recover from abuse or other adverse childhood experiences.

2.4.3.3 We recommend investment should be targeted at systems change and transformation (as well as public service innovation). Systems-change is being advocated by voluntary sector services like Welsh Women's Aid and others, because at present, government-led systems across public services have developed to only be able to respond to one 'need' at a time, which in turn generate perverse situations where some of those in greatest need receive the least help.

2.4.3.4 In many cases, survivors of abuse are being failed by systems that are created to serve agencies, and not improve the lives of survivors of abuse; a focus on risk has been accompanied by a reduction in needs-led responses, and a growing crisis of unmet need. If inter-related systems were changed to meet survivors' needs from the outset, then resources would be saved and survivors of abuse would achieve a much greater positive benefit from their interaction with public authorities. To support a systems-change approach that transforms services we recommend Welsh Government should ensure cross-departmental budgets support delivery of multi-agency statutory guidance that delivers systems-change and 'change that lasts'; prioritising needs-led strengths-based delivery that places survivors of abuse at the centre of any intervention.

2.4.4 Local health board financial arrangements

2.4.4.1 We would like to see greater join up between health, social care and housing budgets, and how violence against women prevention is addressed strategically across these sectors. We recommend that Ministers ensure NHS and social care investment enables these agencies to play a greater role in the prevention of domestic abuse, sexual violence and other forms of violence against women.

2.4.4.2 Domestic and sexual violence and abuse has major public health implications, and represents an enormous cost to the NHS. The close link between such abuse and mental and physical ill-health, children's safety and wellbeing, plus the positive results of working in partnership, make it even more important that the NHS recognises and acts upon its responsibilities in this area. The NHS spends more time and money dealing with the impact of violence against women and children than any other agency, so action to tackle the causes



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and consequences of such violence is therefore not only cost-effective but contributes to the health and well-being of the population.

2.4.4.3 Therefore, in order to effectively achieve a healthier Wales, to reduce health inequalities, to close the gap in health outcomes and achieve a more equal Wales, it is vital that health and social care budgets prioritise early intervention and prevention of domestic abuse, sexual violence and other forms of violence against women.

2.4.5 Low carbon budgeting and preparing for the Future Generations Act

2.4.5.1 Investment in specialist services across Wales would help ensure many of the 'Wellbeing Goals' set out in The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which aim to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales:

- **A more prosperous Wales.** Domestic violence costs Wales £303.5m annually: £202.6m in service costs and £100.9m to lost economic output.³ These figures do not include any element of human and emotional costs, which the research estimates costs Wales an additional £522.9m. In addition, women who experience violence will be adversely affected in both education and work. Each year, one in ten victims of partner abuse takes time off work as a result of the abuse. By incorporating approaches to prevent violence against women, Wales will be more prosperous both with regard to public spending, and also in terms of personal ability to earn, learn and succeed.
- **A Wales of cohesive communities.** Violence against women and cohesive communities are interlinked. Tackling violence against women will lead to safer communities. In addition, violence against women can result in the further social exclusion of already marginalised groups, for example Black and minority communities, refugees, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT+) communities. Tackling violence against women will challenge social stigma, which will promote inclusiveness and better community ties.
- **A healthier, more equal Wales.** This includes a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances. Gender inequality is a root cause of violence against women.⁴ As such tackling violence against women, through funding specialist services that help prevent violence and abuse, will lead to greater equality between men and women in Wales. The Act also sets out the goal for

³ Walby, S., The Cost of Domestic Violence: Update 2009

⁴ UN Women: virtual knowledge centre to end violence against women and girls:
<http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/300-causes-protective-and-risk-factors-.html>



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a healthy Wales; a

society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood. The World Health Organisation has stated that violence against women is a 'global health problem of epidemic proportions'.⁵ By funding services that prevent violence against women, Wales will see a positive increase to the nations' physical and mental health, reduction in problematic substance use, as well as improved resilience and recovery from trauma associated with violence against women and adverse childhood experiences.

2.4.6 Impact of the Welsh Government's legislative programme and whether its implementation is sufficiently resourced

2.4.6.1 A long-term funding model is essential if services across Wales are to be sustainable and grow to meet demand. Without this, women and children across Wales are at risk of not getting the support they need to achieve independence and live free from violence. Following the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015, it is anticipated that improvements to identifying violence against women by public services will lead to increased demand on specialist services in Wales. It is deeply worrying that this might happen at a time when lifesaving services may be left without funding to protect and support the most vulnerable women and children in Wales.

2.4.6.2 We urgently need consistent national and local commitment by funders, and sustainable long-term funding to sustain specialist services that work to prevent domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women in Wales.

2.4.7 Scrutiny of Welsh language, equalities and sustainability

2.4.7.1 Violence against women and girls is a human rights violation. One in every three women worldwide experiences physical and/or sexual violence at least once in their lives, usually by an intimate partner. United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has proclaimed the elimination of violence against women as a top priority of the UN's work and achieving "gender equality and empowering women and girls" is one of the Goals of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, adopted by the 193 member states of the UN during the annual General Assembly (25 September 2015). One of the important targets of the goal is the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls and the need for specialist women's services to support survivors.

⁵ World Health Organisation Media Centre:
http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2013/violence_against_women_20130620/en/



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2.4.7.2 Black and minority

organisations that support survivors of violence and abuse are most vulnerable to cuts and closure across the UK, even though they are well known in the communities they serve and have the highest numbers of women approaching them directly, rather than being referred on by police, social workers or others. Bigger, more generic services are rarely able to achieve this profile or these 'self-referrals'. In work to eliminate violence against women, particular attention should be given to the rights and needs of women and girls facing multiple forms of discrimination, including women from minority ethnic communities and asylum seekers and those with refugee status, survivors of trafficking, women living in poverty, disabled women, and LGBT+ women. In every case the inclusion of women's voices is imperative in efforts to prevent or mitigate such violence.

2.4.7.3 We urge Welsh Government, through its budgetary processes and associated legislative and policy frameworks, to commit to contributing to the realization of equality between women and men and to the elimination of all forms of violence against women, which will transform the lives of women and girls in Wales. To achieve this, we recommend Welsh Government should ensure budgets deliver sufficient specialist women's refuge spaces in Wales to meet the needs of women and children and a national network of independent specialist women's services to support women and children to achieve independence and freedom from abuse.

2.5 What spending commitments and priorities would you like to see in the 2017-18 draft budget in order to ensure that progress is being made on preventative spending and, in particular, the area of health and social services?

2.5.1 Welsh Government commits to protecting the funding for independent (third sector) specialist domestic abuse and sexual violence services in Wales in 2017/18; and identifies sufficient resources to establish a model for long term sustainable funding for these specialist services for the duration of the government and National Violence Against Women Strategy. Investment should be targeted at prevention and early help, developing needs-led and strengths-based services, and achieving systems change and transformation ('change that lasts').

2.5.2 Welsh Government ensures budgets support delivery of statutory guidance associated with the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act, and that budgetary investment targeted at promoting the well-being of future generations, reducing poverty and mitigating welfare reform, proactively addresses violence against women prevention and alleviating adverse childhood experiences.



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2.5.3 All Government

Departments (Finance and Local Government; Health, Well-Being and Sport; Environment and Rural Affairs; Communities and Children; Economy, and Education) prioritise investment into the protection and support of victims and the prevention of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence as a strategic cross-cutting priority, and provide leadership to ensure this is core business for public service boards.

2.5.4 Ministers should ensure NHS and social care investment enables these agencies to play a greater role in the prevention of domestic abuse, sexual violence and other forms of violence against women, in partnership with specialist services and Welsh Women's Aid. This should include funding arrangements which support Public Health Wales and the Health Boards and Trusts in Wales to:

- a. Commit to delivering a public health approach to preventing domestic abuse, sexual violence and other forms of violence against women.
- b. Commission the IRIS programme for health services and independent (third sector) specialist services, to ensure national delivery.
- c. Implement violence against women guidance and NICE Domestic Violence and Abuse Guidelines (PH50 2014).

2.5.5 Welsh Government should promote the business case for violence against women prevention amongst all providers/contractors in receipt of Government investment, requiring them to:

- a. Ensure they demonstrate corporate social responsibility by creating workplace policies, and training and educating employees on domestic and sexual abuse.
- b. Promote and/or provide access to support for victims, and take action against perpetrators.
- c. Exert leadership in local communities by supporting specialist services and promoting preventative campaigns and equality between women and men.

2.5.6 Welsh Government should ensure the Supporting People budget for 2017-18 and cross-departmental budgets prioritise the sustainability of the third sector specialist domestic abuse sector.

Any comments or questions regarding our response can be directed to:

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