



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

REPORT, DOCUMENT

Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence: annual progress report 2022 to 2023

Summary of progress made from April 2022 to March 2023.

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Introduction

This report focuses on progress the Welsh Government has made in the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 and is aligned to the objectives set out in the National Strategy on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) 2022 to 2026.

Under section 12 of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 ('the Act'), the Welsh Ministers must, in respect of each financial year, publish a report which addresses the following:

- progress made towards achieving the objectives in the Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence national strategy
- progress made towards achieving the purpose of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 in Wales (by reference to the national indicators).

Part 1 of this report sets out the wider context within which the progress against the objectives should be viewed. While these sections are not specific to the objectives within the strategy, they demonstrate progress towards achieving the purpose of the Act to prevent gender based abuse and protect and support survivors. This includes sections on:

- the Programme for Government
- the National Strategy, objectives and indicators
- the Blueprint approach to delivery
- general progress updates

Part 2 of the report focuses on each objective within the National Strategy in turn and includes a general update, key achievements, and next steps for each.

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Part 1: context

Programme for Government

The Welsh Government Programme for Government made the following commitments in relation to VAWDASV:

- Strengthen the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy to include a focus on violence against women in the street and workplace as well as the home.
- Expand the 'Ask and Act' and 'Don't be a Bystander' training and awareness campaigns.

In order to make Wales the safest place in Europe to be a Woman.

National Strategy

Section 3 of the Act sets out the duty of Welsh Ministers to prepare and publish a National Strategy, which must be reviewed and published after each Senedd election. Following the Senedd election in 2021, the Welsh Government conducted extensive engagement and consultation with key partners, stakeholders, the specialist sector and the general public. The Welsh Government subsequently published a new National Strategy, to build on the learning from the previous iteration and to continue to make Wales the safest place in Europe to be a woman.

The Strategy is being delivered through a Blueprint approach, which brings together devolved and non-devolved organisations as well as the specialist sector to focus on 6 workstreams discussed in detail below.

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National Strategy objectives

The National Strategy objectives were decided upon following extensive engagement and consultation. The focus for 2022 to 2023 has been delivering on these objectives through the VAWDASV blueprint:

1. Challenge the public attitude to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence across the Welsh population through awareness raising and space for public discussion with the aim to decrease its occurrence.
2. Increase awareness in children, young people and adults of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships and empowering them to positive personal choices.
3. Increase the focus on holding those who commit abuse to account and supporting those who may carry out abusive or violent behaviour to change their behaviour and avoid offending.
4. Make early intervention and prevention a priority.
5. Relevant professionals are trained to provide effective, timely and appropriate responses to victims and survivors.
6. Provide all victims with equal access to appropriately resourced, high quality, needs-led, strength-based, inter-sectional and responsive services across Wales.

National indicators

The VAWDASV National Strategy states that 'In order to evaluate the impact of our strategy it is important that we use measures which reflect our whole system approach and reflect the contribution of the full range of our partners. For this reason, we will review the National Indicators to ensure they reflect the full partnership and can measure the progress of our public health approach. In doing so we will recognise responsibility of non-devolved bodies to parallel approaches set out by the UK Government.'

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Following a series of workshops with stakeholders, a first set of **National Indicators** were laid before the National assembly for Wales, 24 June 2019.

This is therefore the extant set of indicators:

1. Increase in reporting of all forms of VAWDASV.
2. Increase in awareness across all sections of society that violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence is unacceptable.
3. Increase in awareness amongst children and young people in Wales of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships.
4. Increase in awareness amongst children and young people that abuse is always wrong.
5. Increase in VAWDASV related incidents which result in an arrest, prosecution and conviction.
6. Perpetrators are able to receive appropriate intervention.
7. Enable equal access to & availability of effective, evidence based early interventions for victims and survivors.
8. Those in relevant job roles are trained to recognise and appropriately respond to VAWDASV.
9. Ensure victims receive appropriate support.
10. Increase victim confidence and access to justice.

The intention was to develop the data sets further with stakeholders to develop the indicators. This work was not intended to add to the indicator set but to make their collection, collation and publication support and inform the development of the new national strategy. Unfortunately, resources were diverted because of the COVID-19 pandemic which meant that the planned further work was begun but not complete.

Since then, the VAWDASV National Strategy 2022 to 2026 has been developed co-productively and published, which commits to reviewing the National Indicators to ensure they reflect the current VAWDASV National Strategy and will be used to measure progress against the aims and objectives of the

Strategy. It will be crucial to ensure that any changes to the indicators take full account of emerging Blueprint priorities. The work will also build on the work undertaken in 2020 to ensure its value is not lost.

VAWDASV Blueprint

The Welsh Government and Policing in Wales have driven forward the development of the Blueprint approach together and established shared governance arrangements. The pooling of resources and identification of funding to support the establishment of a VAWDASV Blueprint delivery team demonstrates joint leadership and commitment to ensuring effective delivery of the VAWDASV National Strategy through the Blueprint.

The VAWDASV Blueprint structure has been implemented with 6 workstreams reporting to a strategic VAWDASV National Partnership Board and operational National Programme Board. These workstreams reflect the commitments in the Programme for Government as well as the National Strategy:

1. Gender based harassment in all public spaces.
2. Workplace harassment.
3. Tackling perpetration.
4. Sustainable whole system approach.
5. Older people's needs.
6. Children and young people's needs.

The Welsh Government published the **Blueprint's High Level Action Plan** in March 2023, which describes the purpose of each of the workstreams and sets out their high level actions, which will contribute to the National Objectives of the VAWDASV Strategy 2022 to 2026. Contributions from the members of each workstream, along with the inclusion of voices of survivors from all aspects of VAWDASV, will be instrumental in taking forward these actions.

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The voices of survivors will be at the heart of all we do, and a Survivor Voice Scrutiny and Involvement Panel has been established to ensure this. Any recommendations which are made by the workstreams are scrutinised by the panel ahead of being submitted to the VAWDASV National Partnership Board for consideration.

The panel is chaired by the National Advisers on gender-based abuse and draws much of its membership from existing, pre-established survivor groups across Wales. This creates a group that has links to and can feed into the existing networks and their memberships, creating a sustainable structure and framework. It also ensures the right level of support for those involved.

Overseeing the delivery of the Strategy is the National Partnership Board co-chaired by the Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip and Dafydd Llewelyn, Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed-Powys, on behalf of Policing in Wales. The Board has met 5 times since its inception in May 2022.

Next steps

The Welsh Government has committed to publishing an [update on progress made against the actions set out in the High Level Plan in October 2023](#), and annually thereafter.

General progress updates

While the Act requires the annual report to focus on the strategy objectives, there have been other achievements in relation to VAWDASV in Wales during the reporting period, which should also be highlighted.

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National advisers

On 7 July 2022, the Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip announced the appointment of Johanna Robinson and the reappointment of Yasmin Khan as the National Advisers for Violence Against Women, Gender Based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence. These appointments run from 1 August 2022 to 31 July 2025.

The National advisers published their [annual plan for 2023 to 2024](#) on 30 November 2022 which outlines how they will work to prevent VAWDASV and to protect and support people who have experienced violence and abuse.

White Ribbon

During the reporting year, the Welsh Government has been working towards reaccreditation of its status as a White Ribbon employer. White Ribbon Accreditation is a global initiative to end male violence against women. It calls on boys and men to take action to make a difference.

The Welsh Government was successful in renewing its accreditation in March 2023 to demonstrate a clear commitment and leadership in this area.

As a professional organisation, we have created a White Ribbon Steering Group as part of the accreditation process and will also create a new and innovative internal network consisting of White Ribbon ambassadors and champions, with a primary aim of spreading the important White Ribbon message across all Welsh Government departments and beyond, throughout the year and not just around White Ribbon Day on 25 November.

We have a number of ambassadors and champions already within the organisation and we believe that the core values, principles and goals of White

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Ribbon UK are fundamental, and should be promoted as much as possible on a daily basis in order for us all to enjoy a workplace free from all forms of harassment, abuse and inequality.

The Welsh Government is the only UK Government or Governmental department to have been White Ribbon accredited.

Engagement with UK Government

Over 2022 to 2023 the Welsh Government VAWDASV team engaged with colleagues across the UK Government regularly as well as the office of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner. This includes on issues such as funding and legislation, including the Bills outline below, as well as regular general catch ups.

Victims and Prisoners Bill

UK Government introduced the Victims and Prisoners Bill into the House of Commons on 29 March 2023. The Welsh Government Crime and Justice and VAWDASV teams have regularly engaged with the Ministry of Justice on this Bill and how it interacts with the landscape here in Wales. This engagement is continuing through 2023 as the Bill progresses through Parliament.

The Protection from Sex-based Harassment in Public Bill

The Home Office consulted on introducing an offence of public sexual harassment in July to September 2022. The Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip wrote to the UK Minister for Safeguarding in August 2022 to state her support for the creation of such an offence.

After substantial support, the Home Office used the vehicle of a pre-existing

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Private Members' Bill to bring forward this offence. The Bill was amended at Committee Stage to include Wales following both Welsh Government and UK Government assessments that creating such an offence was within legislative competence.

The aims of the Bill align with the aims of the Act, the Programme for Government Commitments and the VAWDASV National Strategy.

The Senedd passed a Legislative Consent Motion on 13 June to give consent for this offence to also apply to Wales. The Bill continues its passage to becoming an Act.

The Istanbul Convention

The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, commonly known as the Istanbul Convention, is a gold standard international charter for the protection of women and girls.

On 21 July 2022, the UK ratified the Convention, and it came into force in the UK on 1 November 2022.

The Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip wrote to the UK Government Ministers to outline her support for the ratification of the Convention. Her letter also stated her concerns that the UK Government submitted a reservation on Article 59 which relates to support for migrant victims of VAWDASV. The Minister restated her disappointment that the plight of migrant women was not recognised on the face of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 but that she was further disappointed to see that these victims and survivors will not be adequately supported and provided for within the ratification of the Istanbul Convention.

The Welsh Government's work to support migrant victims of VAWDASV is

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detailed in this report under progress made under objective 6 of the National Strategy.

Gender based harassment in all public spaces and Workplace harassment

The Welsh Government Programme for Government identified workplace harassment and safety in public places as priorities for tackling VAWDASV. Workstream groups for both of these areas were established in 2023. The actions identified in the high level plans are:

Workplace harassment

Action 1

Establish and maintain a robust evidence base, including capturing lived experiences of workplace harassment, so that we better understand the scale of workplace harassment and the actions which help prevent it.

Action 2

Develop a whole system approach to support the effective prevention and response to workplace harassment towards women and girls, and so tackle workplace harassment in all workplaces across Wales.

Action 3

Use and enhance existing tools and levers to raise awareness, promote excellent practice and support active change to eliminate workplace harassment

towards women and girls, and to improve workplace responses to all forms of violence against women and girls, domestic violence and sexual abuse.

Action 4

Provide Challenge and Support for all organisations across Wales to go beyond their Legal and other mandatory duties and to adopt exemplar standards of behaviour in the workplace.

Street harassment and safety in public places

Action 1

Consolidate and enhance the evidence base on the prevention of, and response to, public sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based harassment in public spaces, and the safety of women and girls in public spaces, to understand prevalence, causes and effective interventions.

Action 2

Develop a preventative, whole-system approach to tackle public sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based harassment in public spaces, to increase safety and feelings of safety for women and girls.

Action 3

To identify, develop and implement effective interventions that enable everyone in society to challenge misogynistic attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, in order to change the culture of misogyny and harassment that feeds abuse.

Action 4

To review and make recommendations for an equitable approach on the use of interventions and initiatives across all agencies and communities.

So called 'Honour Based Abuse'

Virginity testing and hymenoplasty are acts of violence against women and girls and were criminalised under the Health and Care Act 2022.

In partnership with the members of the Honour Based Abuse leadership group, the Welsh Government produced a **guidance toolkit** for professionals, care providers and the public in Wales to raise awareness of the illegal and degrading practices of virginity testing and hymenoplasty. The toolkit includes 3 documents:

- An information sheet for members of the public.
- A short, sharp poster for members of the public.
- A more in-depth guidance document for professionals.

The guidance was published in 17 languages, including 15 from countries that the World Health Organisation have identified having the most prevalence of cases relating to virginity testing and hymenoplasty worldwide.

Intersectionality and an equalities approach to policy development and delivery

The National Strategy and the Blueprint high level plan outline the commitment of the Welsh Government and its partners to imbedding an equalities approach to VAWDASV.

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A fundamental part of this is the recognition and understanding that the impact of VAWDASV is not uniform and that it affects different people in different ways.

Most obviously, women are disproportionately affected by VAWDASV and the strategy recognises this gender imbalance. This is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality. Gender inequality provides the underlying conditions for violence against women. It exists at many levels in our society; from the disproportionate levels of men in leadership and decision-making roles, economic factors like the gender pay gap, and family and relationship roles and expectations. There is a strong and consistent association between gender inequality and violence against women.

Beyond this, however, the lived experience of VAWDASV is intrinsically linked to factors that relate to a wider range of equality characteristics. As a result of intersecting forms of discrimination and oppression, some groups of people experience different, more frequent or more severe violence, or face additional barriers to help-seeking. An intersectional approach is therefore vital, to help us develop our understanding of VAWDASV and address the diverse needs of all those affected, including children, older people, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, disabled people and LGBTQ+ people and communities. Each workstream will need to take these issues into consideration throughout their work, to ensure our outcomes promote equality consistently and comprehensively.

All blueprint workstreams are working towards embedding an equalities approach and to address intersectionality within plans.

The Welsh Government's work on VAWDASV aligns with and contributes to achieving actions with the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan, the LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales and the Disability Rights Task Force, amongst others.

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Disabled victims and survivors

The VAWDASV capital grants process has been amended to ensure these grants support the needs of disabled victims and survivors. The 2021 Office for National Statistics figures indicate that disabled people are nearly three times more likely to experience domestic abuse and yet so many services are still not accessible, sometimes resulting in the victim still having to live with the perpetrator. Data reveals that disabled victims typically endure abuse for an average of 3.3 years before accessing support, compared to 2.3 years for non-disabled victims. In addition, like for older people, domestic abuse experienced by disabled people is often simply seen as a safeguarding issue, thus denying the victims justice within the criminal justice system.

The Welsh Government VAWDASV team, alongside colleagues in the finance team, are considering the best method of understanding what steps and measures grant recipients are putting in place to ensure the funded project/s meet the needs of disabled victims and survivors of VAWDASV and how we can incorporate this into the monitoring for this funding.

This will not only help ensure that disabled victims' and survivors' needs are being met next year but also help shape future funding rounds.

Older people

Responses to the consultation on the draft strategy highlighted the importance of understanding the impact of VAWDASV across a whole life span. In response, the blueprint workstream on older people's needs was established in 2023.

The Older People's Needs Blueprint workstream successfully came together as a group and created a high-level action plan to deliver the objectives of the 2022 to 2026 strategy. They are:

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- to consolidate and enhance existing evidence bases and identify the gaps to improve knowledge and understanding of the abuse of older people and the services that are available to them
- to develop a Wales-wide whole-systems approach which ensures clarity and cohesion between Safeguarding and VAWDASV
- to improve the availability and suitability of trauma-informed services for older people, adequately recognising their diverse needs, both for survivors and those who are perpetrating abuse
- to prioritise and influence specific awareness-raising campaigns to improve the recognition, knowledge and understanding of the abuse of older people

Part 2: progress against National Strategy objectives

Objective 1

Challenge the public attitude to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence across the Welsh population through awareness raising and space for public discussion with the aim to decrease its occurrence.

General update

Communications and campaigns

Through our Live Fear Free campaigns, we have continued to raise awareness of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence in all aspects of life, including the street and other public places. These campaigns provide practical advice for those who may be suffering abuse, as well as highlighting the support available to enable friends, family and the wider community to

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recognise abuse and take safe action. The campaigns are instrumental in promoting the Live Fear Free helpline, our free, 24/7 service for all victims and survivors of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence and those close to them, including family, friends and colleagues.

Following a procurement exercise in September 2022, the Welsh Government awarded a 3 year contract to Cowshed Communications to develop further Live Fear Free campaigns. Since being awarded the contract, they have:

Undertaken an audit and subsequent re-design of the core Live Fear Free assets, including new content templates for social media and amended profile pictures and banners.

Built on previous activity, to develop a series of campaigns during the financial years 2022 to 2023, 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025. These campaigns will sit under the Live Fear Free banner and incorporate the use of the existing Live Fear Free branding, website, Facebook and Twitter channels.

In November 2022, worked with Welsh Government Officials to closely with Football Association Wales (FAW) along with female Red Wall fans to create a World Cup video to coincide with White Ribbon Day. The video was **shared** across Live Fear Free, Welsh Government and FAW social media channels and was widely shared and amplified by supporters and stakeholders.

Worked with the Welsh Government VAWDASV policy team during the latter part of 2022 to 2023 to develop '**Sound**'; an early intervention and prevention campaign aimed at young men aged between 18 and 34 which was launched in July 2023.

The campaign encourages young men to reflect on their own behaviours and make positive personal choices to begin open conversations with their peers, raising awareness of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships. The campaign focuses on some of the classic gateway behaviours to abuse

such as love bombing, gaslighting, controlling behaviours and verbal abuse.

The campaign has been developed with young men from a variety of different backgrounds and engaged with those with lived experience. 'In Person' Cohort Groups have been tested and include construction students at a college; members of a boxing club; barbers; rugby and football clubs; perpetrators and survivors.

The policy team has also engaged with the VAWDASV Comms Network which has provided invaluable input and constructive challenge. This is a well-established multi-agency meeting involving comms leads from our key partner organisations including health, policing, regional coordinators, the Violence Prevention Unit and the specialist sector. This group meets monthly and supports the development and delivery of all VAWDASV campaigns. This collaborative way of working is useful to develop campaigns but also to amplify our messages ensuring a wider reach.

We are using channels that we know our target audience are more likely to receive their news and information from, this includes podcasts, Tik-Tok, video on demand and wider social media.

Links to both Live Fear Free and Respect are available on the Sound website. We are also continuing to raise awareness and profile of the Live Fear Free helpline via our social media accounts.

Key achievements

- By the end of the 2022 to 2023 financial year, the Live Fear Free Twitter accounts had 2,900 followers (97% net increase), 96,000 impressions (up by 2000%), and link clicks were up by 700%. On Facebook, our followers increased to 3,800 (413% net increase), we achieved 94,000 followers (up 1400%) and link clicks were up 236%. These high numbers can partly be

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attributed to the lower level of activity across the Live Fear Free accounts in the previous period as there was no campaign running and no contracted agency, but is also due to the refresh of the assets and more regular posting from Cowshed across the accounts.

- The World Cup video we created with the FAW to coincide with White Ribbon Day also contributed to these figures, with the video being shared across Live Fear Free, the Welsh Government, and FAW social media channels and achieving 200,000 views, 4,600 likes, and 573 shares in total. It is the most viewed Tweet to date on the Live Fear Free Twitter channel.
- We also worked with the FAW to repurpose the existing 'Call Out Only' video featuring their players and released it on International Women's Day, with a total of 51,113 views, 2,031 likes, and 67 shares.
- Our paid digital strategy aimed to increase awareness of the Live Fear Free helpline and support that's available to provide help and advice about violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. In total, our paid media achieved 27,142,115 impressions, 26,250 clicks, and 8,368,137 video views.

Next steps

- A campaign with a focus upon workplace sexual harassment is planned for 2023 to 2024.
- The policy team will continue to engage with the VAWDASV Comms Network and VAWDASV blueprint workstreams to ensure consistent and coordinated communications activity.

Objective 2

Increase awareness in children, young people and adults of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships and empowering them to positive personal choices.

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General update

VAWDASV can have a significant impact on children and young people. It can affect their wellbeing, their educational attainment, family and peer relationships, and their ability to enjoy health, happy, respectful relationships now and in the future.

In 2022 to 2023, the Welsh Government continued to fund the Spectrum project, which is delivered by Stori Cymru (previously known as Hafan Cymru). This promotes the importance of healthy relationships and raises awareness of VAWDASV. Spectrum also delivers training for school staff and governors about understanding the impact of domestic abuse on a child and promotes a whole school approach to tackling domestic abuse.

There is extensive guidance available to support education settings on preventing and responding to child sexual abuse, including our statutory guidance **Keeping Learners Safe**. In addition, we have several Welsh Government funded helplines established in Wales: **Childline Cymru Wales**, **Live Fear Free helpline** and the **Meic** service.

The Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip was invited by the Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Committee to give evidence in April 2022 as part of its inquiry into peer on peer sexual harassment among young learners. The Minister welcomed Estyn's report on peer on peer sexual harassment in education settings in Wales. Estyn's recommendations included 2 for the Welsh Government, which were accepted and will be taken forward. These recommendations were that the Welsh Government should:

- work with local authorities to improve the way they collect bullying and harassment information from schools and ensure that local authorities identify and respond to patterns and trends in behaviour. This is in order to plan suitable guidance, training and support for schools

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- ensure schools receive regular and informative updates on best practice and suitable resources that are available to support them in the delivery of relationships and sexuality education

The Welsh Government is also working with a range of stakeholders, including the Police, to develop a multi-agency peer on peer sexual harassment action plan. The action plan will outline the actions that will be taken by the Welsh Government and partners to tackle peer on peer sexual harassment in education settings. We aim to publish the action plan during the autumn term.

In September 2022, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) was implemented in primary schools, maintained nursery schools, and non-maintained nursery settings. It is intended that this will have a focus on developing healthy relationships from the early years, and further our aim to ensure all children and young people have the ability to enjoy healthy, happy, respectful relationships now and in the future.

As part of the Welsh Government's Blueprint approach to delivering the VAWDASV National Strategy, the specific workstream focusing on the needs of children and young people was established in 2023. The membership of the workstream includes a wide range of partners and stakeholders across the public and specialist sector.

Key achievements

- Ministerial attendance at the CYPE committee to give evidence on the work being done in VAWDASV to protect and support children and young people.
- 21,500 children and young people gained increased knowledge, awareness and understanding of VAWDASV issues via Spectrum sessions.
- £20,000 of funding was provided to Stori Wales for the development of resources to assist the delivery of Relationship and Sex Education in schools.

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Next steps

The Children and Young People workstream successfully came together as a group for the first time in early 2023 and created a high level action plan to deliver the objectives of the 2022 to 2026 strategy. They are:

- to consolidate, enhance, and identify gaps in existing evidence bases and needs analyses on the children and young people impacted by domestic abuse and sexual violence
- to develop a Wales-wide whole system approach to meet the needs of children and young people impacted by domestic abuse and sexual violence, encompassing maternity and early years through to adulthood
- to establish clarity on the responsibilities of all relevant authorities under the Act and other non-devolved public services to identify, respond to, and reduce domestic abuse and sexual violence experienced by children and young people
- to strengthen accountability mechanisms to ensure public services are meeting the needs of children and young people impacted by domestic abuse and sexual violence including services, responses, auditing, inspection, and grant monitoring

Alongside the Welsh Government Safeguarding teams, we are working to ensure that there is clarity and cohesion in approaches to Safeguarding and VAWDASV. The workstream is also continuing to support the implementation of the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curriculum's promotion of healthy relationships, as well as work to address peer on peer sexual harassment and abuse.

Objective 3

Increase the focus on holding those who commit abuse to account and

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supporting those who may carry out abusive or violent behaviour to change their behaviour and avoid offending.

General update

In October 2022, the Welsh Government appointed the Head of Perpetrator Policy to work with the Perpetrator Programme Manager appointed the previous financial year. These appointments provide leadership and policy development in relation to tackling perpetration and focusing on early intervention and prevention.

Domestic Abuse Prevention Orders (DAPOs) will be introduced across Wales, replacing all other ancillary Court Orders in 2026. During the report year, the Welsh Government has been working with the National DAPO Programme Board, local stakeholders, Gwent Police and UK Government departments to develop a pilot site in Gwent where the new DAPOs can be tested within the Welsh context. This will ensure all agencies are prepared for implementation. DAPOs will provide more opportunity for protection and rehabilitation, with the additional ability to impose rehabilitative interventions as part of the DAPO. Domestic Abuse Prevention Notices (DAPNs) will be served first, as quickly as possible, followed where appropriate by the imposition of the DAPO, allowing for better early intervention and prevention.

The team provided support to UK Government colleagues, and the University of Durham's Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse (CRiVA), in developing Perpetrator Service Standards policy guidance to support the UK Government's Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan published in 2022.

Through engagement with Welsh police and crime commissioner (PCC) offices, we have become core members of the Domestic Abuse Perpetrators Oversight Group and Police Perpetrated Abuse Steering Group.

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Key achievements

- Worked with New Pathways to fund, develop and deliver 'Raising Awareness of Sexual Violence' to professionals, designed to raise professional curiosity amongst those working within individuals displaying, or participating in, harmful or problematic sexual behaviour.
- Supported South Wales and Gwent Police Forces to secure a Pilot for the revised 'conditional cautions', two-tier framework. This is a preventative programme for first-time offenders of domestic abuse and will serve as an immediate intervention for low risk, eligible offending.

Next steps

The Welsh Government will continue to contribute to the proposed Joint Justice plan to increase the number of prosecutions for domestic abuse offences, through theory of change workshops facilitated by the Crown Prosecution Services.

In late Spring 2024, Gwent will become one of the pilot areas to impose the DAPO (Domestic Abuse Protection Order) in both Criminal and Family Courts. Welsh Government Officials will continue to work with UK Government agencies, Policing in Wales and local stakeholders to ensure the Welsh context is considered.

We will continue to work closely with Policing in Wales colleagues in Gwent Police and South Wales Police to support the revised two-tier caution framework, ensuring these tools are used effectively to hold those who commit abuse to account.

Since 2022, the Tackling Perpetration Workstream has been established as part of the VAWDASV Blueprint high level plan, with 4 key high level objectives to:

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- consolidate and enhance existing evidence bases and needs analyses on perpetration of Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence in Wales
- develop a Wales-wide whole system approach for tackling perpetration of Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence that encompasses early intervention and prevention through to the criminal justice response
- establish clarity on the responsibilities to prevent and tackle perpetration of Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence of all relevant authorities under the Act and other non-devolved public services
- strengthen accountability mechanisms to ensure public services are meeting their responsibilities to tackle and prevent perpetration of Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence

Objective 4

Make early intervention and prevention a priority.

General update

Prevention lies at the core of the VAWDASV National Strategy. The strategy commits to maintaining a focus on survivor support and services whilst at the same time shifting the focus from symptom to cause through a public health approach. This commitment means a focus on a wider societal impact which reduces the chance that individuals will experience VAWDASV in the first place.

Identifying VAWDASV at the earliest opportunity and providing an appropriate response to minimise impact and harm is critical in achieving the early intervention and prevention objective of the National Strategy.

Welsh Government officials have worked closely with regional coordinators as

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well as Policing in Wales colleagues, commissioners and other agencies to ensure there are appropriate responses to support early intervention and prevention of VAWDASV, identifying the gaps in provision and investigating opportunities to close those gaps.

The team has also been undertaking work with Violence Prevention/Reduction Units across England and Wales to develop appropriate and safe responses to the commissioning of needs-based perpetrator and harm reduction services, ensuring that resourcing primary prevention and interventions is a priority in tackling VAWDASV and supportive of objective 3.

Bystander training pilot

The Programme for Government committed to expanding the Welsh Government's 'Don't be a Bystander' Initiative. As a result, the Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip agreed to a 3 year funding contract to develop and deliver a pilot Pan-Wales Bystander intervention training initiative that will be delivered to citizens of Wales.

The pilot will run until March 2026. The delivery model envisages up to 400 people per year receiving training: approximately 1200 in total. A full evaluation will take place which will provide recommendations for the future of the scheme.

This training pilot will be open to the general public. Target settings will include, but will not be limited to, sports clubs, teams and governing bodies, teacher training settings, organisations and businesses, police, community organisations, local authorities and the general public.

The procurement exercise took place during the reporting period and we awarded the contract in April 2023 to Kindling Transformative Interventions in consortium with PLAN and beyond equality. Kindling is a University of Exeter subsidiary co-directed by Dr Rachel Fenton and Dr Nathan Eisenstadt and will

be responsible for programme development of this pilot.

Communications

The development of the 'Sound' communications campaign is a big part of our work on prevention; however, this is covered in more detail under objective 1.

Ask and Act

'Ask and Act' is a process of targeted enquiry to be practiced across the relevant authorities (as named in the Act), to identify and respond to VAWDASV.

A 3 year contract was awarded to Welsh Women's Aid in November 2022 to continue and support the delivery of the Ask and Act Training Programme.

The Ask and Act programme is a National programme and is fully operational across all regions of Wales. As part of the Programme for Government commitment to expand the Ask and Act programme, Welsh Government published [supporting information for additional authorities](#) in January 2023.

By March 2023, over 27,000 workers had been trained to 'Ask and Act'. Specifically, during the 2022 to 2023 reporting period, over 10,000 people were trained.

VAWDASV E-Learning

The VAWDASV E-Learning module is still available to anyone through guest access where previously training could only be accessed by relevant authorities. This has resulted in over 73,000 people accessing the course in 2022 to 2023.

Of the 73,000 people, 36,641 people outside of relevant authorities accessed

the VAWDASV e-learning course in 2022 to 2023.

Key achievements

- The first Welsh Government bystander intervention initiative was procured.
- 73,000 people have accessed the e-learning course in 2022 to 2023.
- By March 2023, over 27,000 had been trained to 'Ask and Act'. During the 2022 to 2023 reporting period, over 10,000 people were trained.

Next steps

- The Welsh Government will work with commissioners and advisors to develop a needs-led, public health response to prioritising prevention and early intervention.
- The Bystander pilot will commence and design a programme of training to be delivered to the people of Wales.

Objective 5

Relevant professionals are trained to provide effective, timely and appropriate responses to victims and survivors.

General update

The National Training Framework (NTF) remains one of the key mechanisms for delivering the Act. Victims and survivors of VAWDASV will interact with a range of public services including housing and healthcare and it is important to establish proper pathways for support and to embed understanding of gender based violence within all relevant authorities in Wales.

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In November 2022, contracts for groups 4, 5, 6 and a new additional training suite were awarded.

Groups 4 and 5, which cover Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) training for professionals and managers, were awarded to Safe Lives and Group 6, which covers training for public service leaders, was awarded to Welsh Women's Aid.

The additional training suite is to provide awareness training of wider VAWDASV topics and is available to all groups of the NTF. This contract was awarded to Stori. Since awarding in November to March 2023 a total of 544 people had received training in these areas:

- Domestic abuse experienced by children and young people: 91.
- Supporting Male Victims: 46.
- Supporting LGBTQ+ victims: 52.
- Street Harassment: 58.
- Stalking: 59.

In May 2022, the relevant authorities outlined in the Act submitted their sixth annual reports and there continues to be a focus on the planning and implementation of the NTF across Wales. Work has continued with relevant authorities to increase the percentage of the workforce completing basic awareness training.

Key achievements

- By the end of March 2023, more than 342,000 professionals in Wales had accessed training through the National Training Framework. That is 342,000 professionals who are more knowledgeable, more aware and more confident to respond to those experiencing VAWDASV.
- An additional 544 professionals received specialist training as a result of

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further funding in 2022 to 2023.

Next steps

- Officials will undertake a review of the National Training Framework during 2023 to 2024.

Objective 6

Provide all victims with equal access to appropriately resourced, high quality, needs-led, strength-based, inter-sectional and responsive services across Wales.

Welsh Government funding in 2022 to 2023

The National Strategy reconfirmed the Welsh Government's commitment to supporting specialist services to respond directly to the needs of survivors. This is essential in ensuring the specialist sector can provide survivors with safety and security, to recover from their experiences and rebuild their lives.

In 2022 to 2023, the Welsh Government provided more than £8 million in revenue and £2 million in capital funding to VAWDASV regions and specialist services to provide invaluable and lifesaving support to all victims of VAWADSV.

In addition to the direct funding provided by the Welsh Government, the National Strategy sets out the principles of partnership and collaboration that the VAWDASV blueprint is built on. With that in mind, in 2023 the Sustainable Whole System Approach workstream was established. The group is working to co-ordinate the funding provided by partners across Wales to identify duplication and gaps as well as opportunities to complement funding streams. This will help

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to tackle the negative impacts of funding structures which can sometimes be short-term and constrain innovation.

Following its inquiry into VAWDASV impacting migrant women, the Senedd's Equality and Social Justice (ESJ) Committee made 15 recommendations to Welsh Government, to improve the experiences of victims of gender-based violence with no recourse to public funds (NRPF), including migrant and asylum seeking victims.

The Welsh Government considered these recommendations and accepted, wholly or in principle, all 15.

One recommendation focussed on establishing a crisis fund that service providers can access to support migrant women who are victims or survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and who are subject to NRPF.

On 1 March 2023, the Minister agreed to fund BAWSO to deliver the Migrant Victim of Abuse Support Fund. This 1 year pilot will seek to remove the barriers for victims seeking support with NRPF. It will provide an extension to the Home Office's Support for Migrant Victims Scheme which places limitations on the length and types of support available victims and survivors are able to receive.

The learning from this pilot, together with the evaluation of the Home Office's Support for Migrant Victims Scheme, will shape the design of longer-term support to meet the needs of migrant victims in Wales.

Key achievements

- The VAWDASV revenue grant continued to fund the Live Fear Free helpline to support 34,348 victims and survivors of VAWDASV, along with friends, family, or anyone else concerned about their or someone else's behaviour. The Live Fear Free helpline is available through phone, text, web chat or

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email to ensure a range of accessible and safe routes to access advice and advocacy.

- Additional 'one off' revenue funding was provided to assist Regions and Specialist services with the increase in costs because of the cost of living crisis.
- 31 projects were supported from the VAWDASV capital grant. Projects supported included upgrades of office and refuge accommodation, purchase of disbursed accommodation for those who are ready to move on from refuge or for whom refuge accommodation is not suitable, and provision of target hardening equipment to allow victims and survivors of VAWDASV to remain safe in their own homes.
- Funding of up to £150,000 was provided to BAWSO to support migrant women fleeing VAWDASV with No Recourse to Public Funds.

Next steps

The Sustainable Whole System Approach blueprint group will review and refresh existing regional and national arrangements and make recommendations on how to strengthen and align delivery of services in line with the purpose of the Act. The workstream is focusing on ensuring that statutory public services are responsive to the needs of victims and survivors, looking at procurement and developing a whole system approach to deliver services equitably across Wales.

The actions identified as part of the group's high level plan are:

- review existing practice to understand the current landscape for the implementation of existing guidance and delivery against statutory responsibilities under the Act
- review and refresh existing guidance for developing needs assessments as well as prioritising, planning, designing, and monitoring services to develop a whole system approach to sustainable commissioning
- review existing procurement and grant guidance for VAWDASV and other

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related disciplines to ensure equity, innovation and quality in the delivery of services and provision across Wales

- develop guidance to ensure regional partnership structures for VAWDASV are coherent and that the relationship between local planning, service delivery and commissioning is explicit
- develop a National Framework of Standards which will provide guidance on the requirements for good service delivery, set out minimum service levels, and articulate clear expectations for commissioning partners to commit to these Standards

Conclusion and future focus

Setting up the VAWDASV blueprint approach, in collaboration with our partners, has been a significant piece of work that has continued throughout 2022 to 2023 and will continue for the life of the National Strategy, if not beyond. The blueprint gives us an opportunity to formalise working arrangements that we have had in place informally in Wales. It will allow us to optimise the impact of the diverse contributions to tackling VAWDASV and embed our principles of partnership and collaboration working together to ensure everyone can live fear free.

Wales will not be a bystander to abuse.

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