



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

The Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015: Guidance for Local Strategies

Audience	All those involved in the development of local strategies under section 5 of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 (the Act), including local authority and Local Health Board leads for violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence services.
Overview	The purpose of this guidance is to assist local authorities, Local Health Boards and their partners to develop local strategies that comply with the requirements, and further the purposes, of the Act.
Action required	This guidance should be used to inform the design and development of local strategies required by the Act.
Further information	Enquiries about this guidance should be directed to: VAWDASV Team Communities Division Welsh Government Rhydycar Business Park Merthyr Tydfil CF48 1UZ Email: via VAWDASV.LlywodraethCymru-WelshGovernment@wales.gsi.gov.uk
Additional copies	This document is only available in digital format.
Related documents	National Strategy on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence 2016-2021

Local Strategies Guidance January 2018

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1. Introduction

Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015

The Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 (the Act) requires local authorities and Local Health Boards to prepare a strategy for the local authority area for tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV).

The purpose of the Act is to improve:

- Arrangements for the prevention of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence;
- Arrangements for the protection of victims of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence;
- Support for people affected by violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

The Act covers all forms of gender based violence in recognition that both men and women are victims of violence; threats of violence or harassment arising directly or indirectly from values, beliefs or customs relating to gender or sexual orientation; and also forced marriage. The guidance reflects that and whilst the guidance refers to “violence against women”, this should be read as also including male victims of gender-based violence (GBV) unless the context suggests otherwise.

The National Strategy on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence is based on these three areas¹. Published in November 2016, it sets out what Welsh Government will do to contribute to the pursuit of the purpose of the Act. Partners should consider and develop their own strategies and policies in light of the objectives set out in the National Strategy.

We recognise the invaluable contribution made by other organisations, including public services, devolved and non-devolved partners, independent specialist violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence and wider voluntary sector organisations which are integral to contributing to the pursuit of the purpose of the Act. Welsh Government wants to work collaboratively with all partners to work towards the elimination of VAWDASV and GBV.

Purpose of the guidance

The Act places a duty on local authorities and Local Health Boards to prepare and publish joint local strategies for tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

¹ <http://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/commsafety/161104-national-strategy-en.pdf>

The purpose of this guidance is to assist local authorities, Local Health Boards and their partners to develop local strategies that comply with the requirements and purposes of the Act.

This guidance should be used to inform the design, development and review of local strategies required by the Act.

2. Duties on local authorities and Local Health Boards under the Act

Duty to prepare local strategies

The duty on local authorities and Local Health Boards is to prepare, publish and implement joint local strategies for tackling violence against women, gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Whilst the Act refers to a single local authority publishing a local strategy with its relevant Local Health Board, this does not preclude local authorities and Local Health Boards from working on a regional basis and preparing “regional” strategies for the purpose of fulfilling this part of the Act. A number of local authorities have already formed regions (Cwm Taf, Gwent), and have drafted strategies accordingly.

Regional strategies may identify high level strategic priorities and may have a regional delivery plan which includes local focused actions depending on needs identified.

Duty to consult

Under section 6 of the Act, local authorities and Local Health Boards must consult with all relevant persons prior to publishing their local strategies.

This should take the form of a formal consultation, ideally open for 12 weeks with opportunities to disseminate the draft for consultation and allow partners and survivors to contribute to the development of the strategy. This could be through one to one interviews, focus groups, and online surveys.

The views of survivors, service providers, wider stakeholders and commissioners will enable a wide view to be gained of what works well, where there are gaps in provision and opportunities for improvement. It is important that engagement is meaningful and maintained (and not a ‘one off’ exercise). See ‘engagement and involvement’ section below on page 9.

Effective partnership working: Good practice

An effective response to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence will often require multi-agency collaboration.

Those who have experienced domestic abuse tell us that multi-agency responses work because they only have to tell the story of their abuse once, they get help the first time they tell anyone and they receive the same joined-up response from all agencies.

In order to enable a holistic and effective response to promoting the safety of individuals at risk of all forms of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, a collaborative and partnership approach between public services and third sector organisations is vital.

Local strategies should demonstrate how partnership working and collaboration is improving services for victims and survivors.

Needs assessments

A needs analysis is needed to identify local needs and provision for violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence services. Local demographic statistics are important to inform practice to ensure all members of the community are able to access services and are doing so. Meeting the needs of the whole community must be a priority. Carrying out an equality impact assessment of services provided will help identify any unmet need.

The experience of service users should regularly and systematically be used to inform the partnership on the effects of its work and to suggest improvements. This should include learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews and Child Practice Reviews.

Relevant authorities working in partnership should participate in the creation of and contribute to a dataset to monitor, inform and develop its response. It is vital to ensure the Data Protection Act and General Data Protection Regulations are adhered to. This information should be collated and analysed as part of the partnership's performance management. Relevant authorities should create outcome measures to judge their effectiveness. See below page 16 for more information on this.

The Lloyds Bank Foundation Toolkit

The Lloyds Bank Foundation Toolkit on commissioning is a useful resource. Within the toolkit, it states:

“The needs assessment process aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of current and future needs of local people. A needs assessment that has been completed in collaboration with partners and stakeholders will help to ensure a practical understanding of the specific and varying needs of those affected by violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence to inform strategy development and commissioning to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities.”²

In developing local strategies, local authorities and Local Health Boards are required under section 7 of the Act to have regard to the most recent needs assessments undertaken under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and strategic assessments under s6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 relating to reducing crime and disorder, combating substance misuse and reducing re-offending. Basing actions on robust needs assessments will ensure a focus on the key needs of your area.

² https://www.lloydsbankfoundation.org.uk/VAWDASV%20Toolkit_Wales_web.pdf

Full use of data should be made from a wide range of sources, including existing communities-based assessments, such as the local Well-being Assessments required under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Police and Crime Plan for your area.

Data from front line service providers should be used to inform the local assessment of needs, available resources and gaps in service provision the local strategy and commissioning arrangements should be seeking to address. This will avoid any unnecessary duplication by ensuring existing data is used where it is available.

A comprehensive understanding of the needs of victims and survivors, support services for children and families and perpetrator services in the local area will help support regional commissioning arrangements for designing, planning and delivery of effective services.

We recognise that there may be gaps in the availability of reliable, consistent data; therefore you should ensure that comprehensive consultation is conducted and that steps are taken to address the information gaps.

These could include:

- a comprehensive resource mapping exercise to support a gap analysis and the production of an area wide service directory;
- joining up third sector data information systems to achieve more meaningful information and
- developing a clear and consistent performance and outcomes framework

Lloyds Bank Foundation guidance

“An effective needs assessment should gather together local data, evidence from professionals and survivors and review research and best practice.

Sources could include:

- qualitative and quantitative data from public services – in particular social care, housing and homelessness;
- data from specialist agencies about what is leading survivors to make contact, and any reasons why they have not been able to provide a service to an individual or family;
- evidence of need from the health sector to include AandE, maternity services,
- primary care and mental health;
- demographics of the population together with needs data from other sources to help extrapolate local levels of need;
- findings from Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) and serious case reviews; and
- qualitative data from survivors and those at risk of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.”³

³ ibid

The strategy should demonstrate how the data has been analysed and understood and how this is being used to shape services, and meet identified needs and gaps.

3. Engagement and involvement

Meaningful, inclusive engagement with and involvement of stakeholders, providers and survivors should be a key element of the strategy development. A range of means should be used to allow different groups and individuals to contribute. This could include online surveys, focus groups and interviews.

It should be clear how the feedback provided has been used to shape your strategy.

Meeting the needs of survivors/those with lived experience of forms of VAWDASV

Local authorities and Local Health Boards, in the preparation and implementation of their local strategies, should focus on the different needs of victims and survivors, recognise gender is an important consideration and reflect that in the services which are provided. Where evidence highlights the need for gender specific services, this should be reflected in local strategies, which acknowledge the differences in services these groups require.

Survivors' voices and experiences must be central to informing the development and delivery of strategies in order to ensure systems, processes and services best meet survivors' needs.

*"...survivors' experiences of protection and support services and systems in Wales are key to understanding their effectiveness and to informing practice and service improvements. Survivors' voices and experiences are also essential to informing prevention work and to ensuring that legislative and policy developments, the National Strategy and National Adviser's Plan place survivors' needs and experiences at the centre."*⁴

In early 2016, survivors of violence and abuse were invited to attend focus groups in every region of Wales to help inform national and local priorities. Sixty six survivors, who had experienced a range of violence and abuse including domestic abuse, sexual violence, forced marriage, FGM, 'honour-based violence', sexual exploitation, trafficking and child sexual abuse, attended focus group across Wales. A report on the findings and their recommendations was provided to Welsh Government.⁵

⁴ Are you listening and am I being heard? Survivor Consultation: A report of the recommendations of survivors of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence in Wales, March 2016: Cymorth i Ferched Cymru / Welsh Women's Aid <http://www.rhianbowendavies.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Are-you-listening-and-am-I-being-heard-FINAL-July-2016.pdf>

⁵ Ibid

Survivors identified a number of recommendations for improvement in services. They stated that it is important the needs of all survivors be addressed in the development of national and regional strategies, including survivors in rural and urban locations, in Black and minority ethnic communities and those who face immigration issues, survivors who are disabled, who are young or older, who are lesbian, bisexual, gay or transgender, and survivors whose life experiences lead agencies to define them as having multiple and/or complex needs (for example if they have mental health or substance abuse needs, if they are involved in the criminal justice system or in the sex industry, if they are homeless or in the care system).

The recommendations cover dedicated VAWDASV services, children's services, health, housing and refuge provision, perpetrator work, training, publicity and education. Details of the recommendations can be found in the report.

These recommendations and the principles outlined by survivors should inform the development of local strategies. Where necessary, local authorities and Local Health Boards should identify and work with relevant partners to address the recommendations made. Survivor engagement should be a continuous process that informs the development of policies and services.

4. Content of local strategies

A local strategy may include provision relating to specific action the relevant local authority and Local Health Board expect to be undertaken within the authority's area by any public authority, any third sector organisation or other person whose activities are capable of contributing to the pursuit of the purpose of the Act.

Local strategies should also set out how the local authority and local health board will contribute to and participate in regional commissioning arrangements for designing, planning and delivery of effective VAWDASV and GBV services.

Whilst it is important that strategies acknowledge and communicate the disproportionate experience of women and girls they should not discount violence and abuse directed towards men and boys or perpetrated by women. Strategies should recognise that anyone (women, men, children and young people) can experience and be affected by domestic abuse, rape and sexual assault, sexual abuse, forced marriage, child sexual abuse, stalking and harassment, sexual harassment and exploitation. This can happen in any relationship regardless of sex, age, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, religion or belief, income, geography or lifestyle.

Local strategies should include provision for all people and all acts of abuse/violence covered by the Act.

Links with the National Strategy

You are required to take into account the objectives set out in the National Strategy when drafting your local strategy.

The National Strategy outlines six objectives that the Welsh Ministers expect to achieve by November 2021, grouped under the three purposes of the Act:

Prevention

Prevention is one of the key purposes outlined in the Act and preventative measures should be outlined in local strategies. This could include outlining work being taken forward to contribute to achieving the prevention aim – such as perpetrator programmes, education and schools’ initiatives and awareness raising campaigns – depending on the outcome of the needs assessment.

Objective 1 – Increase awareness and challenge attitudes of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence across the Welsh Population

Objective 2 - Increased awareness in children and young people of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships and that abusive behaviour is always wrong

Objective 3 - Increased focus on holding perpetrators to account and provide opportunities to change their behaviour based around victim safety

Objective 4: Make early intervention and prevention a priority

Protection

Protection is a critical aspect of our work; public services need to work together to protect those who are currently experiencing violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence from suffering any further harm, and protect any children within the family setting. A whole-systems approach to multi-agency risk management is recommended to minimise crisis management where possible and relevant.

This requires a coordinated and collaborative response where the expertise and experience of the specialist violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence sector and survivors will be critical if we are to get it right.

Objective 5 - Relevant professionals are trained to provide effective, timely and appropriate responses to victims and survivors

Support

Providing support for people affected by violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence can be complex, as people’s experiences and needs can be vastly different. However, we need to promote a supportive culture, underpinned by a range of services that are best placed to respond to the needs of individuals and families.

It is the aim of Welsh Government to encourage services which are effective, maintained and of a consistently high standard across Wales. Evidence-based

interventions are key to ensuring those experiencing violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence are getting the most effective services possible.

We know that *how* services are delivered is as important as *what* is delivered. Timely responses which respond to multiple needs without judgement are needed. We need to support survivors to navigate an often complex route to services and support them to develop positive coping strategies, and enable empowerment and self-protection.

Objective 6 - Provide victims with equal access to holistic, appropriately resourced, high quality, needs led, strength based, gender responsive services across Wales

5. National programmes of work

To further the purposes of the Act we are implementing a number of programmes and actions, working in collaboration with the public sector and third sector organisations. In drafting your strategy you should consider how you can contribute to, and engage with these to fulfil your duties under the Act.

National Training Framework

The Framework is one of the key mechanisms for delivering the Act. It aims to create a consistent standard of care for those who experience violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence and an unfailing standard of service throughout the public sector to this client group.

The Framework will ensure that high quality and consistent training is available to those across the public and specialist third sector. It sets out training requirements for all roles within Welsh public services, including awareness raising training for all staff, helping professionals to deal with disclosures of abuse and ensuring consistent training is available for specialist professionals.

A key part of the Framework is the e-learning package. This e-learning will raise the awareness of a quarter of a million workers across the Welsh public sector.

We have also introduced “Ask and Act”. This requires professionals like Health visitors and Housing Officers to identify signs of abuse and to ask clients if they are being abused. They are required to offer referrals, interventions or specialist support depending on what they need.

The Framework sets out a series of requirements to be made on the relevant authorities under the Act in relation to the delivery and standards of training in relation to these issues.

The local training plan required under the Framework must form part of your local strategy.⁶

Education

To work towards the prevention of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence in the future, we have to focus on children, to make sure they understand what constitutes a healthy relationship and how to recognise the symptoms of unhealthy relationships.

To assist schools and further education institutions to promote positive attitudes towards gender equality and healthy, respectful relationships, we have published a Whole Education Approach Good Practice Guide⁷, produced by Welsh Women's Aid; awareness raising guidance for school governors⁸ and a review of resources, information and guidance produced by Welsh Women's Aid and AVA (Against Violence and Abuse)⁹.

The Welsh Government's response to the Expert Panel will be published in early spring.

The expert panel was established to help inform the development of the future Sex and Relationships (SRE) curriculum as part of the Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning Experience and identify issues and opportunities which could inform decisions to support the teaching profession deliver high quality SRE in schools more effectively.

Estyn published a thematic review on the delivery and impact of Healthy Relationships education in maintained schools in Wales in June 2017.¹⁰ The report is intended for Welsh Government, head teachers, governors, local authorities and regional consortia. We suggest you consider the recommendations within the report when drafting your local strategy. The Welsh Government's response was published in December 2017 and can be found at:

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolhome/raisingstandards/estynremit/estynreports/a-review-of-healthy-relationships-education/?lang=en>

Regionalisation

Local strategies should also set out how the local authority and Local Health Board will contribute to and participate in regional commissioning arrangements for designing, planning and delivery of effective violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence services. The roll out of a regional funding approach for the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Services Grant will be implemented from April

⁶ <http://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/commsafety/160317-national-training-framework-guidance-en.pdf>

⁷ <http://livefearfree.gov.wales/policies-and-guidance/good-practice-guide-a-whole-education-approach?lang=en>

⁸ <http://livefearfree.gov.wales/policies-and-guidance/vawda-guide-for-governors?lang=en>

⁹ <http://livefearfree.gov.wales/policies-and-guidance/violence-teaching-resources?lang=en>
<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/default/files/documents/A%20review%20of%20healthy%20relationships%20education.pdf>¹⁰

2018, although 2018-19 will be transitional year. It is anticipated that a move to a regional approach will improve the alignment of funding with policy direction, including the Act; ensure greater focus on the delivery of services; and facilitate greater value for money and flexibility of regionally funded services to meet local need.

Your local strategy should take into account your plans for regional working and the delivery plan submitted to us under the Grant.

Regional working - issues to be considered:

- In conducting needs assessments and Well-being assessments, together with service mapping and gap analysis, are there logical alignments with neighbouring local authority areas (e.g. shared VAWDASV service providers, similar population issues etc.)?
- What are the 'natural' alignments for people in your local authority area e.g. where do people tend to go for services not available locally (such as hospitals, shopping, or leisure)? Is this shaped by geographical considerations, economies of scale or transport issues?
- What existing collaborative or cross-boundary 'social care' service arrangements and relationships are already in place (e.g. LHB, social services arrangements, safeguarding boards, Supporting People, Mental Health, SARCs, APBs etc.) and which of these work most effectively?
- What existing cross-boundary criminal justice arrangements are in place (police areas and PCC commissioning), Local Criminal Justice Board working arrangements, specialist DV courts, MAPPA and MARAC arrangements, offender management schemes and projects?
- What cross-boundary networks (e.g. third sector, service users) are already in place and that work effectively?
- What are the opportunities for appropriate cross-border governance arrangements (e.g. PSB, CSP, regional collaborative committee etc.)?
- What existing co-ordination and commissioning infrastructure is in place, both locally and in neighbouring authority areas, that could be pooled (e.g. does the authority or a neighbour already act as a 'banker' or collaborative procurement lead for another area of service provision?), are there multi-disciplinary teams involved in social care planning, service design and commissioning?

Matters for consideration

Gwent Pathfinder evaluation

Cordis Bright published their evaluation of the Gwent regional model in April 2016¹¹. Chapter 12 covers lessons for other areas when developing a regional model, with key lessons set out in 12.2. You should consider these when drafting your local strategy and refining your plans for regional working.

¹¹ South East Wales VAWDASV Board, Evaluation of the regional model for VAWDASV, Cordis Bright, April 2016

Collaborative working

Local strategies should reflect collaboration and in particular, actions being taken by other public authorities, voluntary organisations or any other person which contribute to the purpose of the Act. This should include supporting regional commissioning arrangements for the design, planning and delivery of effective violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence services.

Public services, community and third sector organisations and independent specialist violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence services all have a key role to play in the provision of a range of support options. A collaborative approach will ensure greater focus on the delivery of services and will facilitate greater value for money and flexibility of funded services to meet local need.

An integrated approach is needed to ending all forms of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, from leadership to frontline professionals which mainstreams and prioritises the issue making it “everyone’s business”.

Accordingly, you should work with the Police, Police and Crime Commissioners, education services, housing organisations, the third sector, specialist violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence services, survivors, and other non-devolved crime and justice agencies such as the National Probation Service and Youth Justice Board Cymru in drafting and implementing your strategy.

Survivor Engagement Framework

We issued information on our plans for a survivor engagement framework in August 2017 and have begun the initial development work of this framework.

The aim is to create the framework in partnership with a wide variety of survivors, witnesses and affected others, including representation across the protected characteristics and those with complex, multi- faceted needs.

Listening to, and acting upon the experiences of survivors, is critical in ensuring that services are planned to be effective, responsive and consistent.

Adverse Childhood Experiences

There is a growing body of research into the long-term effects of exposure to chronically stressful situations in childhood. This may include growing up in households where children are routinely exposed to issues such as domestic abuse, or abuse of alcohol or drugs. Collectively, these stressors are known as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) exposure to which can seriously affect children’s later chances in life.

Children and young people who are being raised in such environments are more likely to struggle to achieve long term positive outcomes and are highly likely to raise their own children in environments where ACEs are

commonplace, creating a cycle of social and economic deprivation which is difficult to break.

Public Health Wales has produced a series of reports examining the prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences in the Welsh adult population and their impact on health and well-being across the life course¹².

Preventing ACEs can have significant benefits to families and individuals, as well as for wider communities. Local authorities should consider the role violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence services can play in providing services which help to prevent ACEs as well as helping to mitigate the effects of ACEs on those who have already been exposed to them.

ACE Support Hub.

The hub has been set up to help organisations and communities across Wales understand more about ACEs and their impacts as well as what action they can take to become more ACE informed. If you want to know more or have any questions you can contact the ACE Support Hub at ACE@wales.nhs.uk.

6. Monitoring and Implementation

We expect local authorities and Local Health Boards to include indicators and outcome measures to determine the impact of local strategies. In doing so, you should consider existing indicator/outcome frameworks. These include:

- Indicators under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 performance framework Public Health Outcomes (<http://gov.wales/docs/phhs/publications/160329frameworken.pdf>)
- Mental Health Indicators (<http://gov.wales/topics/health/socialcare/well-being/?lang=en>) Supporting People Outcome Framework (currently being revised)
- Common Indicator Framework which is used by programmes such as Flying Start and Families First
- Tackling Hate Crime Indicator Framework

Welsh Government is developing a set of National Indicators and has considered how existing indicator/outcome frameworks and considered how these contribute to the development of the National Indicators. The National Indicators will be published in 2018.

Governance and Accountability for the Strategies

Collaborative work in relation to VAWDASV is often focussed on multi-agency fora which bring organisations together to support and case manage those at

¹² <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/888/page/88504>

risk. This is a fundamental and requisite element of an effective response to those at risk.

However, client focused, multi-agency fora only work when led strategically and when monitored and governed by operational groups. Only when a combined and co-ordinated response is delivered across the public service do victims of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence receive a response which is consistent, effective and sustained.

When considering multi agency work it is important to consider strategic leadership in partnership and operational collaboration which drives progress and ensures effectiveness.

Partnership work requires effective communication, meetings and planning in several spheres: to develop strategic and operational frameworks and a united care pathway for all the strands of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence; to share information and develop co-ordinated interventions in particular cases; and then to monitor the care pathway and review outcomes to develop the response.

Strategic partnerships should develop, approve and monitor the local strategy. Membership of the strategic group should be at a senior level of the relevant authorities and include those authorised to act and make decisions on behalf of their organisation. Clarity is required as to how any partnership fits within the overall local governance structure.

It is important to agree how you will:

- monitor and report on your local strategy and how the relevant authorities are delivering on the purposes of the Act;
- ensure any collaborative work and actions are reflected in local strategies;
- deliver and be accountable for actions and responsibilities identified through any established partnerships;
- ensure regular service-user input;
- ensure appropriate governance including the minimum requirements on members, frequency of meetings, responsibility for day-to-day organisation and coordination of the group.

An agreed common, integrated set of outcomes and a joined-up dataset is important which:

- monitors the care pathway;
- assesses whether the strategic objectives are being met;
- informs the group's oversight of the delivery of the local strategy;
- includes information and feedback from service users
- includes agreement on a common set of policies to be used across partners including risk assessment, information-sharing and training;
- agreement on how services should be funded to address local needs
- and provide value for money processes such as joint commissioning or joint funding arrangements.

It is important that members of the strategic partnerships:

- ensure membership of the group is at an appropriately senior level and includes those authorised on behalf of their organisation to ensure delivery is achievable;
- invite all necessary partners, including the police, probation and specialist third sector organisations at an equivalent senior level;
- agree an action plan to deliver the strategic aims, detailing who is responsible for delivery of the actions;
- review the action plan on a quarterly basis and report on it annually as part of the local strategy review requirements;
- gather, analyse and monitor all performance and financial information against the action plan; and
- ensure there is an agreed care pathway established for all partners to use for those suffering violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

7. Role of the National Advisers

The National Advisers may be able to assist and advise LA/LHB's on the development and review of their strategies to ensure consistent high quality strategic planning on these issues and improve coordination and consistency.

Resources

Lloyds Bank Foundation Tackling Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence: A Collaborative Commissioning Toolkit for Services in Wales August 2016

This toolkit has been produced by Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales in association with specialist UK violence against women charities. It aims to help agencies in Wales to work together to provide an effective commissioning approach to ensure the future well-being of all those affected by violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

The toolkit is intended for:

- Current and future commissioners
- Providers of services
- Welsh Government, to help support local action that will deliver impactful solutions and
- Others with a stake in the safety and well-being of local people.

https://www.lloydsbankfoundation.org.uk/VAWDASV%20Toolkit_Wales_web.pdf

Home Office Violence Against Women and Girls National Statement of Expectations December 2016

The national statement of expectations explains the actions local areas should take to ensure victims of violence against women and girls get the help they need.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/574665/VAWG_National_Statement_of_Expectations_-_FINAL.PDF

Legislation, Policies and Strategies

When developing local strategies, local authorities and Local Health Boards need to take into account of a number of pieces of legislation, including the following. The most relevant is included, but it is not exhaustive. Some of the legislation cited imposes duties directly on relevant authorities or other public bodies.

Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 (VAWDASV Act)¹³

The duties relating to local strategies are contained in sections 5 to 8 of the Act.

¹³ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2015/3/contents/enacted>

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act aims to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.

Public bodies listed in the Act need show that they have applied the five ways of working (sustainable development principle). Following these ways of working will help public bodies work together better, avoid repeating past mistakes and tackle some of the long-term challenges we are facing:

Long term

The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.

Prevention

How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.

Involvement

The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves

Integration

Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.

Collaboration

Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives.

Involvement

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 provides a legal framework for improving the well-being of people (adults and children) who need care and support, carers who need support, and for transforming social services in Wales. This requires local population needs assessments to inform the development of local strategies.

Housing (Wales) Act 2014

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 enshrines in legislation the role of the local authority in preventing and alleviating homelessness. Section 57 of this Act specifies that whether a person or a member of that person's household is at risk of abuse, including domestic abuse, is a factor in determining whether it is reasonable to continue to occupy accommodation.

Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016

The Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 makes specific provision for joint occupation contracts. These will help survivors by targeting perpetrators for eviction.

Welsh Government's Supporting People programme provides essential help to some of our most vulnerable people – its strong prevention and early intervention approach reflects the objectives of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and the wider Welsh Government legislative agenda.

The programme supports people from a range of categories. These include people:

- who are at risk of homelessness or getting over a period of homelessness
- people fleeing domestic violence
- people with mental health needs
- people with substance misuse issues
- people with learning disabilities
- a significant proportion of the people supported are older people.

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 ("1998 Act") sets out the duties of responsible authorities in relation to tackling crime and disorder in their areas. The responsible authorities for a local government area are collectively known as a Community Safety Partnership, or 'CSP'. Some areas however, discharge their statutory functions under their Public Services Boards (PSBs).

Sexual Offences Act 2003

An Act to make new provision about sexual offences, their prevention and the protection of children from harm from other sexual acts, and for connected purposes.

Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003

The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as amended by the Serious Crime Act 2015) makes the following provisions:

- extends the extra-territorial reach of the offences in the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 so that they apply to habitual as well as permanent UK residents
- introduces a new offence of failing to protect a girl from risk of FGM
- grants lifelong anonymity to victims
- brings in a civil order (FGM protection orders) to protect potential victims, and
- introduces a duty on healthcare professionals, teachers and social care workers to notify the police of known cases of FGM carried out on a girl under 18.

Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 and Domestic Violence Crime and Victims (Amendments) Act 2012 places a responsibility on relevant authorities to conduct Domestic Homicide Reviews.

It places duties on local authorities and to those staff in Social Services departments who deal with children, carers, vulnerable adults and wider domestic violence issues.

Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007

This Act makes provision for protecting individuals against being forced to enter into marriage without their free and full consent and for protecting individuals who have been forced to enter into marriage without such consent; and for connected purposes.

Modern Slavery Act 2015

This Act makes provision about slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour and about human trafficking, including provision for the protection of victims; to make provision for an Independent Anti-slavery Commissioner; and for connected purposes.

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 impose duties on relevant Welsh authorities including the requirement to publish equality objectives. Authorities are required to publish a statement which sets out the steps taken in order to achieve each equality objective and also to monitor the progress of achieving those objectives. The Welsh Government Equality Objectives (that sit within a Strategic Equality Plan) will help ensure that public services and employment are fair, accessible, responsive to people's needs, and that communities are inclusive. People should not be treated less favourably because of their gender, race, faith or belief, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy and maternity, being (or not being) married or in a civil partnership, being a disabled person, or being transgender. These protected characteristics underpin Welsh Government's work, ensuring a joined up approach to achieving better outcomes for the people of Wales.

There is a legal requirement on all public authorities, when carrying out all their functions, to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment on the grounds of sex, and to promote equality of opportunity between women and men. This requires public authorities to recognise that the two groups are not starting from an equal footing and identical treatment will not always be appropriate. Single sex services are lawful where there is a clear need, such as a women's refuge, and equality duties do not mean that single sex services should be cut, or that services should necessarily be provided on the same scale for both men and women, in recognition that women make up the majority of victims of domestic violence and rape and sexual abuse.

Older People

There is sometimes confusion between the experience of domestic abuse in later life and "elder abuse" (a term which encompasses all forms of violence, abuse and neglect experienced by older people). Such confusion can result in victims of abuse falling between the systems which are designed to offer them protection and as a consequence do not receive appropriate support to help them to stop the abuse or make them safe.

Statistics bear this out. The latest Home Office data indicates that 28 older people (aged 60+) in England and Wales were killed by a family member. This

represented 24% of all victims. However, the reporting of domestic abuse incidents involving older people represented less than 4% of all reported incidences.

The experience of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence can be even more damaging to victims where it is experienced alongside other complex needs or vulnerabilities. Whilst it is wrong to homogenise older people as “vulnerable” or “frail”, it is important that public sector and third sector providers are prepared and able to link safeguarding systems to offer a suite of support which addresses all of the issues which may be faced by an older person experiencing violence and abuse.

BME people

Research has found that: “BME women are disproportionately affected by different forms of abuse e.g. forced marriage, honour based violence, FGM, sexual exploitation in the form of commercial sex work, trafficking etc. The multiple vulnerabilities from these overlapping contexts make it harder for women to flee violence.”¹⁴

Survivors may face additional barriers to seeking help, such as racial discrimination, religious stereotyping, fear of community dishonour and rejection, and an insecure immigration status, all of which may prevent them from accessing protection.

Disabled people

Disabled people experience disproportionately higher rates of domestic abuse and also experience domestic abuse for longer periods of time, and more severe and frequent abuse than non-disabled people. Disabled women are twice as likely to experience domestic violence as non-disabled women and they are likely to experience abuse over a longer period of time and to suffer more abuse and injuries as result of abuse than disabled men.

LGBT+ people

Welsh Government funded research in 2014¹⁵ which highlighted the barriers faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people when accessing domestic abuse and sexual violence services. The report highlighted individual, interpersonal and structural and cultural barriers and made a series of recommendations to improve accessibility to services, including flexibility, confidential access and inclusivity.

The Human Rights Act 1998

The Human Rights Act 1998 (the Act or the HRA) sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms that everyone in the UK is entitled to.

¹⁴ Roy. S and Ravi.T (2012 Vital Statistics Key finding report on black, minority ethnic and refugee women’s and children’s experiences of gender based violence (London) Imkaan

¹⁵ <http://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/2014/140604-barriers-faced-lgbt-accessing-domestic-abuse-services-en.pdf>

EU Directive on Victim's rights (Directive 2012/29/EU)

The EU Directive on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime sets minimum standards of service provision to support victims. Article 8 outlines duties to establish specialist support services in addition to, or as part of, the more general victim support services. As with general support services, access to specialist support should not depend on whether the crime has been reported.

The objective of the rules is that all victims of crime and their family members are recognised and treated in a respectful and non-discriminatory manner based on an individual approach tailored to the victim's needs.

The rights include:

- Rights of victims' family members
- Right to understand and to be understood
- Right to information
- Right to support
- Right to participate in criminal proceedings
- Rights to protection

Welsh Ministers are under a duty to comply with the European Convention on Human Rights¹⁶ in the exercise of all their functions, as are all other public authorities. The Welsh Ministers also support the principles contained in the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This includes goal 5 - Achieve Gender Equality and empower all women and girls which includes a target in relation to violence against women and girls.

Requirements for specialised approaches to service provision for women should be considered by local authorities and Local Health Boards when undertaking needs assessments and in the development of local violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence strategies as required by the Act.

UN CEDAW

The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women¹⁷ (CEDAW) is the international human rights treaty that focuses specifically on equality between women and men in all areas of life. It is often referred to as the 'women's bill of rights'. The UK ratified CEDAW in 1986. By accepting the Convention, the UK has committed itself to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms, including:

- incorporating the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolishing all discriminatory laws and adopting appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women;
- establishing tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination; and

¹⁶ See section 81(1) of the Government of Wales Act 2006

¹⁷ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>

- ensuring elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organisations or enterprises.

Council of Europe Convention

Welsh Government supports the principles of the Council of Europe Convention¹⁸ on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence ('Istanbul Convention'), to which the UK is a signatory. This sets out minimum standards to prevent violence against women, protect victims and prosecute perpetrators including:

- a) protecting women against all forms of violence, and prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence;
- b) contributing to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and promote substantive equality between women and men, including by empowering women;
- c) designing a comprehensive framework, policies and measures for the protection of and assistance to all victims of violence against women and domestic violence;
- d) promoting international co-operation with a view to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence; and
- e) providing support and assistance to organisations and law enforcement agencies to effectively co-operate in order to adopt an integrated approach to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence.

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention 2011 (IC)) is the most modern treaty to deal with ending violence against women and girls and domestic violence. It applies equally to women and men, yet acknowledges that women and girls are the subjects of the most prevalent forms of violence in the world today. It acknowledges the rights and obligations in the UN CEDAW.

The Convention encourages multi-sectoral working, including third sector organisations. The Istanbul Convention obligates states to promote changes in the social and cultural patterns of behaviour of women and men with a view to eradicating prejudices, customs, traditions and other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority of women or on stereotyped roles for women and men. It equally obligates states to enact measures to eradicate and prevent violence and to provide adequate funding and gender-appropriate shelters etc.

You should consider the principles of the Convention when drafting your strategy, particularly where they relate to prevention, protection and support.

Prosperity for All: the National Strategy

This strategy takes the key commitments outlined in the Programme for Government, places them in a long-term context, and sets out how they fit

¹⁸ <https://rm.coe.int/168046031c>

with the work of the wider Welsh public service to lay the foundations for achieving prosperity for all.

Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence - VAWDASV National Strategy

The objectives set out in the National Strategy are:

Objective 1: Increase awareness and challenge attitudes of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence across the Welsh Population

Objective 2: Increased awareness in children and young people of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships and that abusive behaviour is always wrong

Objective 3: Increased focus on holding perpetrators to account and provide opportunities to change their behaviour based around victim safety

Objective 4: Make early intervention and prevention a priority

Objective 5: Relevant professionals are trained to provide effective, timely and appropriate responses to victims and survivors

Objective 6: Provide victims with equal access to appropriately resourced, high quality, needs led, strength based, gender responsive services across Wales

Welsh language

In developing commissioning arrangements/commissioning services regions should consider the importance of ensuring that support for victims of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence is made available in Welsh to those that need, and those who choose to receive the support in Welsh.

Relevant authorities will, over time, become liable to comply with Welsh Language Standards. Where employees working to tackle violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence engage with Welsh speaking colleagues, service users or representatives from other public bodies, they will need to ensure that they comply with the relevant Standards which apply to their particular authority.

Ending Violence against Women and Girls Strategy 2016-2020

The UK Government 'Ending Violence against Women and Girls Strategy 2016-2020' builds on a number of initiatives undertaken by the UK Government including the introduction of a new offence of controlling or coercive behaviour, the Modern Slavery Act, Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) under the Crime and Security Act 2010, the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), FGM Protection Orders under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 ("the 2003 Act") and an FGM mandatory reporting duty inserted into the 2003 Act by the Serious Crime Act 2015, and strengthening measures to manage people who commit sexual offences or those who pose a risk of sexual harm.

The UK Government strategy sets out a number of actions which are applicable to Wales. These include actions relating to the **National Statement**

of Expectations,¹⁹ commissioning resources and the introduction of the Home Office’s Violence against Women and Girls Transformation Fund.²⁰ You should consider these expectations when drafting your strategy as these relate to service provision, collaboration, support and access to services.

In 2014, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) issued “Domestic violence and abuse: how health services, social care and the organisations they work with can respond effectively”.²¹ This guidance, which applies across England and Wales, highlights that domestic abuse is a complex issue that needs sensitive handling by a range of health and social care professionals. The cost, in both human and economic terms, is so significant that even marginally effective interventions are cost effective.

In 2016, NICE issued further Domestic Abuse Quality Standards²² for healthcare providers. The Welsh Government has an agreement in place with NICE covering the Institute's guidelines, and there is an expectation that NHS bodies in Wales take full account of the recommendations made by the Institute when commissioning and delivering services to patients.

The NICE guidance is for everyone working in health and social care whose work brings them into contact with people who experience or perpetrate domestic violence and abuse. This includes: people working in criminal justice settings and detention centres, health and social care commissioners, including clinical commissioning groups and local authorities, and staff working for specialist domestic violence and abuse services. The latter could be working in local authorities, Local Health Boards and other organisations in the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. The guidance is also aimed at local strategic partnerships.

Other cross cutting themes

Sex Industry, Exploitation and Trafficking

The priority in this context is public protection; people involved in prostitution can be particularly vulnerable to sexual and other violent crime and may in fact be victims of child sexual exploitation or modern slavery.

Migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women

A major concern to service providers is their ability to assist migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women who have suffered, or are suffering violence against women and who have no recourse to public funds. This group can often be subject to issues such as FGM, so called ‘honour’ based violence

¹⁹

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/574665/VAWG_National_Statement_of_Expectations_-_FINAL.PDF

²⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/violence-against-women-and-girls-service-transformation-fund>

²¹ <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph50>
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs116>

²²

and forced marriage, as well as the already complex issues of domestic abuse and sexual violence. Visa issues, cultural, language and communication barriers can further complicate and isolate these women.

Children and Young People

When considering outcomes for children and young people in relation to VAWDASV services improved outcomes can only be delivered and sustained when key services work together to plan and implement provision.

To enable the regional commissioners to fully discharge their role in this area they should include representation as appropriate from the relevant partner agencies such as Social Services, Children and Mental Health Services, Education, Youth Offending Services and appropriate voluntary organisations. Providing the range of education, prevention and support services for children and young people is a key component of safeguarding and promoting the health and well-being of children. Safeguarding children should not be seen as a separate activity from promoting their welfare and should be placed in the context of wider service delivery. Therefore, it is imperative VAWDASV services maintain good working relationships with social services and other colleagues involved in the Safeguarding Children's Boards.