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Welsh Assembly Government

# Evaluation of Welsh Women's Aid

*Final Report*



# Evaluation of Welsh Women's Aid

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# Terms and Abbreviations

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ASP	Accredited Support Provider
BAWSO	Black Association of Women Step Out
CHC	Community Housing Cymru
CPD	Continued Professional Development
CSD	Community Safety Division
DCLG	Department of Communities and Local Government
EcAD	Economic Advice Division
HR	Human Resources
IDVA	Independent Domestic Violence Advisor
LA	Local Authority
LHB	Local Health Board
LSP	Local Strategic Partnerships
MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
NHS	National Health Service
RCT	Rhondda Cynon Taff
RCW	Regional Children's Worker
RSL	Registered Social Landlords
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SJLG	Social Justice and Local Government
SPRG	Supporting People Revenue Grant
SPG	Supporting People Grant
WA	Women's Aid
WAFE	Women's Aide Federation of England
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government
WCVA	Wales Council for Voluntary Action
WLGA	Welsh Local Government Association
WSU	Women's Safety Unit
WWA	Welsh Women's Aid

# Explanation of words and phrases

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Whilst the nature of the evaluation is largely qualitative (based upon interviews within the framework of topic guides), some quantitative assessments have been made and the following conventions are adhered to throughout this report:

nearly all	with very few exceptions
most	80% or more
many	70% or more
a majority	over 60%
half/around half	close to 50%
a minority	below 40%
few	below 20%
very few	less than 10%

We have also tried to make it clear which group the proportions apply to – for example, local WA groups, local authority representatives and so on.

# 1. Introduction

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CRG Research Ltd in partnership with Dr Amanda Robinson from Cardiff School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University were commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) to undertake the *'Evaluation of Welsh Women's Aid'* (WWA) to "assess the effectiveness of the organisation in helping the Assembly Government to achieve its domestic abuse strategy objectives." (Research Specification p.1). The report considers the efficiency and value for money provided by WWA and the appropriateness of the organisation's structure, process, practices and objectives.

The WAG *'Tackling Domestic Abuse: The All Wales National Strategy'* primary objective is to provide a structural 'backbone' to direct domestic abuse intervention across Wales. It aims to facilitate the development and implementation of a 'joined-up' problem-solving approach which addresses domestic abuse holistically. Specifically the overall aims of the strategy are:

- *"To facilitate the development and implementation of a quality co-ordinated joint-agency response;*
- *To improve the current service provision for all victims and to particularly increase the safe choices for women and children/young people who experience domestic abuse;*
- *To hold abusers accountable for their behaviour;*
- *To increase public awareness as to the issues surrounding domestic abuse;*
- *To challenge the notion that domestic abuse is acceptable;*
- *To protect children and young people in Wales from the negative impact of domestic abuse;*
- *To educate and inform children/young people to enable them to make informed choices."* (WAG, 2005 p.1)

WWA is the national umbrella organisation representing local Women's Aid (WA) groups. The 34 local member groups provide direct women-centred support in the community and in refuges to women and children who have experienced domestic abuse.

To assist with the delivery of the National Strategy the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration<sup>1</sup> announced shortly after the publication was launched that the Assembly will undertake an evaluation of domestic abuse initiatives funded by the WAG. The purpose of the evaluations is to ensure the domestic abuse projects are delivering against the aims outlined in the strategy (outlined above) and to ensure the

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<sup>1</sup> Since this time the NAFW has been reorganised and this Department is now known as the Department of Social Justice and Local Government (SJLG)

projects are delivering value for money. This evaluation of WWA will contribute to that body of work<sup>2</sup>.

This evaluation covers:

- i. *"The relationship between the Assembly Government and WWA in terms of general communication, funding and reporting arrangements and policy development;*
- ii. *The added value provided by WWA at the national level in terms of: impact and image with the public; delivery of a key aim of the All Wales Domestic Abuse Strategy; profile with key partners; quality and quantity of contribution to partnerships; quality and quantity of contribution to policy development; representation of the sector and of individual groups;*
- iii. *The relationship between WWA and its local member groups in terms of: impact of WWA on performance of local groups; performance monitoring and management; and assurance of quality and consistency of practice; mutual understanding of roles and realities; general communication; level and usefulness of participation by groups in decision making and factors affecting this; leadership and influence; support, training and guidance;*
- iv. *The suitability and efficiency of WWA's arrangements for governance (including the functioning of the Executive Board), strategic planning, decision making, and day to day management;*
- v. *WWA's use of resources, financial management and stewardship of public funds; and human resources and industrial relations;*
- vi. *Funding levels and commitments, and the long term sustainability and capacity of the organisation, taking into account the implications of WWA's current job evaluation exercise;*
- vii. *The extent to which the services and contribution of the organisation represents value for money and are efficiently delivered."* (Research Specification p.3-4)

The research involved two distinct phases.

- Phase 1: To document the current organisational aims, objectives, operational management, structure, practices and processes and to assess the extent to which these are appropriate in terms of their expected outcomes (Research Specification p.4).
- Phase 2: To assess the actual effectiveness of current management, structure, practices and processes and the impact of recent organisational

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<sup>2</sup> As part of this evaluation programme, the Evaluation of the All Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline was completed in January 2006 and the Evaluation of the Ante-natal Domestic Abuse Pathway was completed in October 2007. The Minister is also considering externally commissioning the following projects: Evaluation of three domestic abuse 'one-stop shop' projects (Safer Caerphilly, Safer Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent Domestic Abuse Service); Evaluation of the New Pathways Sexual Referrals Centre; and, an Evaluation of Black Association of Women Step Out.

changes on the organisation and its work, especially in addressing the shortcomings identified in the 2001 evaluation (Research Specification p.5).

Over a period of 6 months our work programme involved:

- Thorough examination of documentary evidence including internal and external reports, publications, monitoring information (where available) and a literature review;
- In-depth key informant interviews with:
  - WWA personnel (n=15);
  - WWA trustees<sup>3</sup> and external board members (n=10);
  - WAG officials (n=4);
  - a sample of national stakeholders (n=10) ;
  - local authority representatives (n=6).
- A web-based survey to enable stakeholders more widely to input their views to the evaluation and comments on WWA structure, processes, practices and objectives (n=105, including representation from a minimum of 15 local groups<sup>4</sup>, with 29 responses from individual workers);
- Case studies based in 8 local groups to amplify and develop the key points arising from previous stages of the research programme. Case studies involved visits to local WA offices and to some refuges and outreach projects, interviews with local WA workers and their partners (where appropriate contacts were identified) n=31);
- Quantitative and qualitative analysis and reporting.

This report covers:

- The context for this evaluation including the political climate and corresponding changes to the way domestic abuse is addressed (Chapter 2);
- The relationship between WWA and local WA groups (Chapter 3);
- The relationship between WWA and the WAG (Chapter 4);
- The governance of WWA (Chapter 5);
- Management arrangements within WWA (Chapter 6);
- Added value at a national level provided by WWA (Chapter 7);
- Value for money (Chapter 8);
- Conclusions and recommendations (given in Chapter 9).

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<sup>3</sup> Referred to as delegates within the movement

<sup>4</sup> 7 respondents indicated that they would rather not say which group they worked for.

## 2. Context

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The Chapter starts by defining domestic abuse and discussing its prevalence. It describes how domestic abuse has moved from the fringes to a central position politically, and in turn describes the changing way in which responses to domestic abuse issues have developed in practice. We also outline the role of WWA and local WA groups, and comment on an earlier evaluation of WWA.

### **About Domestic Abuse**

Domestic violence is recognised as a serious problem across Britain. Research shows that domestic violence accounts for between 16% and one quarter of all recorded violent crime, (Dobash and Dobash, 1980. Todd, 2004. Home Office Violent Crime Unit, 2004) and that one incident is reported every minute (Stanko, 2000). Home Office data shows that 45% of women and 26% of men could recall being subject to domestic violence (abuse, threats or force), sexual victimisation or stalking at least once in their lifetimes (Walby and Allen, 2004). Although victims of domestic violence are not restricted to women alone, women are much more likely than men to be the victim of multiple incidents of abuse: 32% of women who had experienced domestic violence did so four or five (or more) times, compared with 11% of the men that had experienced domestic violence; and women account for 89% of all those who have experienced four or more incidents of domestic violence (Walby and Allen, 2004).

The Home Office collects data every year and produces a number of statistical bulletins on Crime in England and Wales<sup>5</sup>. Since 1995 these reports have incorporated statistics on domestic abuse and more recently there has been a specific bulletin on intimate violence (domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking). Out of all the regions in the recent Home Office Statistical Bulletin (2005/06 p.75) dealing with intimate violence, Wales has the highest percentage of women experiencing partner violence at 7.1% (with other regions being 1% behind) and also the highest for family violence at 4.8%.

### **Financial Cost and Savings**

Domestic abuse and violence against women is hugely costly, both to the lives of individual women and to society as a whole. The impact of violence ranges from

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<sup>5</sup> These reports break down statistics in relation to domestic abuse in each police authority and provide a useful indicator.

physical injury, psychological consequences, long-term mental health issues, constrained socio-economic opportunities and wider social exclusion.

The financial costs of domestic abuse are high, but concealed to a certain extent within the service sector - voluntary and statutory, health and welfare, and not just the criminal justice services.

**Table 1: Combined costs and service users for SPG and SPRG<sup>6</sup> (2005-06)**

<b>Client group</b>	<b>Total costs</b>	<b>Total service users</b>	<b>Spend per service user</b>
Women seeking refuge from domestic violence	£8,240,764	2885	£2,856

[Source: WAG, 2006b]

Still, it is estimated that each domestic abuse homicide costs approximately £1.1m (Brand and Price, 2000). The cost of domestic violence to the criminal justice system, health care, social services, emergency housing and civil legal services is estimated at £3.1 billion per year (Walby, 2004).

It is estimated that the human and emotional cost of domestic abuse in England and Wales alone is £23 billion a year (Walby, 2004). Significant economic savings can be achieved by reducing the prevalence of domestic abuse, as illustrated by the Costs and Benefits of the Supporting People Programme Report (WAG, 2006b). The report showed large quantitative and qualitative benefits of the services provided by refuges across Wales (including local WA groups).

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<sup>6</sup> SPG and SPRG are two funding streams for domestic abuse services in Wales (see Figure 6 for more information)

**Table 2: Impacts for women seeking refuge from domestic violence**

Area of Impact	Impact	Mode	Mean	Max
<b>Physical Health</b>	Reduction in A&E attendances due to reduced experience of violence	80%	80%	80%
	Reduced number of violence related GP visits per woman/child due to Supporting People	80%	80%	80%
	Reduced number of GP visits (general health) due to Supporting People	10%	17%	30%
	Impact of Supporting People on outpatient attendances of women/children	5%	18%	30%
<b>Mental Health</b>	Reduction in community mental health contacts for those experiencing DV	5%	18%	30%
	Reduction in admissions for serious mental health episodes for women/children	25%	25%	25%
<b>Crime</b>	Reduction of risk of sexual assault once the victim accesses Supporting People accommodation and support	80%	80%	80%
	Reduced risk of murder once accessing Supporting People accommodation and support, given that in 19% of cases the violence carries on	80%	80%	80%
<b>Homelessness</b>	Percentage of people prevented from becoming homeless through receiving Supporting People	50%	50%	50%
	Impact of Supporting People on reducing likelihood of tenancy failure	50%	50%	50%

[Source: WAG, 2006b]

The WAG found that women seeking refuge from domestic abuse costs £8,240,763 but has a net benefit of £47,946,346 to the Supporting People budget (WAG, 2006b).

### **UK response to domestic abuse**

Since 1997 a range of policies have been introduced that stressed the need to reduce domestic violence and improve support to victims and their children. On the 9<sup>th</sup> October 2007 the Government announced a new set of Public Service Agreements (PSA) setting out the key priority outcomes the Government wants to achieve in the next spending period (2008-2011). Priority Action 1 in 'PSA 23: Making Communities Safer' is "*Reduce the most serious violence, including tackling serious sexual offences and domestic violence*".

Despite the recognised necessity of taking a multi-agency approach to domestic abuse, the focus of attention has largely remained on criminal justice agencies and their performance. Therefore, most recent developments have consisted of

improvements to the criminal justice response to domestic violence. Only very recently has the response by agencies outside the criminal justice system (e.g., health, education, social services, the voluntary sector) to victims of domestic violence been scrutinized to determine methods of improvement. The evaluation of WWA, and its contribution to the multi-agency approach to domestic abuse in Wales, is one such example. Domestic abuse is first and foremost a crime. Although criminal justice is not an issue devolved to the WAG, the Assembly has firmly stated its commitment to supporting local partnerships to create a safe environment free of crime and disorder. The *All-Wales Domestic Abuse Pathway* is one such example.

The Home Office's national domestic violence plan,<sup>7</sup> announced by Baroness Scotland on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2006, has a tripartite structure whereby 'one-stop-shops' for victims, specialized courts and multi-agency responses for very high risk victims (known as MARACs) come together in a coordinated way to assist victims, hold perpetrators accountable and target resources to the most vulnerable families. All of these initiatives require the coordination and cooperation of agencies from the criminal justice, statutory and voluntary sectors. The support provided to victims by the voluntary sector is considered to be absolutely crucial for the success of these high-profile initiatives.

Research into the services and support provided to victims of domestic abuse by the voluntary sector must be developed in order to document best practice and help monitor and produce good outcomes for victims of domestic abuse and their children. This research will therefore have important policy and practice implications for voluntary sector organisations that provide services to victims of domestic abuse living in Wales, multi-agency partnerships attempting to reduce domestic abuse in their communities, and victims and their children.

### **Welsh Assembly response to Domestic Violence**

The WAG launched its strategy on domestic violence in March 2005 in '*Tackling Domestic Abuse: The All Wales National Strategy, A Joint-Agency Approach*' (WAG, 2005). The strategy identified a number of issues with responses to domestic violence within Wales. These were:

- There was no overall strategy for Wales, little joint-agency working and not enough safe information sharing between agencies;
- Without safe information sharing the needs of domestic abuse victims could not be adequately met and perpetrators would not be held accountable. Agencies could not learn from the pockets of good practice that did exist in

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<sup>7</sup> Available at <http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/domesticviolence/domesticviolence51.pdf>

Wales: if agencies did not know what services existed there could not be policy replication/transference;

- Many agencies had no specific domestic abuse policy and did not record domestic abuse work, believing it to be a small part of their overall work;
- It was not known how much time agencies actually devoted to dealing with issues of domestic abuse. A further consequence was that agencies which may not consider domestic abuse to be a relevant issue could remain outside an integrated strategy;
- Issues of rurality, language and culture in Wales were not being adequately addressed. (WAG, 2005 p.12)

To address these identified weaknesses, the primary objective the Welsh Assembly Government set for the strategy was to:

*“provide much-needed structural ‘backbone’ to direct domestic abuse intervention across Wales... to facilitate the development and implementation of a ‘joined-up’ problem-solving approach which addresses domestic abuse holistically - providing protection for individuals who suffer domestic abuse and simultaneously addressing the causes of domestic abuse.”* (WAG, 2005 p.3)

The WAG identified equality as a central principle of the strategy but also stressed the importance of the following elements:

- Protection and support for victims;
- Perpetrator accountability;
- Prevention.

Based upon the above principles the following aims for the strategy were set:

- *“To facilitate the development and implementation of a quality-co-ordinated joint-agency response;*
- *To improve the current service provision for all victims and to particularly increase the safe choices for women and children/young people who experience domestic abuse;*
- *To hold abusers accountable for their behaviour;*
- *To increase the public awareness as to the issues surrounding domestic abuse;*
- *To challenge the notion that domestic abuse is acceptable;*
- *To protect children and young people in Wales from the negative impact of domestic abuse;*
- *To educate and inform children/young people to enable them to make informed choices”* (WAG, 2005).

As a result of the strategy a number of initiatives have been put in place:

### ***The All Wales Working Group***

Comprising of representatives from relevant stakeholder organisations and Assembly departments, the All Wales Domestic Abuse Working Group is tasked with ensuring joint action across Wales takes place. The group monitors and evaluates progress of the domestic abuse strategy, promote good practice and advises the WAG.

### ***All Wales network of Domestic Abuse Co-ordinators***

The 1998 Crime and Disorder Act required local authorities and police to form crime and disorder partnerships to promote a co-ordinated and partnership approach to reducing crime levels. These partnerships are known as Community Safety Partnerships (CSP) within Wales. As part of the national domestic abuse strategy the WAG has funded a Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator within each CSP to ensure that domestic abuse is prioritised and forms part of each local authority's community safety plan.

### ***All Wales Pathway***

The All Wales Antenatal Routine Enquiry into Domestic Abuse Care Pathway & Training Pack for health professionals was developed by the All Wales Midwifery and Health Visitors and Networking Group with financial assistance from the WAG.

The group was set up in 2004 with a remit of developing improvements in maternity services for women experiencing domestic abuse in pregnancy. As part of this work the care pathway was developed which assisted midwives and health visitors in making enquiries into domestic abuse as part of the antenatal care process.

The resultant pathway was a woman centred, clinically driven and evidence based approach, offering a structured approach to referral and support services for women that disclosed domestic abuse.

A training package was developed to support the pathway documentation and guide the trainers through each of the minimum standards of the pathway. The system also could be used as a tool for audit and gathering statistical information.

Due to the success of the Antenatal care pathway, this work was extended to include Accident and Emergency settings. Funding was made available by the WAG for a nurse secondee to introduce the All Wales routine enquiry about domestic abuse into Accident and Emergency settings.

### ***School-based interventions***

An information booklet *Good Practice on Domestic Abuse* targeted at schools was published in March 2004, and circulated to schools, local authorities and youth organisations. WAG is planning to update the schools guidance in 2008/09. *Good Practice on Domestic Abuse* was developed with the aim of helping teachers and relevant staff recognise and understand children and young people that had been victims of domestic abuse.

The good practice guide is an example of the WAG's position that tackling domestic abuse should be part of a 'whole school' ethos, and part of the culture of youth organisations such as the youth service.

The focus on tackling domestic abuse within the school environment can also be seen in the recently announced national strategy on school-based counselling services (WAG, 2008). Domestic abuse is specifically identified within the strategy as being an issue that needs to be addressed, and support offered to those children and young people that have experienced it.

The WAG report that the All Wales Schools Programme is reaching 97% of schools in Wales and includes a module on domestic abuse.

### **Local authority response**

Local authorities have a legal duty to provide welfare services to people identified as being particularly vulnerable (this includes victims of domestic violence), to promote and improve their social well-being and welfare. The legal responsibility for such provision and arrangements is set out in the Local Government Act 2000 in particular Part 2, which states that: "*every local authority is to have power to do anything which they consider is likely to achieve any one or more of the following objectives:*

- *The promotion or improvement of the economic well-being of their area;*
- *The promotion or improvement of the social well-being of their area; and,*
- *The promotion or improvement of the environmental well-being of their area".*

The power under this act includes power for a local authority to:

- Incur expenditure;
- Give financial assistance to any person;
- Enter into arrangements or agreements with any person;
- Co-operate with, or facilitate or co-ordinate the activities of, any person; and,
- Provide staff, goods, services or accommodation to any person.

The power under this Act also includes power for a local authority to do: *"anything in relation to, or for the benefit of, any person or area situated outside their area if they consider that it is likely to achieve any one or more of the previously mentioned objectives"*.

In addition, under Part 93. (2), the WAG may pay grants to local authorities in Wales towards expenditure incurred by them in providing, or contributing to the provision of, such welfare services as may be determined by the Assembly. Welfare services include services that provide support, assistance, advice or counselling to individuals with particular needs.

A key source of funding made available to local authorities by the WAG to meet the above legal duties has been the Supporting People Grant (SPG) programme (see Figure 6 for more information). The programme gives local authorities responsibility for funding, planning, reviewing and commissioning support services that can help local authorities deliver against their local and national strategic priorities. The funds can also complement other local strategies, which promote rehabilitation, intermediate care and improvements in the economic, social or environmental well-being of local communities.

The role of local authorities in relation to domestic violence is also evident in their work on CSPs. A network of domestic abuse fora have been setup across Wales with each CSP hosting a domestic abuse forum. The creation of these domestic abuse fora has helped ensure a multi-agency partnership approach to domestic abuse, with key local organisations (e.g. local authorities, police, housing associations and WA groups) participating.

## **Women's Aid**

During the 1960s and early 1970s increasing concern over, and a need to respond to male violence towards women, saw the creation of the women's refuge movement. The feminist movement of that period heavily influenced the refuge movement, and this was reflected in how the refuges operated e.g. an emphasis on self-help and self-determination, and collective rather than hierarchical structures. The rationale behind the collective structure was that *"all decisions affecting the work of the group should be taken collectively, thus empowering women by sharing responsibility and not misusing power or repeating unequal power hierarchies that women experience within society"*. (WWA website, 2008)

The refuge movement operated on two key levels: publicising and bringing into the open the previously 'private' issue of domestic violence; and the provision of refuge

services to women and children that had suffered domestic violence (Pascal, 1986, Cited: Charles, Gilkes, and Symonds, 2001)

In 1974 the National Women's Aid Federation was founded through the coalescence of 35 previously separate local refuge groups to campaign nationally. However, in 1978 the national federation split into separate federations in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

### Women's Aid in Wales

With funding from the Welsh Office Local Authority Social Services Division, WWA was formally established in 1978. The creation of WWA, saw local WA groups in Wales become 'members' of WWA. WWA served, and continues to serve as the coordinating and unifying umbrella organisation for member groups.

Local WA groups are independent and autonomous organisations, and WWA represents the majority of refuge groups in Wales. There are currently 34 local WA groups<sup>8</sup> in Wales represented by WWA, covering 21 of 22 Welsh local authorities.

**Figure 1: Map of local WA member groups**



[Source: WWA website]

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<sup>8</sup> This figure may change shortly as we are aware of at least three groups who are in discussions about a possible amalgamation(s).

The management arrangements, governance and funding levels within local WA member groups vary substantially and as a result services at a local level also vary significantly. At the beginning of the evaluation period 12 local groups were operating as hierarchies and 22 were collective organisations, although many were in discussions about possible changes, often having observed successful change management programmes in neighbouring groups. Most of these are registered with the Charity Commission and Companies House.

A minority of groups remain focused on refuge services but increasingly local WA groups are providing more proactive services (e.g. outreach services). Services offered by local WA include:

- Emergency 24 hour access to temporary accommodation (refuges);
- Information and practical support to individuals;
- Outreach services;
- Floating support;
- Awareness raising (e.g. workshops in schools);
- Promotion of domestic abuse services (e.g. attendance at community events and marketing campaigns);
- Training local partners.

As we note above, the structure of organisations within the refuge movement, in particular Women's Aid, were strongly influenced by the feminist movement, leading to the adoption of collective organisational structures. As with any organisational structure there are pros and cons.

Hierarchies are viewed as facilitating effective management, where time is used more efficiently in pursuing the goals of the organisation, rather than spending time on clarification of power and authority. However, hierarchies may also inhibit communication between workers and manager, be inflexible, and unable to adapt to complex situations (Lanello, 1992. Cited: Charles, Gilkes, and Symonds, 2001)

Collective organisational structures typically are egalitarian and keep rules to a minimum. Control within the group is maintained by peer pressure and group homogeneity, achieved through selective membership based upon skills and compatibility with the group/organisation. A number of potential issues have been identified that may hinder such organisations from working effectively:

- Time: consensus-style decision making takes longer than bureaucratic decision making;
- Emotional intensity: collective organisations participate in more face-to-face communication, individuals are therefore held more accountable for their actions and conflicts may have a higher personal cost;

- Non-democratic values: individuals living within hierarchical societies are not well prepared to participate in collective organisations;
- Environmental constraints: as consensual organisations develop around issues which challenge mainstream society, political, economic and social pressures upon the organisations may be more intense than those upon non-consensual organisations;
- Individual differences: attitudinal, skill-related and personality differences between individuals may lead to conflict within consensual organisations. (Rothschild and Whit, 1986 Cited: Charles, Gilkes, and Symonds, 2001)

In addition, although an organisation may espouse a collective approach, it is still possible for an individual to effectively dominate others within the organisation.

Women's Aid has clearly been successful over the years: the issue of domestic abuse has been highlighted and priority raised within the political agenda; and the delivery of services to women that have experienced domestic abuse has had a significant impact. However, the success of Women's Aid in bringing domestic abuse to the fore, coupled with pressure from government to evidence impact, has meant that Women's Aid has increasingly been under pressure and in competition with often larger and better resourced organisations for funds.

## **2001 Evaluation**

As a result of these new pressures in September 2001 at the WWA Annual General Meeting it was agreed that a review of WWA structure was required. The organisation recognised that *"although in theory the present structure maximises the potential for all groups to participate in the democratic decision making process, in practice it is not working as effectively as envisaged"* (WWA tender document).

The National Centre for Public Policy and School of Social Science and International Development at the University of Swansea were commissioned to undertake this research. The research identified a number of strengths and weaknesses within WWA at that time.

Strengths identified within the 2001 evaluation report include:

- WWA identity as a political and campaigning organisation;
- The organisations understanding of domestic violence as a social problem which relates to gender inequalities in society and to women's very limited access to resources - the solutions WWA proposes derive from this analysis;
- Women centeredness - which relates to the organisations ability to reach out to women and children and to the way support is offered;

- WWA's ability to empower women;
- Reliance on group participation in management and decision making;
- The knowledge, skills and commitment of staff;
- The support provided to local groups (Charles, Gilkes and Symonds, 2001).

The problems identified facing the organisation were:

- *Management is unfunded which means its takes place at the expense of local groups;*
- *Participation by groups in management is too low for the organisation to function effectively;*
- *Decision-making powers and processes and lines of accountability are unclear;*
- *The autonomy of local groups and their often very loose relationship with WWA makes quality assurance (in the form of Codes of Practice) virtually impossible;*
- *Communication within the organisation at all levels is poor;*
- *There is a lack of knowledge amongst member groups about WWA and the relation of groups to the national organisation;*
- *Employment relations within the organisation are problematic;*
- *There are high rates of absenteeism through sickness which affect the ability of the organisation to function effectively;*
- *The existence of 3 regional offices makes the work of national workers unnecessarily difficult;*
- *WWA has a poor image, workers are on low pay, membership fees are low, official cars are old, everything is done on a shoe string;*
- *Funding is insecure and inadequate at both local and national levels."* (Charles, Gilkes and Symonds, 2001) p.55)

One of the main organisational problems identified was that of 'management overload' and an inability or unwillingness of groups to send delegates to management meetings. It was recognised that pressures for change were based mainly on the need to combat growing discontent amongst groups and workers and the need to be accountable to funders, as well as needing to provide an effective and cost-efficient service.

WWA made changes in response to the evaluation in 2001, reflected on the findings, and succession plans are being put in place to support the newly appointed Director who joined WWA at the end of the evaluation period<sup>9</sup>. In addition, WWA have taken an increasingly important role at national and local level in developing and supporting

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<sup>9</sup> The new Director took up office on the 21st July 2008.

both the Assembly Government and local authority domestic abuse prevention policies and services.

The current evaluation commissioned by the WAG, builds upon the work of the 2001 evaluation, and assesses how WWA have moved forward since 2001. The findings of our evaluation are presented in the following chapters.

### 3. The relationship between WWA and its local member groups

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In this Chapter we explore the relationship between WWA and its local member groups. We begin by outlining WWA membership arrangements and associated requirements, including expectations WWA have of local WA groups and what they can expect in return. We then describe the support services WWA offers local groups including information provision, website resources, accredited training and working groups. The role of RCW's and their influence on the relationship between WWA and member groups is also explored. Importantly we comment on the influence WWA has over local WA groups and the potential for WWA to improve their performance, both as a centralised body without formal powers and as an Accredited Support Provider (ASP).

#### Membership

WWA offers local groups two levels of membership:

- Full membership
- Affiliate membership

Currently WWA has 34 members; including 32 full members. The reason that two of the groups are not full members is because they are not autonomous groups (they are subsidiaries or departments within a housing association). Affiliate members receive the same benefits and level of support but forfeit voting rights. The cost of membership is £465 for full membership and £464 for affiliate membership. An inflationary rise of 2.5% is anticipated for next year.

A membership agreement between WWA and local WA member groups is currently being drafted. An original membership agreement exists but is more than 20 years old. It is planned that members will be required to agree and sign a membership contract relating to an agreement between themselves and WWA. The membership agreement will set out agreed expectations and obligations between WWA and local WA groups. At present the draft document (dated March 2008) states that WWA will:

- *“consult with groups to ensure that WWA represents National (All-Wales) views*
- *keep up to date with legislation in all relevant areas and keep groups informed, provides of standardised policy/procedures*

- *collate National statistics annually*
- *Challenge and inform existing and emerging policy*
- *Respond to consultation documents e.g. WAG, Legal, etc.*
- *Provide training opportunities and information/delivery of appropriate training*
- *Develop accredited training for groups and ensure that WWA staff commit to the same personal and professional development as groups*
- *Raising the profile of WWA's Mission by making use of research and statistical information provided by groups*
- *Develop clear communication regarding strategy, maintaining communication infrastructure and links between groups and regions to reinforce options available*
- *Develop and adopt a strategic view for service provision and delivery (across) Wales wide" (WWA, 2008d p.2).*

As members it is anticipated that WWA will expect local WA member groups:

- *"to show commitment to the governance of WWA by regularly attending Regional Meetings and participating in WWA Executive Board, and to provide information required for strategic development*
- *to ensure good governance and stewardship of the group, and if wound up or dissolved to default assets to WWA*
- *comply to service aims i.e.*
  - *to meet statutory requirements*
  - *minimum sets of standards (WAG)*
- *attendance at training:*
  - *relevant to role*
  - *recognition of Occupational Standards and contribute to a "pot" of trainers to train on behalf of WWA if appropriate*
  - *attend Core Training e.g. Risk Assessment, Health and Safety*
- *to provide statistics in all key areas e.g. Refuge/Floating Support/Age Specific – Children/Outreach*
- *to provide 24 hr direct access*
- *to provide service user focus*
- *to provide positive evidenced promotion of services and organisations as a whole when applicable*
- *to promote Service user/lead participation and consultation*
- *to provide a Support Network to bring groups to an equal footing*
- *to promote the use of the Welsh Language and Bi-lingual services where appropriate" (WWA, 2008d p.3)*

Most local WA member groups will also have responsibilities to other organisations, primarily under other contracts or service agreements with funders (e.g. Comic Relief, BIG Lottery, etc).

## **Assurance of quality and consistency of practice**

Operations at a local level are not robustly monitored and other local groups and local partners have expressed concerns about some local WA groups meeting the above requirements as well as holding serious concerns about the practices and standards in some local groups. The National Strategy clearly states "*Every person living in Wales must be treated equally and with respect*" (WAG, 2005. p. 8). At present the variety within local WA groups and that of other support providers is a concern amongst many of our interviewees.

This was not an evaluation of local WA groups but during our fieldwork we identified several issues of concern relating to the practices and arrangements in a minority of local WA groups (reported by local groups themselves and local authority representatives) including:

- Refusal of women with complex needs when refuges are empty (or have spaces)<sup>10</sup>;
- Refusal of women with young male children;
- Failure to deliver 24 hours direct access service (where funded to do so);
- Neglect of children in refuge (in a context of limited resources the mother is prioritised);
- Failure to engage with local partners;
- Poor attendance at valuable consortia meetings (notably MARACs and domestic abuse fora).

Furthermore, statistics provided by local WA groups show that 44% of women in refuge had been referred by other refuges, and that 44% of women in refuge had previously used refuge services (WWA, 2008)<sup>11</sup>. This could suggest local WA member groups refuge services are not effectively enabling women to 'move on'.

These issues are especially important to the survival of local WA groups given the increasingly competitive nature of third sector services. These issues and their implications are returned to at later chapters within this report.

## **General communications**

Apart from those groups with staff on the Executive Board contact between local WA groups and WWA is voluntary and often sporadic. With local partnerships

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<sup>10</sup> WWA 2007/2008 Annual Statistics Report shows 2766 requests for refuge accommodation to local WA member groups were unable to be met. This figure could be higher as not all local WA groups contributed data (29 out of 34). However it is not known what local WA groups were unable to meet this demand. (WWA, 2008a)

strengthening through domestic abuse fora and local domestic abuse coordinators many interviewees from local WA groups reported that they felt stronger links and associations with other individuals and partner organisations than with WWA. If they required training or advice they would seek it collaboratively through local networks rather than turning to WWA.

There was an acknowledgement by a few local WA workers that the relationship is two way. The effectiveness of WWA can only be achieved if local WA groups work with the national team. However there are barriers to them doing so, notably increasing pressure on staff time in a context of limited resources and poor communication systems (access to computers and the internet is limited in many groups)<sup>12</sup>.

### **Information and statistics**

A key area which WWA wishes to develop is the collation and analysis of data from local WA groups. The statistics that local WA groups provide are vitally important to help WWA to accurately assess the scale of domestic abuse and enable WWA to challenge and inform public policy. WWA state that in order *"to be in a strong position to inform the implementation of the All Wales National Strategy on Tackling Domestic Abuse we need to have robust, accurate and up to date statistics on the work of our member groups and the women and children being supported by them"* (WWA 2008c p.44).

At present data is collected monthly, quarterly and/or annually from most local WA groups through a variety of methods, dependent on the group's individual circumstances. Currently, on average:

- 15 groups submit statistics on a standard paper-based pro-forma;
- 14 groups submit statistics based on the standard pro-forma but in an electronic format;
- 2 groups send their own set of 'non-standard' statistics;
- 2 groups send no statistics at all
- 1 group sends statistics sometimes..

Of the 34 WWA member groups, 29 responded to (repeated) requests for key data from across their services for the production of the 2007/08 Annual Statistical

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<sup>11</sup> These figures must be treated with care, as noted above, not all local WA groups supplied data.

<sup>12</sup> A survey of members IT infrastructure was completed by WWA earlier this year. WWA made several requests to local WA groups for data and 21 (of 34) groups supplied information. The survey showed that one group does not have Broadband facilities and two groups only have one computer which staff share.

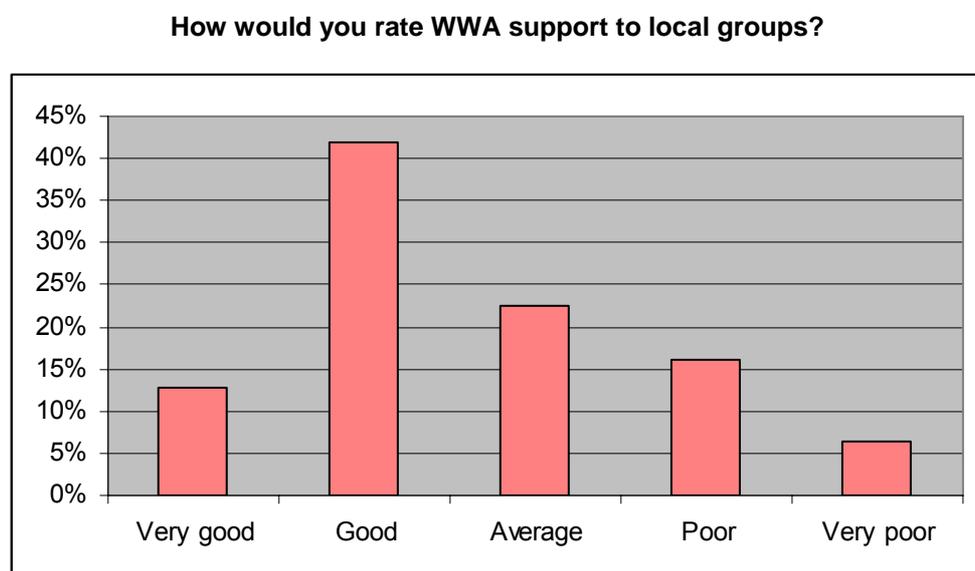
report<sup>13</sup>. The importance of this report is clear. WWA, WAG and other stakeholders use this report as a key source of information about domestic abuse service supply and demand. It is also means local WA member groups are not complying with what WWA membership agreement will expect of them.

Ideally, WWA would like to work towards a system of regular monthly collection of standard data from every group. To this end WWA have decided, in principle, to invest in a dedicated computer programme that will allow them to assist their member groups to simultaneously manage their service-user case notes. Details of this package and associated costings have been sent out to local groups for their consideration. The current issue that WWA are working to resolve is the prohibitive cost of the programme. The current quotation stands at £90,000+ to roll out across every group, excluding yearly membership.

### Support Services

WWA offer support to member groups in a variety of ways, including providing advice, training, representing the movement to the general public, NAFW/WAG and other relevant bodies (e.g. NHS, police). In the next few paragraphs we comment on each of these roles. Figure 2 shows that most of the website respondents from local WA groups rated WWA support services as above average<sup>14</sup>.

**Figure 2: WWA member support services**



[n=29]

<sup>13</sup> Of the local WA groups that did respond "every group did not supply statistics for each of the 12 months" (WWA, 2008)

<sup>14</sup> Only local WA groups were asked this question in the web consultation.

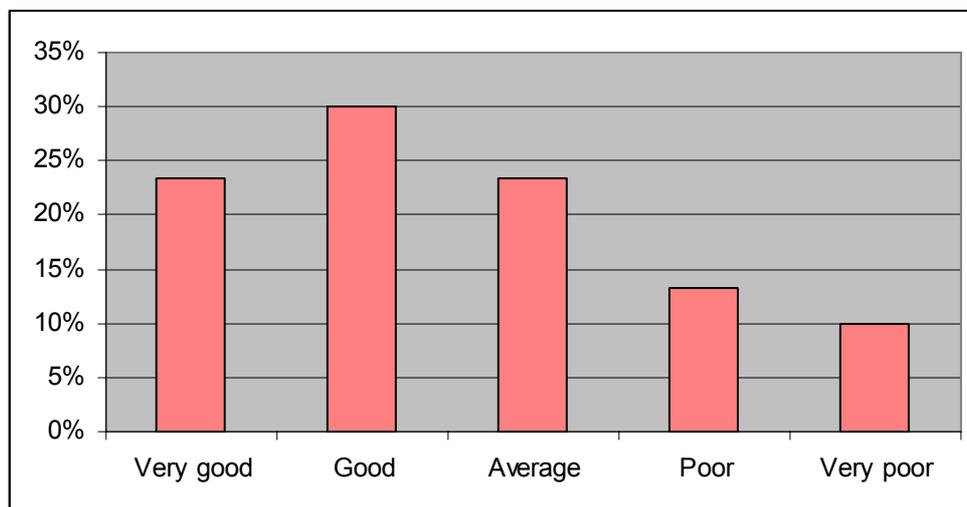
**Advice**

Figure 3 below shows that over half of local WA groups that responded<sup>15</sup> to the website consultation thought that the advice WWA provide them with (in relation to the provision of direct services for women and children) was "good" or "very good".

Interviews during fieldwork found that local WA groups valued the legal advice that WWA provides through newsletters, e-bulletins, workshops and through informal contact with the Legal Issues Coordinator was most valued. The value of this resource was also noted by four national level interviewees.

**Figure 3: WWA advice to local groups**

**How would you rate advice to local groups on the provision of direct services for women and children?**



[n=29]

Interviews would suggest that those who felt WWA were not offering good advice to local groups is because either the group do not know who to contact within the national team (we mentioned earlier that this is an issue) or because WWA does not have the appropriate resources<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Only local WA groups were asked this question in the web consultation.

<sup>16</sup> Demands for expertise in specialist areas such as mental health and substance misuse is discussed in Chapter 6 where we note that WWA has limited staff numbers and is therefore unable to provide expertise on the whole gambit of important issues which relate to domestic abuse.

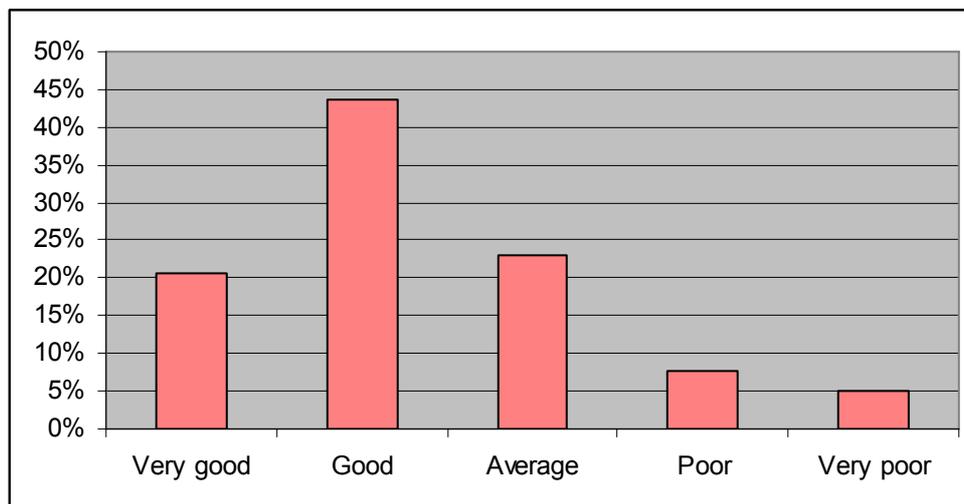
**Website**

WWA re-launched it's website on the 8th March 2007. This development was funded by Barclays Bank. At this time WWA incorporated a 'Members Area' into the website. This secure area acts as an instantly accessible online repository for all the important documents needed by member groups. It also acts as a place where workers from groups can post notices and questions and receive advice from colleagues in other parts of Wales.

Several interviewees were critical about the visual appearance of the website and felt it was a deterrent to local groups, partners and members of the public to access, although 63% of respondents to the website consultation thought that WWA website information and resources were either "good" or "very good".

**Figure 4: Website information and resources**

**How would you rate WWA services: Website information and resources**



[n=84]

Opportunities available to WWA in terms of improving their website include:

- Update reports and documentation (e.g. the last annual report available outside of the members area is the 2005/06 report);
- Raising the profile of their political campaigns;
- Informing members of the public how to support campaigns;
- Informing members of the public and/or organisations how they can make a donation to the organisation;
- Inform partners who members of the national team are (e.g. so they know who to contact about what issues, etc);
- The part of the website aimed at children and young people should be more accessible (i.e. a link from the homepage). Good practice in

materials aimed at young people could also improve these web pages (e.g. larger font, use of colour and pictures, non linear texts, etc.).

On several occasions WWA has reportedly discussed with WAFE opportunities to share website resources and materials. Reportedly in principle these developments were welcomed but so far WWA and WAFE have not worked together in the development or sharing of website resources or materials. For example, WWA would benefit from WAFE's 'Hideout' an online resource for children and young people which enables them to visit an online refuge and explore all the rooms. Conversely WAFE may benefit from access to WWA policy responses on UK wide issues.

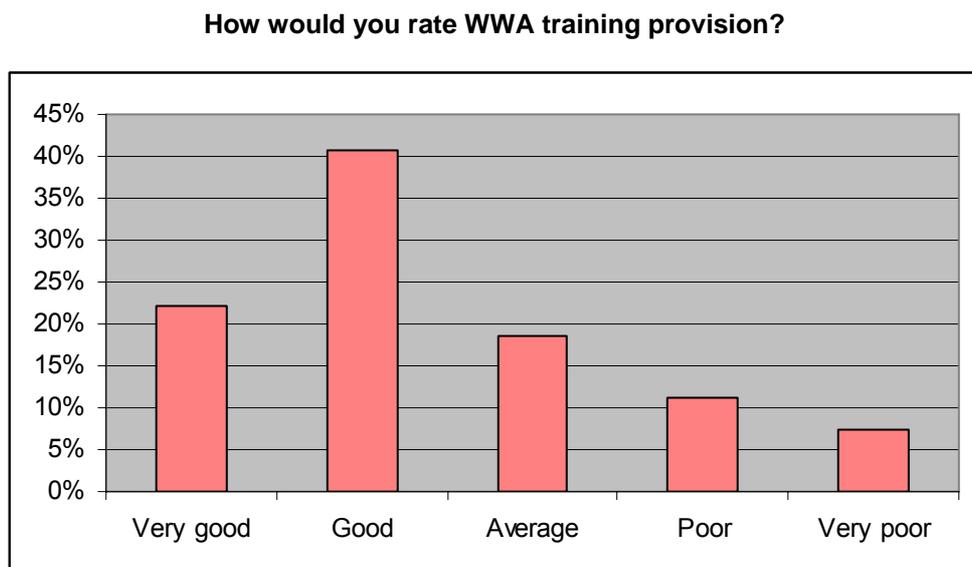
### **Training**

In 2006/07 WWA provided 20 training programmes over 60 days which were attended by over 800 people. Subjects included:

- Domestic Abuse Awareness;
- Counselling skills;
- Safeguarding children;
- Resolving conflict.

WWA also provided training to external organisations including Unison, Tai Hafan and Llamau. Nearly all interviewees who had attended WWA facilitated or organised reported very positive experiences which is supported by WWA evaluation form analysis. Figure 5 shows that 81% of website respondents (who felt able to comment) rated WWA training provision as "average" or above.

**Figure 5: WWA training provision**



[n=27]

During 2006/07 WWA established 'e-learning' via Skillgate. This enables member groups to access individual, bite-size 'on demand' training via a dedicated website. To date there are 53 registered users<sup>17</sup>. A key barrier to local WA groups using this service will be limited access to computers and the internet. This is something WWA are trying to address on behalf of local WA groups (as cited above). Although not prompted, none of our interviewees commented on this facility.

WWA status as an OCN accredited training provider and how this provides value at a national level is discussed in Chapter 6.

Within WWA national team there are two dedicated training related posts, (one of which is currently vacant). Other members of staff, notably the Legal Issues Coordinator and the Housing Coordinator design and deliver training when requested if a need is identified. The flexibility of this arrangement was identified as an organisational strength. However, the post of the Accreditation Project Coordinator is funded on a short term contract via Comic Relief and Lloyds TSB (not WAG funding). Given that there are widespread concerns about standards within local groups it was thought by more than half of the Executive Board and several national stakeholders that WWA need more resources to support this function. Most of these felt the WAG should finance this.

### ***Support for local governance***

Between May 2002 and October 2005 the Charity Commission conducted a number of review visits to ten WA groups in England<sup>18</sup> in order to:

- *"Ensure compliance with the legal framework within which the charity operates;*
- *Assess and report on, whether a registered charity is aspiring to the standards set out in the Commission's booklet CC60 Hallmarks of an Effective Charity;*
- *Provide advice and guidance in support of the achievement of the Hallmark standards;*
- *Contribute towards continuous improvement in the charitable sector;*
- *Enhance the relationship between individual charities and the commission".*

Several issues of concern were highlighted as a result of this process including:

- Non-compliance with the Charities Governing Document;
- Inadequate financial controls;
- Conflicts of interest amongst trustees;

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<sup>17</sup> Levels of use or the number of local WA groups using this service is not known.

- Insufficient risk management.

WWA used the report as a basis for joint discussions with groups on how best to improve their arrangements. As a result of this process WWA developed a trustee support pack and updated generic policies and procedures for local WA groups to adapt for their own purposes.

In March 2008 the Charity Commission and WWA worked together to design and deliver regional training sessions which were attended by 30 women from 17 groups (including staff and local WA group trustees). Members of WWA Executive Board also attended. The purpose of the events was to share information and encourage good practice. The events also provided an opportunity for the Charity Commission to learn about WWA as well.

### **Working Groups**

WWA also supports groups by providing information and opportunities to share good practice and lessons learnt through the establishment of different interest groups. In general groups are open to all members interested in discussing working practices, new developments, and concerns about the given topic. The number of groups and the topics they cover depend on the needs of the movement at the time, currently these are three.

From time to time WWA invite visiting speakers to provide information on relevant issues, for example, visiting speakers to the Children's Special interest Group who have provided information on a range of topics, these have included:

- *"representatives from CAFCASS to speak about their new Domestic Abuse toolkit;*
- *Witness Support to speak about the vulnerable witness and children's service they provide;*
- *Autism Wales to speak about working with children with Autistic spectrum disorders;*
- *Researchers who carried out a study into core children's services linked to the National Service framework;*
- *Tai Hafan Schools Liaison Officer to demonstrate resources used in preventative work in schools"* (WWA website, 2008).

Several working groups having taken place recently to look in detail at demonstratable outcomes at a local level. The aim of this work is to empower local WA groups to demonstrate how they 'make a difference' and will support accountability processes. This work is discussed further in Chapter 8 as part of a wider discussion on value for money.

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<sup>18</sup> All data relating to local groups has been anonymised.

## **Role of Regional Children's Workers**

Following a funding bid to WAG in September 2007 WWA employed 7 Regional Children's Workers (RCWs). The purpose of the role was to allow some direct work with children and young people on a regional basis.

From our interviews with staff in local WA groups and through our website consultation we collected reports of feelings of disappointment and some resentment towards WWA regarding the funding for the role of RCW. Most of the RCW we spoke with commented that they had picked up on these feelings through their contact with a few local WA groups. Around half of interviewees from local WA groups feel this funding should have gone directly to local WA groups and that by applying for this funding WWA became effectively a competitor and have done their members of disservice.

Prior to the employment of RCW, local WA group concerns about the role of the RCW were documented at the Executive Board Meeting in March 2007:

- *"This could jeopardise funding in the future for groups e.g. Children in Need fund sessional workers, and sessional work is in their job description;*
- *What they will be expected to provide is a duplication of services;*
- *There was a lack of consultation with groups;*
- *The expectations of the posts fails to acknowledge/recognise the work already being undertaken by groups – a lot of which is built up over a number of years and has taken very careful negotiating to achieve;*
- *The funding could impact on partnership work and local contacts – some groups are funded through the local authority/social services who would be only too happy to not have to provide money for services to children;*
- *The pay scale undervalues work with children and young people and those who provide it;*
- *Groups also agreed that the money would be better used, and be more cost effective to have 7 paid hours go straight to groups. No on costs, no transport costs, no need to provide a computer and mobile phone, and no unnecessary duplication of services".*

In order to ensure the role of the RCW met the needs of local WA groups WWA undertook a feedback exercise and SWOT analysis in each of regional meetings held with groups (in mid 2007) to discuss the best use of this new resource. The results of this exercise was collated and feedback to groups and is still available on WWA website (in the members only area). Common elements were set as the first priority in corresponding action plans.

The role of the RCW's varies significantly because they have been driven by local demand. A few have been developing materials for local WA groups to use (e.g. 'Settling in Packs' and 'All you need to know' packs) which are now being distributed across Wales, others do a lot of hands on work with children in refuge, others work closely with partners (e.g. awareness raising and support work in schools). At best this can be seen as a responsive and flexible resource to meet different local needs; however there is an indication that RCW are doing what local WA groups will allow or approve of, rather than addressing local need.

## **ASP**

As set out in the WAG 'Supporting People in Wales. Accreditation of a Support Provider' *"Accredited bodies should not contract any part of a grant funded service unless or until they are satisfied that the contractor is able to provide the specified service as set out in SPRG Procedures at a satisfactory level"* (WAG, 2002). This new role will give WWA the ability to stop funding to local WA groups should their standards be deemed unsatisfactory.

The fact that seven local member groups have chosen WWA as their ASP shows trust and respect in the organisation by over 20% of the groups. Specific benefits to local WA groups who take out an agreement for WWA to be their ASP are as follows:

- *"Infrastructure which supports your group;*
- *Partnership Approach;*
- *Support and Guidance;*
- *Brings WWA close to groups; informs policy and identifies gaps in provision;*
- *ASP with issue related knowledge and experience;*
- *Support with issues – giving you back time to do your job;*
- *A team of back up support staff"* (WWA Website, 2008).

The role of WWA as an ASP has been discussed further in subsequent Chapters (see Chapters 4 - 7).

## **Tensions**

Towards the end of last Summer the Director of WWA and key members of the national team facilitated workshops with staff from local WA member groups to discuss what local WA groups wanted from WWA and expectation of service levels. The research team were given notes from these events which show inherent contradictions in responses. For example, there were differences of opinions surrounding the role of RCW's, WWA's role as an ASP and whether WA should work

to enable women to remain in their homes as a preference over refuge only services. Participants also reported that they were shy of the fact that they may be judged from within the movement for working collaboratively with external partners. Some showed appetite for large scale change (e.g. transferring from collective to a hierarchy<sup>19</sup>, amalgamating into regional groups or undertaking more regional coordination and collaboration, and working with men) (WWA, 2007d)<sup>20</sup>. These contradictions within the movement make the role of a representative body more challenging.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the All Wales National Strategy clearly states that women and men can be victims of domestic abuse. WWA wish to challenge this. WWA clearly state "*WWA recommends that the definition of domestic abuse and violence is gender specific. The WAG's present domestic abuse definition does not see it as a gender specific abuse dealing with power and control of one gender (men) against another (women)*" (WWA, 2008 p. 5). The woman-centred focus of WWA is a foundational issue in terms of giving rise to the ethos, occupational culture, and philosophy of the organisation. Historically it is why the management was structured collectively rather than hierarchically. Thus, the importance of this issue cannot be overstated, in terms of how it goes right 'to the heart' of WWA.

Despite this, around half of workers from refuge groups felt there was a need to work with men to prevent abuse, challenge attitudes and behaviour and provide positive male role models. More than a quarter of workers felt there is a need for more services for male victims of domestic abuse. However, a minority of workers felt very strongly that WWA is for women only and felt their key strength was that they provide services for women (and children) by women. In addition to addressing a perceived need, local groups also felt pressure by other funders (e.g. local authorities) to provide services for men. A few mentioned that they had missed out on funding opportunities for services for both men and women because they did not wish to lose their affiliation with WWA.<sup>21</sup>

As mentioned in previous Chapters there is no consensus (although documentation dictates that it should be forbidden) about how WWA should deal with men as either victims, offenders or as colleagues/advisors.

## Conclusion

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<sup>19</sup> Whilst celebrating successes, many stated the move from collective to hierarchy as a success, whilst other groups gave their collective status as a reason for celebration (WWA, 2007d)

<sup>20</sup> It is difficult to apportion percentages

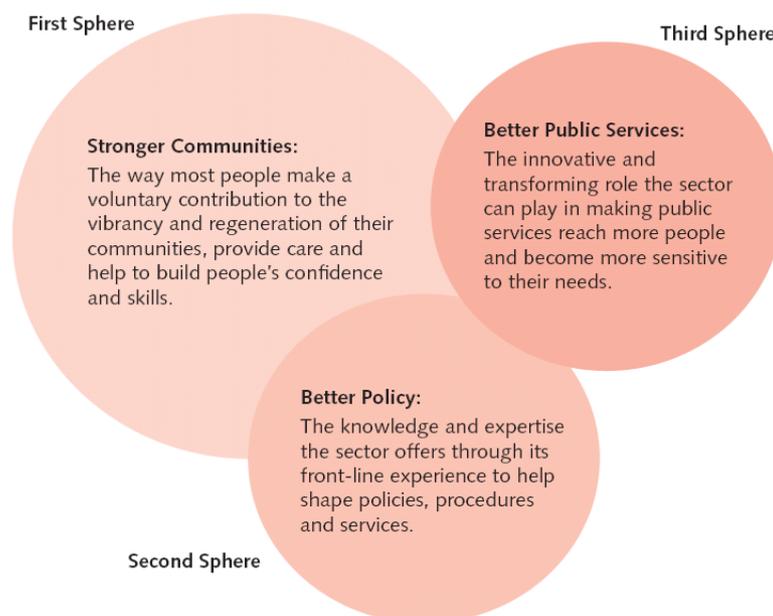
<sup>21</sup> Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline provides gender neutral services. Male callers who contact the National helpline are now directed to a new service. The Dyn Cymru helpline (Tel: 0808 801 0321), which is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government was officially launched in March this year but has been running as a pilot initiative since February 2006. It provides basic support and information to men all around Wales - including heterosexual, gay, bisexual, and transgender men - who experience domestic abuse.

It seems fair to say that relationships between WWA and local WA groups are complex – often harmonious and effective, sometimes less so. WWA is meeting the needs of many local member groups who welcome their support in terms of advice, guidance, training, campaigning and help provided by RCW's. However, the lack of engagement by some local member groups and indications of ineffective and malpractice creates serious concerns and is limiting the capability of WWA as a national body. Operating in an increasingly cut-throat field the ability for WWA to lead local WA groups to become competitive and to become the provider of choice will be vital to the success of the movement. Furthermore, to make WWA voice powerful as a representative body it needs to have one voice. Assurance of quality and consistency of practice is wanted, particularly by funders. It is too soon to comment on how WWA role as an ASP has impacted on their relationship with member groups, but this will inevitably change the nature of engagement with members who have chosen them as their ASP, at least.

## 4. The Relationship between Welsh Women's Aid and the Welsh Assembly Government

The WAG reaffirms the importance placed in the third sector in 'The Third Dimension', recognising that voluntary organisations are a *"major asset and force for improvement - challenging, complementing and extending the roles played by the public and private sectors"* (WAG, 2008b p.10).

**Table 3: WAG's three spheres of interest in the third sector**



[Source WAG, 2008b p.17]

At first sight the relationship between the WAG and the third sector as a whole is a complex one. It includes:

- *"the exchange of data and information;*
- *the sharing of views through various consultation processes;*
- *joint planning, design, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and schemes;*
- *the funding of generalist and specialist support services;*
- *direct and indirect funding of individual third sector organisations across various subject areas;*
- *the outsourcing of an increasing range of public services;*

- *a shared interest in the way local authorities, Assembly Government Sponsored bodies (AGSBs), the UK Government, the EU and other public authorities interact with the third sector the approach of a range of major third sector funders...and so on" (WAG , 2008b p.17).*

In this Chapter we consider the relationship between the WAG and WWA. In particular we discuss funding, monitoring and reporting arrangements, and general communication.

## Funding

Public funding, through the WAG remains the primary source of funding for the organisation. The Department of Social Justice and Local Government (SJLG) within the WAG funds three distinct areas: core funding; the All Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline (WDAH) and the Regional Children's Workers (RCW).

**Table 4: WAG funding 2007/08 and 2008/09**

	2007/08	2008/09
<b>Core funding</b>	357,185	367,901
<b>Helpline</b>	334,410	404,410
<b>RCW</b>	249,490	246,950
<b>Total WAG funding (£)</b>	<b>941,085</b>	<b>1,019,261</b>

Funding is paid in four equal quarterly sums on receipt of a satisfactory 'Quarterly Progress Report and Grant Claim' form (reporting and monitoring requirements are detailed below).

It should be noted that local WA groups also receive significant funding from the WAG through the Supporting People Framework (see Table 1 above and Figure 6 below).



Figure 6 above illustrates the complexity of relationship is compounded by funding and associated regulation requirements (which is discussed further in Chapter 7).

WWA core funding is designated as funding for staff posts. From March 2008 this has equated to 10 full-time positions (see Figure 9)<sup>22</sup>. The WAG Community Safety Division (CSD) is not prescriptive in terms of the nature and remit of these roles but any changes to the staff structure are discussed jointly during quarterly monitoring meetings. (The roles and functions of WWA personnel are discussed in Chapter 6).

Funding for premises, resources (e.g. I.T. equipment) is sought elsewhere. Other primary funders include BIG and Comic Relief. In addition WWA has successfully gained (smaller sums of) money from a number of private sector sources (e.g. Barclays Bank and Lloyds TSB).

RCW funding is designated for one Co-ordinator and seven RCW. The purpose of this funding was *"to allow some direct work with children and young people on a regional basis"* (WWA, 2007). (The role and function of the RCWs is discussed in Chapter 6 and 7).

The All Wales National Helpline currently provides free, confidential support 24 hours a day in Welsh and English to women, men and children who are victims of domestic abuse. WWA receives a fixed sum for the management of the helpline. This figure was increased significantly in January 2007 (an additional £250,000 was allocated for 2006/09) in order to enable the Helpline to open for 24 hours a day every day of the year (prior to this date it was open only 12 hours a day) (WAG, 2007a).

### **Reporting Arrangements**

WWA and local WA groups receive funds through different departments within WAG. They are therefore under the scrutiny of two different Assembly Directorates and two different Ministers (who are from two different political parties). This is perhaps unsurprising given the multifaceted nature of domestic abuse and the huge gambit of issues to which it relates.

Since January 2008 WWA have been required to submit three separate 'Quarterly Progress Report and Grant Claim' forms relating to the three funding streams from which they receive monies. Prior to this time WWA submitted one 'Quarterly Progress Report and Grant Claim' covering all of their work. These reports include details of projects and work made possible by other funding streams (for example,

the accreditation project). In addition WWA are required to provide independently audited and published accounts annually.

A review of documentation showed that since January 2008 the quarterly reports have been more structured and have provided more detail (expanding from on average a 1 page document covering all funding to structured text within at least 2 pages for each funding stream).

The 'Quarterly Progress Report and Grant Claim' form has three reporting sections:

- Progress of the project to date;
- Outcomes;
- Checks and problems.

To date 'outcomes' information has either been incomplete or limited to descriptions of activities. Information relating to 'checks and problems' in general has also been brief, or is not completed.

However, the submission of a 'Quarterly Progress Report and Grant Claim' is supplemented by a discursive meeting between key members of the Department of SJLG with the Director and the Finance and Business Manager from WWA.

The distribution of funds across domestic abuse services in Wales is vast. Although WWA receive around one third of the WAG CSD domestic abuse budget this represents a small part of WAG funding for domestic abuse services as a whole. If the WAG gave one grant for domestic abuse services the size of this would dictate high levels of accountability and bring much greater scrutiny. Even so, in comparison to other WAG monitoring and reporting requirements and comparative bodies (e.g.DCLG and local authorities) this arrangement is less stringent.

The WAG CSD is aware that the accountability procedures for WWA funding are weak and have asked the organisation to develop a Business Plan as a starting point to improve this situation. A draft Business Plan is in development.

## **Communication**

The Department of SJLG describe their relationship with WWA as a strong one, typified by regular contact and communication by means of regular progress meetings, twice yearly meetings with the Minister, support for WAG information

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<sup>22</sup> Prior to this date WAG provided core funding designated as funding for 15 posts in the national office but WWA contended that the funding was sufficient for fewer than 15 posts. (Research Specification)

needs/requests and WWA representation on WAG working groups<sup>23</sup>. (For more information see Chapter 7). Although, in the past WAG have expressed concerns that WWA has not informed them of serious allegations against members of WWA staff.

One of the Strategy recommendations (WAG, 2005) is that *“individual agencies/organisations/employers to adhere to ‘minimum standards’”*. As noted in Chapter 3, the WAG CSD and Housing Directorate has expressed concerns about the relationship between WWA and local WA groups, the variations in standards at a local level, and serious concerns about the quality of service provision delivered by a very few local WA groups – this concern was echoed in the majority of interviews with local authority staff (representing Supporting People teams) and partner organisations. WAG expects WWA to address this issue.

The WAG wants WWA to act as a national body and represent the movement. A recent example where WWA is failing to do this can be seen on the NAFW whereby at least nine local WA groups have felt the need to respond to the NAFW Communities and Culture Committee call for evidence (NAFW, 2008) supplementary and independently of WWA. Although most of these independent responses state their support for the evidence and recommendations presented to the committee by WWA.(as noted again in Chapter 7).

## **Conclusion**

The fragmentation of funding streams for domestic abuse related services has led to lower accountability procedures for organisations including WWA. Plans to improve the accountability of WWA are in progress.

WAG funds WWA to help the Assembly achieve its domestic abuse strategic objectives. WAG hopes to influence WWA to develop in a way which the WAG believe will best enable WWA to do this. Although WWA is willing to make the required changes (e.g. provide one voice for the movement, introduce minimum standards across local WA groups) its ability to do so is limited by their lack of influence over local WA groups.

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<sup>23</sup> most notably the All Wales Domestic Abuse Working Group

## 5. Governance

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Corporate governance is the framework of accountability to service users, stakeholders and the wider community, within which organisations work together, take decisions and lead and control their functions to achieve their objectives. The effectiveness of corporate governance arrangements has a significant impact on how well organisations meet their aims. (NLIAH, 2007)

In practice, the way organisations 'govern' will be different depending on factors which can include the size of an organisation, how long it has been in existence, and the culture and values it possesses.

In this Chapter we explore the suitability and efficiency of WWA's arrangements for governance. In particular we discuss the constitution, role, responsibilities, composition and selection of the Executive Board and that of delegated authorities.

In order to comment on the suitability and effectiveness of WWA governance arrangements we have compared our findings against the third sector Code of Governance developed jointly by ACEVO<sup>24</sup>, NCVO, the Charity Commission, and other umbrella groups. (ACEVO, 2005)<sup>25</sup>

### Constitution

The original Constitution of WWA was registered in 1982. As laid out in the Constitution, WWA has an Executive Board that is responsible for the organisations strategic direction and policy. Good practice states that "*trustees should focus on the strategic direction of their organisation, and avoid becoming involved in day to day operational decisions and matters*" (ACEVO, 2005). (The responsibility of the day-to-day management of the organisation is delegated to the Director and Senior Management Team and is discussed in Chapter 5).

Since 1982 the Constitution has undergone a number of changes. The most recent changes have been introduced because of the need for greater accountability by the autonomous local WA groups to each other and to funders. The latest changes to the

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<sup>24</sup> ACEVO is the professional body for the third sector's chief executives, with over 2000 members

<sup>25</sup> The guidance was developed in response to the 'Rethinking Governance' research study conducted by ACEVO in 2003, which revealed that most third sector boards in the UK lacked key skills, and a commitment to improving their own performance, and showed a considerable appetite among CEOs for a more professional approach to governance.

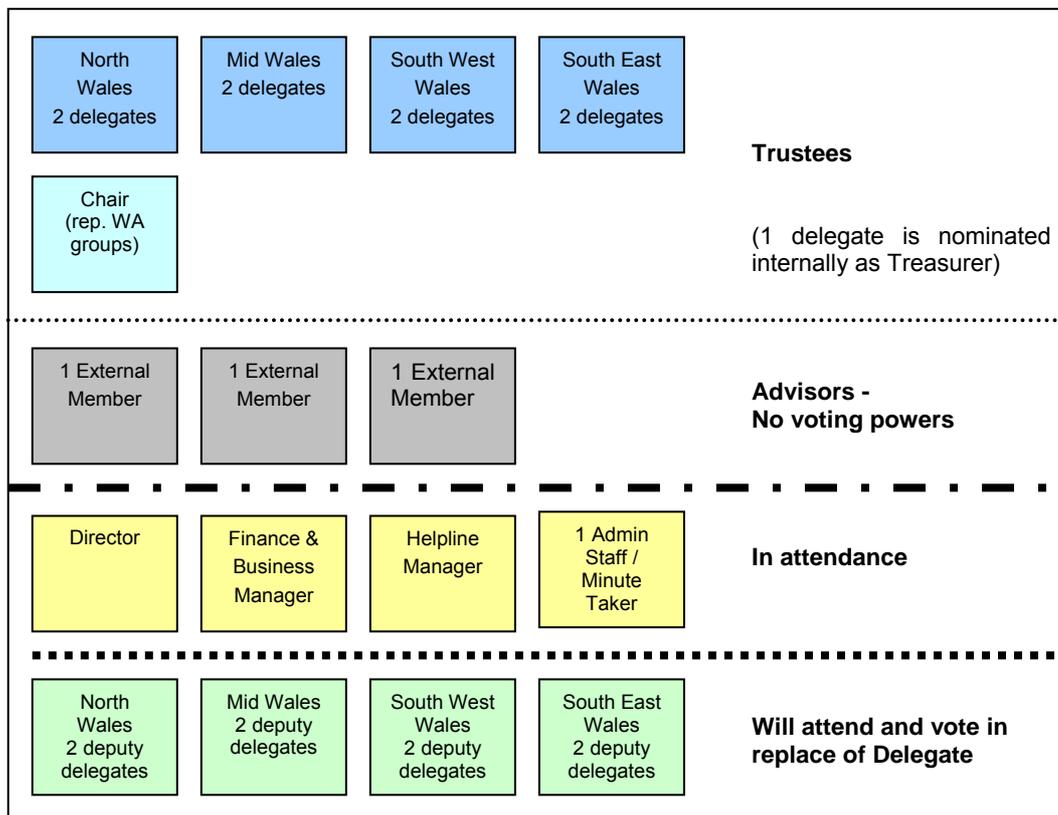
Constitution, completed in March 2007, were required as a result of WWA becoming an Accredited Support Provider (ASP). The Constitution was amended to incorporate the fact that as an ASP WWA will need to ensure that they have the capability to investigate any complaints about the groups and to ensure that they have provisions in place to provide a quality of service.

It was agreed at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in 1993 that any changes to the constitution would be registered annually.

### Role of Executive Board

Figure 7 illustrates the current composition of the Executive Board

**Figure 7: Composition of The Executive Board**



#### **Key**

- Elected personnel from local WA member group
- Elected Chair from local WA member group
- External member
- WWA personnel
- Elected personnel from local WA member group as deputy

The Constitution states: *"The Society shall have an Executive Board which shall consist of two women delegates appointed by member groups from within each of four regions in Wales (North Wales, Mid Wales, South West Wales and South East Wales). Each of the four regions will be entitled to nominate two delegates and two deputies, who will be selected by a nomination and (one group one vote) voting process in each region".* (WWA, 2007c p.8)

In addition, *"The Executive Board shall also include up to three external persons, who will be recruited and selected by the delegate members of the Executive Board and the Chairperson of the Executive Board for their particular skills, knowledge and experience".* (WWA, 2007c p.8)

The Constitution states *"only appointed representative of members of the society, elected at the Annual General meeting, shall be entitled to be voting Executive Board members. The Chairperson and the three external members of the Executive Board shall be non voting members 1 or co-optees."* (WWA, 2007c, p.9)

The Constitution allows that *"women observers and full-time officers of the society may observe the Executive Board meetings at the invitation of the Board. Men will not be eligible for election to the Executive Board nor may they attend as observers."*

The prevention of men from attending meetings was questioned by at least two executive members who felt in some circumstances men could bring valuable advice and could be a useful source of information (we elaborate on this issue in Chapter 9).

Routinely four WWA staff officers also attend executive meetings, including:

- The Director;
- The Finance and Business Manager;
- An Admin Staff (minute taker);
- The WDAH Manager (attended since November 2007).

WWA Staff are requested to leave the meeting on occasions when the Executive Board wish to discuss confidential business.

The Constitution states that in order to assist the regions to nominate delegate members for the Executive Board, the Executive Board provides local WA groups with a board members' job description and a list of the skills and knowledge required by the Board to fulfil its duties, along with an indication of any particular skills or knowledge which the Board needs to strengthen at that particular time. This process ensures nominated delegates complement the existing mix of skills and knowledge present on the Board and is in keeping with good practice guidance which promotes that *"recruitment of new trustees should be open, and focus on creating a diverse and effective Board"* and *"trustees should have a diverse range of skills, experience*

*and knowledge needed to run the organisation effectively"* (ACEVO, 2005). However, historically the trustee board has not reached capacity and therefore this process has not happened. WWA informed the research team that their *"priority has been to fill vacancies and ensure equal representation across our member groups and Wales, then to provide existing delegates with appropriate training enabling them to govern and set strategy"*. Therefore WWA have adopted a more open nomination process.

In practice regions often only have one deputy as there is sometimes a shortage of candidates (for reasons discussed below). If a vacancy of a delegate Board member occurs during the year, and a deputy is not in place, the relevant Region will be requested to put forward a replacement delegate Board Member.

The majority of interviewees (including staff from local WA groups and delegates) acknowledged that in previous years there have been issues whereby conflicts of interest within the board have inhibited the organisation from making important decisions and tackling serious problems. Good practice guidance states that *"trustees should identify and promptly declare any actual or potential conflicts of interest affecting them"* (ACEVO, 2005). Interviewees reported a tightening of rules and guidance and changes of representation in recent years which they believe will mean that in the future these issues will be less likely to reoccur. However, around half of respondents felt this situation could be improved by balancing the Executive Board with more external representation with voting rights.

External representation on the board was first proposed around eight years ago following discussions regarding conflicts of interest on the board and good practice in terms of governance. At this time the proposal was rejected by the Executive. Eventually, following numerous other deliberations and proposals over the next few years, the Constitution was changed in 2006/07 to allow up to three external persons membership to the Executive Board.

It was widely thought that the external members have improved the functioning of the Executive Board by providing impartial advice and comments. At present External members do not hold voting rights. The majority of interviewees (including Executive members and representatives from local groups) questioned this and would like to see the constitution changed to allow voting rights to external members. This motion will be put forward at the AGM in September.

At present the Executive has two external members. Both of the external members have worked for local WA groups in the past. Although it is indisputable from interviewee comments and minuted papers that the external members have added value to the functioning and effectiveness of the Board, it could not be argued that external members are truly external members nor are they without potential conflicts of interest. These persons were known and invited to join the Executive by the

Director who was in post, following discussions and the agreement of the Executive Board.

The Black Association of Women Step Out (BAWSO) is putting forward a motion to be considered at this years AGM to have continuous representation on the Executive given that they are not a local group (BAWSO is an All-Wales voluntary organisation) and are able to offer specialist knowledge and experience regarding domestic violence in black and minority ethnic communities.

WWA are currently in the process of conducting a skills analysis and have issued associated documentation to delegates. At the time of the evaluation the results of this process were not available.

Notwithstanding the current skills audit among the Executive it is clear that, while the Executive draws on strong personal experience of work within the movement, it is weak in other respects. ACEVO guidelines point to a need to have a broad skill base. In the case of WWA we would have expected to see lay representation from agencies connected with criminal justice, education and housing as a minimum. For example, a female magistrate, a head teacher, a housing association chair would add greatly to the scope for understanding the wider policy context. Health and social services are further areas where expertise at a non-executive director level could be usefully involved.

Further there is an issue that most of the Executive Board consists of workers from the field with only very few external members. A more usual arrangement would be to have a Board predominately made up of trustees of local groups i.e. an Executive of executives and to limit the number of work representatives. A reduction of representation of local groups (say to one per region) would allow for the expansion of non-executive direction who would bring fresh insight at a perhaps more strategic level than currently exists. This would also affirm the movement already made from Management Board to Executive Board.

Several external stakeholders, including those with a history of working with and alongside WA, expressed interest in being a member of WWA. Two reportedly had made enquiries to becoming a board member in the past and felt that they were prevented from doing so because they were seen as a "*competitor*" rather than a partner.

At the time of the original Constitution it was decided that WWA did not want a "*President*", nor did they want to give the Chair a casting vote in Management meetings (the equivalent of the Executive Board today). The Chairperson of the Executive Board, who is a staff member of a local WA group, has been in post since 2001. There is no renewal strategy for the role of the Chairperson. The serving term of the Chair was discussed at the Executive Meeting in January 2008 and a three

year period was deemed appropriate but as yet the Constitution has not been changed.

The term of office of a delegate on the Executive Board is a maximum of three years. After this time the person cannot be nominated again until a period of two years has passed. This is compliant with established good practice states that a "*Board should have a strategy for its own renewal*" (ACEVO, 2005). WWA has recently reviewed and modified its recruitment and renewal process for the Executive Board. Prior to this WWA recruited Executive Members at the same time. This was changed in order to ensure the knowledge and experience held within the Executive was not lost should a high turnover happen through the voting process. WWA constitution now states:

- *"In January 2008 two Executive Board Members from different regions in Wales stand down from office and are replaced by two new members from their region who will be in office for three years;*
- *In January 2009 a further three Executive Board Members from different regions in Wales stand down from office and are replaced by three new members from their region who will be in office for three years;*
- *In January 2010 a further three Executive Board Members from different regions in Wales stand down from office and are replaced by three new members from their region who will be in office for three years".*

The majority of representative from local groups recalled barriers to becoming an Executive member. Firstly, a high proportion of local WA group employees are on fixed term or temporary contracts. Delegates are not eligible for nomination unless they have been members of a group for a minimum period of six months. This often means that by the time they are eligible for election or have gained respect amongst their colleagues such that they are likely to be nominated for the Executive they would only be able to serve a very short period before their contract finished. This instability could prevent some from voting for them. Secondly, their funding conditions may mean that they would have to give their own free time to prepare for and attend meetings. Thirdly, it was reported that some groups were unwilling to support a member of their group joining the Executive because they are already short staffed and cannot afford to release the staff member to attend meetings and/or given their limited resources would struggle to find travel expenses for the member to attend.

Executive Board meeting minutes over the last year show that on at least one occasion more than 50% of delegates sent their apologies and did not attend<sup>26</sup>. On these occasions it was agreed to proceed with business and for the Chairperson to

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<sup>26</sup> Most notably the meeting in September 2007 where 5 delegates were present and apologies were received from 6 delegates.

contact members not present to gain their views and where appropriate their agreement to any actions discussed. According to the Constitution *"no business shall be transacted at any general meeting of the Society unless a quorum of appointed representatives of members is present at the time the meeting proceeds to business. One third of the number of appointed representatives of members shall form a quorum"*. The reason for these absences is likely to be related to the issues discussed above, in addition to pressures from the current job (for example, a refuge worker may be needed by a service user on the day of the meeting).

## **Responsibilities**

The Executive meet bi-monthly at least. More frequent meetings are arranged when necessary.

New members of the Executive Board undergo an orientation to brief them on their legal obligations, the content of the Constitution, the Board and decision making process, the functioning and structure of the services, the business plan and recent financial performance. This follows good practice guidance which promotes that *"trustees should ensure that they receive the necessary induction"* (ACEVO, 2005). During induction they are given the opportunity to meet key employees and other Board members.

Good practice guidance also states that *"Trustees should ensure that they receive the necessary training and ongoing support needed to discharge their duties"* (ACEVO, 2005). The Executive Board are encouraged to participate in internal and external training events which further their skills and knowledge in undertaking their roles. During interviews several Executive Board Members recalled having attended recent WWA training events, most notably workshop sessions on governance designed and delivered in partnership with the Charity Commission.

WWA is a registered friendly society governed by its constitution dated 1982. As a registered friendly society, it reports to the Financial Services Authority. The Executive Board is responsible for maintaining proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the organisation and enable WWA to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965 and the Friendly and Industrial Societies Act 1968. The Executive Board is also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the organisation and hence for taking steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Between May 2002 and October 2005 the Charity Commission conducted a review of local WA groups in England (members of WAFE). This prompted several letters of

correspondence between the Director of WWA<sup>27</sup> and the Charity Commission.<sup>28</sup> WWA embarked on a programme of internal review and support for governance arrangements for local WA groups in Wales (see Chapter 7), which was supported by a worker from the Charity Commission. In doing so WWA took the opportunity to look in detail at their organisation's own governance arrangements. Interviewees reported that after this process Executive Members took their responsibilities more seriously as they had a greater understanding of their personal responsibilities as a trustee.

## **Effectiveness**

All interviewees were very clear that they believe the operation of the Executive Board has improved significantly since the 2001 Evaluation and the introduction of a hierarchy structure within WWA. All interviewees felt that the Executive Board was now more strategic, focused and effective. Nevertheless opportunities to improve were acknowledged, for example, a few Executive Members recalled discussions which could have led to more decisive action.

The WWA Annual Report 2006/07 recognised this development:

*"Having previously had a much more 'hands on' role, the establishment of the national team and the day-to-day management responsibility lying with the Director, has meant that we have been able to develop as a Board" (WWA, 2007b p.1).*

Long standing members of the national team and local groups reported that at the time of the 2001 Evaluation the Executive dealt with even the minutiae of day to day operations which wasted delegates and national staff members' time, and hampered the organisations vision and ability to work strategically. Past and current Executive Board Members also reported that historically the governance of WWA has been extremely challenging given a number of allegations against WWA personnel. Although today there remains opportunities to improve the effectiveness of the operations of the Executive, the functioning of the board is far more strategic and effective in its administration.

Board Members and senior WWA personnel indicated that there are no formal procedures for appraising Executive Board Members. Both our interview programmes and subsequent desk research confirmed that this is not unusual, with the 2003 Governance Review (ACEVO 2005) indicating only 27% of third sector organisations undertake Board Member appraisal.

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<sup>27</sup> Initial letter from the Director of WWA was dated 11th July 2006

<sup>28</sup> The initial response from the Charity Commission was dated 3rd August 2006.

## Direction

The current activities of WWA are driven by WWA Business Strategy 2006-09 and the organisations Operational Plan 2006/07. This is the most up to date Operational Plan. The Operational Plan 2006/07 has 7 objectives:

- i. Implementation of the new national structure for managing WWA (see Chapter 6 and below);
- ii. To ensure that WWA is managed effectively throughout the changeover and beyond while continuing to provide its core services (discussed below)
- iii. To enable and support the work for member groups (covered in Chapter 3 and 7)
- iv. To work to establish adequate provision of temporary refuge and support on request for women and children experiencing domestic abuse including services to children, outreach and floating support (covered in Chapter 7 as part of a discussion about national campaigning)
- v. To generally educate and inform the public, media, the police and courts, social services and any other authorities with respect to the position of women and children in our society and to undertake any research that is appropriate (education and information provision is discussed in Chapter 7. The organisations research capacity is discussed in Chapter 6)
- vi. To work actively for such changes in the law, social policy and social attitudes as may be necessary to achieve our aims of creating a society in which no abuse of power exists, where women and children can live free from violence and abuse and where their choices and values are respected (see Chapter 3)
- vii. To effectively enable groups to provide high quality services in Wales, which meet the needs and expectations of women and their children experiencing domestic abuse. The underlying aims throughout the Quality Assurance Strategy will be to develop appropriate, sustainable systems that meet and reconcile the needs of all service users, funders, those involved in providing the service and other stakeholders.

Progress against the Operational Plan is regularly monitored internally and discussed with the Executive. Progress does not appear to be systematically measured, (activities in large are recorded as "*ongoing*" and very few activities are given timescales for completion).

At the Executive Meeting in January 2008 it was agreed that WWA required a business plan template incorporating performance indicators and monitoring. WAG has also requested that WWA complete a Business Plan which is expected before the end of this year. WWA is currently in the process of developing its first "Business Plan" based on an individual staff task analysis exercise. Effectively each member of staff will have an individual Business Plan with specific targets and milestones. This

exercise has given Executive Members a greater understanding of the breadth of the organisations remit and work. In turn this will be communicated through the regions.

### **Delegated authority (and the ASP Sub-Committee)**

In accordance with the Constitution *"the Executive Board may delegate any of its powers to Committees, with the members of such Committees consisting in each case of such Executive Board members and up to four other persons as it thinks fit"* (WWA, 2007c p.10). In past times the Executive Board has established various sub-committees (e.g. finance sub-committee) but at present there is only one sub-committee.

WAG requires organisations to satisfy certain criteria in order to be deemed suitable to become an ASP as set out in the *'Supporting People in Wales. Accreditation of a Support Provider'* (WAG, 2002). In 2007 the Executive Board delegated powers to a sub-committee specifically for undertaking the ASP role. The role of this group should involve:

- *"Receiving monitoring reports and any relevant actions and recommendations;*
- *Approval of the annual charge levied by the organisation to the groups and ensuring that this is sufficient to adequately fund the work of the organisation to undertake this role;*
- *Ensuring that WWA staff have the abilities and skills to be effective in the ASP role;*
- *Approval of the Agreement models that will govern this arrangement;*
- *Ensuring that the Board continues to satisfy the Welsh Assembly Government's criteria for being an ASP (see below);*
- *All Executive Board members will need to be knowledgeable about the ASP role and the responsibilities it confers on them in their role"* (WWA, 2008d)

By constitution, this sub-committee will consist of two members who will be nominated by the Executive Board and a minimum of four, maximum of six external members who are knowledgeable of the ASP role, whose recruitment will be undertaken by the Director. Current membership to this subcommittee includes:

- UWHA;
- Llamau;
- North Wales Housing Association;
- SP team Blaenau Gwent;
- Cymryd-Rhan;

- Cardiff WA;
- Merthyr WA.

Under conditions of the ASP role *"No more than one third of the membership of the Board should be a current recipient of any of the organisation's services"* (WAG, 2002).

The ASP sub-committee plans to meet quarterly at least for the first year. The group has now met twice. As part of their ASP role WWA has now completed 2 reviews of local WA groups. The first of these was a joint review with the housing association, and the second was conducted independently. The review was a desk top audit (as agreed with WAG) but in practice this did not provide access to sufficient information to complete a fair review. WWA supplemented this evidence with discussions and requests for additional information from the local WA group.

There are concerns about the capacity of WWA to successfully fulfil this role which could mean that additional time may be required from the ASP sub-committee. There are also concerns about WWA capability given the challenges WWA has faced in the past (i.e. allegations against staff), especially in light of the fact that historically there are more challenges surrounding the role of an ASP for domestic abuse services than any other form of service provision. As a result, there is great interest within and outside WA about how WWA will rise to this new challenge.

## **Communication**

Six calendar months after the close of each financial year WWA hold their Annual General Meeting (AGM). The functions of the AGM are to:

- Receive the accounts and balance sheet together with the report of the auditor;
- Elect members to the Executive Board;
- Appoint the Auditor;
- Fix the annual general subscription for the ensuing twelve months;
- Transact any other business of the Society including in the notice convening the meeting.

Minutes of the AGM and of every meeting of the Executive Board are taken and read at subsequent meetings respectively, and signed by the Chairperson of the meeting at which they are read. Copies are then published on the members area of WWA website. Although rarely asked, none of our interviewees commented on this facility.

Historically minutes of the Executive Board and minutes from Regional meetings were exchanged and read at respective meetings. This process has largely ceased

now but there was an appetite by a few for this process to return by interviewees and website respondents who felt they were no longer kept as well informed as they previously had been.

The fact that a group member could be on the Executive when their Manager was not was a concern to several group Managers we spoke with. One Manager reported that in the past a colleague had withheld information from Executive meetings over the Manager as a form of power.

## **Conclusion**

Historically, the governance of WWA has been extremely challenging. Over recent years executive arrangements have improved gradually. Key drivers for the improvement are changes to WWA management structure which has led to greater clarity between the roles of WWA staff and the Executive Board and the inclusion of external members in meetings. Obtaining a strong mix of skills and experience on the Executive Board remains limited by the Constitution, given the barriers to local WA staff coming forward to stand for election to the Board. WWAs role as an ASP will bring new challenges to the governance of WWA. Changes to the composition and functioning of the Board are likely subject to the approval of a number of proposals at the AGM in September.

## 6. Management Arrangements

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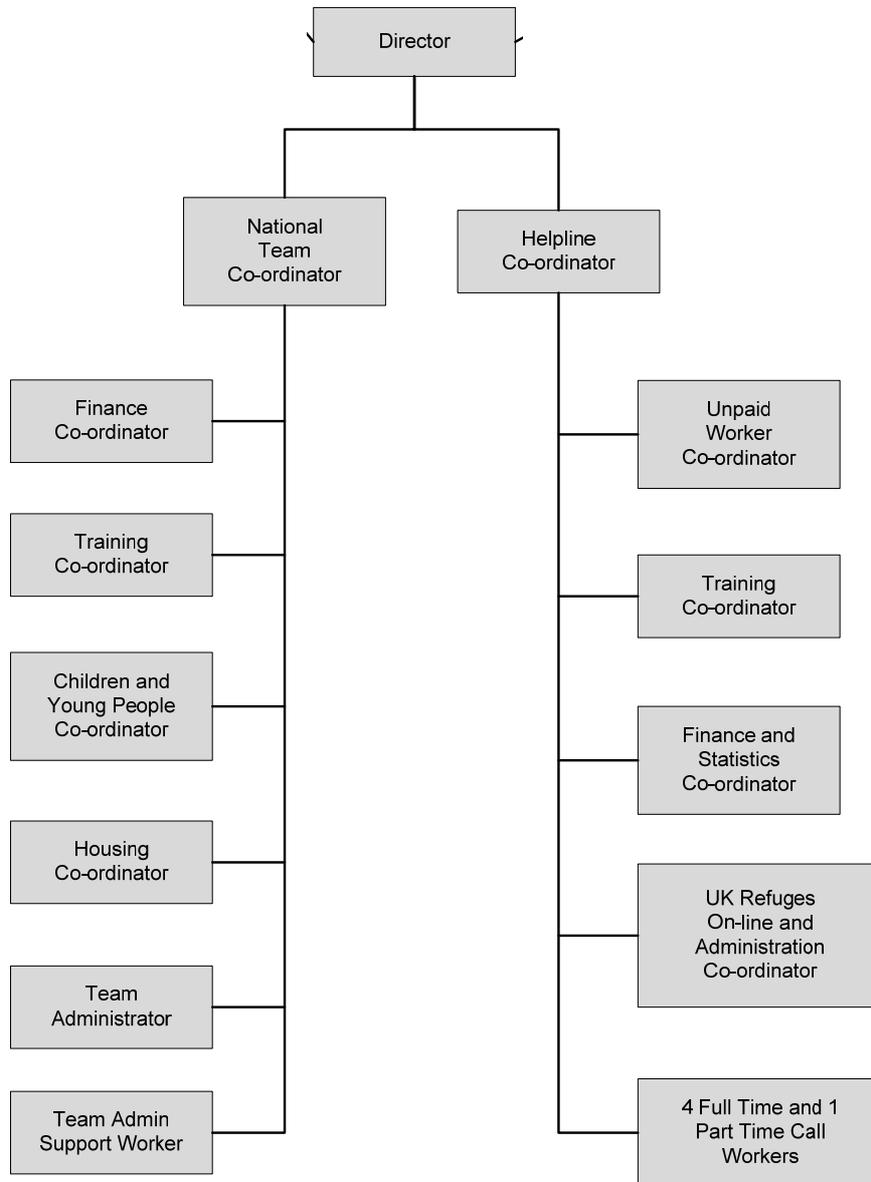
In this Chapter we discuss WWA organisational structure, use of resources, financial management and stewardship of public funds; and comment on WWA human resource arrangements. We also cover funding levels, and the long term sustainability and the capacity of the organisation, taking into account the implications of WWA's current job evaluation exercise.

### **Organisational Structure**

As discussed in Chapter 2, WWA emerged from the feminist movement of the 1970's and its organisational structure, at least up until the 2001 review, reflected these origins: it consisted of autonomous groups in a loose federation. WWA operated a flat structure, with no hierarchy, based on a system of direct democracy and collective working (i.e. everyone is involved in decision making, skills are shared and there is no specialisation of tasks).

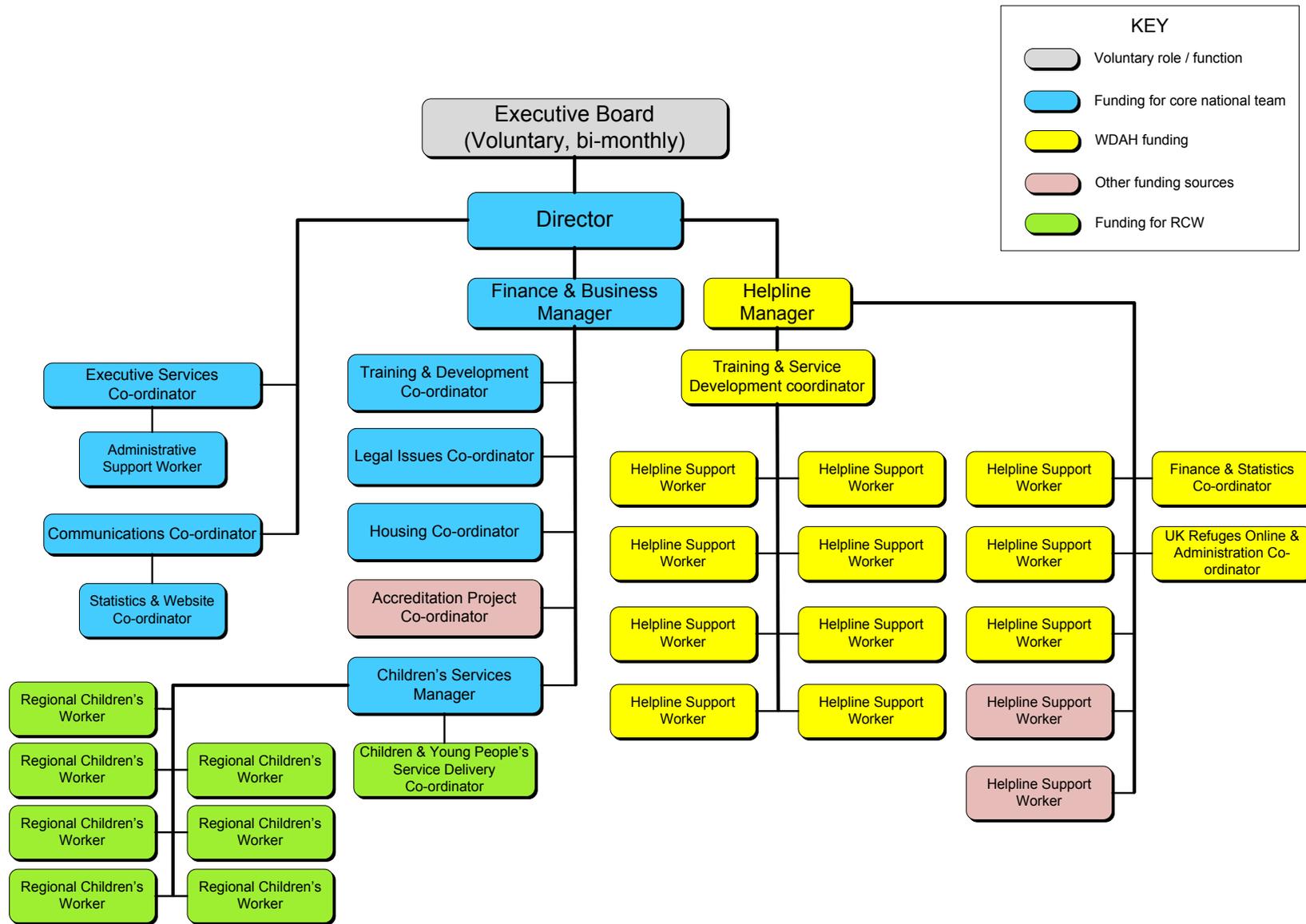
Following the 2001 Evaluation WWA went through a restructure. Since then WWA have made a number of amendments to their structure in terms of staff roles and line management arrangements. Figure 8 and Figure 9 below show the structure in 2003/04 and the current management structure in order to illustrate the extent to which the management structure has changed over recent years.

Figure 8: WWA Management Structure 2003/04



[Source: Adapted from WWA, 2004b]

Figure 9: WWA Management Structure 2008



[Source: Adapted from WWA Organisation Structure Document 2008]

The responsibility of the day-to-day management of WWA is delegated to the Director and Senior Management Team. (WWA Executive Board is responsible for the organisations strategic direction and policy - this role explored above in Chapter 5).

Most interviewees outside of the National team were unable to comment on the organisations structure and management arrangements as they were not aware of them.

The majority of the national team and members of the Executive reported that they feel the new hierarchical structure has improved working relationships and the effectiveness of the organisation. Line management has given staff greater focus and greater clarity of their roles and a clearer understanding of expectations of themselves and others.

Two or more members of the national team commented that the role of the RCW is rather detached from the national team, yet not well integrated with local groups. However, the concept of the role (in terms of the direct face to face contact with local groups whilst being a member of the national team) is relatively new (RCW were employed from September 2007). RCWs noted that their relationship with local groups is improving and that they benefited from regular meetings with other RCWs, the Children's Services Manager and Children and Young People's Service Delivery Coordinator. Furthermore this role has given WWA greater awareness of the activities of local WA groups and their perception/engagement with WWA as an umbrella body.

Again, several interviewees felt the relationship with the All Wales National Abuse Helpline workers could be improved. In practice, the Helpline was thought to be managed as a separate organisation. The location of the national team and the All Wales National Abuse Helpline was thought to exacerbate this issue. The presence of the WDAH manager at Executive Board meetings is seen as a mechanism for improving the links between staff officers within WWA.

## **Remuneration**

The existing salary structure has evolved from the previous arrangements based on the collective principle (i.e. where all the employees were regarded as equal and consequently paid essentially the same rate). The move to a hierarchical structure was developed using local government pay scales. Interviewees from within WA and external to it still held the perception that WWA staff grades and jobs were underpaid and low status, and a number attributed poor performance and ineffectiveness to this reason.

Last summer WWA commissioned ACAS to undertake a formal analytical job evaluation exercise. The objective of the exercise was to develop a fair, transparent and equitable pay structure which everyone can understand. Job evaluation provides the rational basis of an equitable and defensible pay structure. It does not in itself produce a pay and grading system but introduces a mechanism to enable decisions to be made about pay within an organisation. A draft report on the outcome of this exercise is now available.

The ACAS report recommends the salaries for the majority of WWA posts are increased. ACAS found two posts which would justify lower remuneration. ACAS recommend the salaries for the individuals holding these positions are frozen and that upon their departure future post holders are employed at a lower salary and grade.

WWA are now discussing this with trade union representatives before decisions are made based on the outcome of the ACAS report. At the Executive Board Meeting in January 2008 it was noted that the Assembly had said no to WWA spending its grant on outcomes from the Job Evaluation (they had agreed the money could be spent for other purposes<sup>29</sup>).

## **Human Resources**

As noted earlier, historically WWA has faced a number of serious HR related issues. There is not a dedicated staff function for HR within WWA. Human resources within the organisation are the responsibility of the direct line manager and/or the Director. Several of the national team noted that the organisation would benefit from a HR specific post holder.

When a new staff members joins WWA they are presented with WWA Staff Handbook - a large A4 lever file which contains documentation relating to what is expected of them and what they can expect from WWA in return. Working conditions and terms of employment are detailed in full. Approximately 40% of the contents of this handbook are currently being re-drafted and revised. At the time of the evaluation, several drafts had been completed and were waiting ratification by the Executive.

WWA working requirements are comparative to other similar organisations. The Staff Handbook states WWA full-time personnel are required to work 35 hours, including core hours Monday to Friday 9.30am to 3.30pm. Personnel are entitled to 25 days annual leave per annum. In the past staff were also entitled to other leave including sabbaticals. These types of entitlements were removed in recent years following a

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<sup>29</sup> WWA annual conference

vote by the Executive as the organisation was unable to function during periods of long-term staff leave and it was thought that the staff in the national team did not require additional leave as they were not enduring the stress of face-to-face service user contact.

Personnel records are not available for all employees<sup>30</sup> so it has not been possible to compare staff sickness levels in WWA with national averages in the last three years. However, it is clear to see from the records that are available that sickness and absenteeism levels are high. In the first six months of 2008 for example, three members of staff had more than 35 days sickness absence<sup>31</sup>. This will arguably have had an impact on the effectiveness of the organisation, especially given its size.

## **Recruitment**

Again staff turnover records appear to be incomplete so it has not been possible to compare staff turnover with national averages. It is clear however that staff turnover in the last three years has been high. In 2006 ten people left the organisation, and nine people left in 2007. To date six people have left this year. The public sector has an average turnover rate of 13.7% (CIPD, 2007) which WWA figures clearly exceed.

The current Director had planned her departure for July 2008. A new Director has been appointed and will take up this post from 21<sup>st</sup> July. Prior to this date the current Director has been on a period of long term absence. In the meantime the Finance and Business Manager assumed this role.

The majority of WWA and local WA groups expressed a great deal of excitement and optimism surrounding the appointment of a new Director<sup>32</sup>. It was especially appreciated that the new Director has front line experience and experience managing a local WA group.

Three or more national level interviewees felt that in the past WWA remuneration packages have limited the quality of staff attracted to the Directors post and are more pessimistic of recruitment from within the WA movement given this history of sensitive issues and challenges the organisation has faced. (This is not true of the comments we collected from WWA and local WA groups).

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<sup>30</sup> The staff turnover figures compared to the sickness and absenteeism show variations in the number of staff employed over that period. In addition the records for 4 people up to 2007 have been archived and were not made available to the research team.

<sup>31</sup> In the last six months one member of staff had 161 days off, one had 56 days and one had 35 days sickness absence.

<sup>32</sup> The appointee joined WWA on the 21st July 2008.

The appointment of the new Director was assisted by the current Director. This arrangement is unusual across the private, public and third sector.

WWA employs females only. WWA state *“due to the remit of WWA as a provider of services to vulnerable women and children, recruitment is restricted to women within the legal framework set out in the Sex Discrimination Act (1975)”*. It was suggested by at least one interviewee that this employment policy is difficult to justify within the national team.

## **CPD**

WWA personnel take appropriate CPD opportunities as they arise, for example, one member of staff recently returned from the Public Service Management Wales (PSMW) management training week funded by the WAG.

One of the External Board members, building on her own experience developing training programmes and gaining accreditation, mentored the Accreditation Project Coordinator through her first few months of employment.

## **Bilingual Capacity**

Executive Board Meeting Minutes show dissatisfaction with the number of Welsh speakers. Two or more Executive Members have questioned WWA recruitment decisions on this basis. The overriding decision has been that knowledge, skills and experience have been more vital for recent appointments. At the time of the evaluation there were two Welsh speakers in WWA core staff team<sup>33</sup>. Executive Board meeting minutes show that at times the WDAH has struggled to offer a bilingual service 24 hours a day during periods of staff absence. WWA is in the process of developing a properly resourced 10 year plan for the learning of Welsh across the movement, following discussions at several Executive Board Meetings in the last year.

## **ASP**

Since April 2008 WWA has been the ASP for 7 local WA groups. In practical terms the ASP role means that:

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<sup>33</sup> This does not include the former Director who was a Welsh speaker but was not in office for the most part of the evaluation.

- *"WWA will receive Supporting People Revenue Grant (SPRG) and pay this to the WA Group;*
- *They will levy a management charge from the WA groups to cover the work of WWA in carrying out the ASP role;*
- *The organisation has responsibility for monitoring the quality of the support delivered in accordance with the SPRG Service Specifications and the funding tariffs and the probity, governance and financial viability of the Women's Aid groups for which it is ASP. To this end it will undertake two regulatory processes:*
  - *An annual monitoring of the relevant groups*
  - *Ensuring and overseeing the completion of the Annual Return by the Groups sent out by the Welsh Assembly Government."* (WWA, 2008d)

WWA taking on the role of an ASP has had a direct impact of the role of the Director, Housing Coordinator and the Finance and Business Manager. It was anticipated that within one year this would take 20 hours, 40 hours and 20 hours of their time respectively. This figure, at least for the first year, is a massive underestimation. In part this is because the figures were calculated on an assumption that only four local WA groups would choose WWA as their ASP in the first financial year (2008/09) and also because the figure does not allow for set-up time. This has led to these members of staff having to make allowances elsewhere in their roles, for example, attending external multi-agency meetings..

One of the primary drivers for WWA taking on the role of an ASP, as reported in interviewees with the national team and executive members and detailed in the 2006/07 Annual Report, is to address the financial instability of the organisation.

*"There are still the perennial difficulties regarding the financial situation of WWA that can limit what we are able to do. However, we have taken steps to look at how this can be addressed and the key area of capacity building has been the registration of WWA as an ASP."* (WWA, 2007a p.1)

Those interviewees that commented (more than 15 interviewees) suggested that in an ideal world to adequately fulfil this role would require one full time Monitoring and Review Officer (as a new role) plus administration support. However there was concern from outside WWA (including members of the ASP sub committee) that if WWA increased staff resources to effectively carry out this role they would not benefit from the additional income this will provide (which was the primary driver to take on this role).

The role as an ASP also brings a regulatory function to the remit of WWA. This adds a new dimension to the relationship between WWA and local WA groups (discussed

in more detail in Chapter 8). WWA recognise this will require careful relationship management with local WA groups<sup>34</sup>.

Four external national stakeholders had serious concerns about WWA use of resources, stewardship of public funds and industrial relations. These concerns were exacerbated early this year by the news that WWA would be taking on the role as an ASP. Although all of these interviews wish strongly for WWA to succeed, two of these interviewees suggested that WWA should be partnered with a partner organisation over the next five years (approximately) to support WWA being brought up to capacity.

## **Conclusion**

The management of WWA has historically been plagued with staffing issues. Today problems still remain evidenced by high turnover, high staff sickness absence and allegations against members of staff. The introduction of a hierarchy has clearly brought improvement resulting in greater clarity of roles and responsibilities. Funding for core staff and the national office is limited. It is hoped the ASP role will be a key area of capacity building but initial indications show this is likely to swallow already scarce staff resource given the organisations wide remit. Again, improvements are planned and the appointment of a new Director renews optimism for some.

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<sup>34</sup> Within the WCVA they have dealt with the challenge of supporting and regulating by appointing one member of staff, (the 'Risk and Performance Analyst'), who sits completely outside any service function, (reporting directly to the Chief Executive), with the responsibility for monitoring performance and auditing service delivery.

## 7. Added value at a national level provided by Welsh Women's Aid

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This Chapter discusses the added value provided by WWA at the national level in terms of: delivery of a key aim of the All Wales Domestic Abuse Strategy; impact and image with the public; profile with key partners, contribution to partnerships; contribution to policy development; representation of the sector and of individual groups.

### **Campaigning and Policy influence**

Representatives from the WAG expressed their gratitude to WWA for their contribution to consultations relating to domestic abuse issues (e.g. the development of the new Homelessness Strategy which will be launched early in 2009).

An informal arrangement is in place for the Director of WWA to meet with the Minister for SJLG twice a year. However regular meetings are not planned with the Minister for Housing. A key issue in relation to this arrangement is that local WA groups, who are delivering the services on the ground, are funded under the Housing Directorate.

In recent years WWA have produced and published on their website (in the members only area) a number of detailed consultation responses including WWA responses to the following government consultations:

- NAFW Domestic Abuse Inquiry;
- Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007 - Relevant Third Party;
- Marriage to partners from overseas;
- CPS Violence Against Women Strategy;
- Confidence and confidentiality: openness in family courts;
- Priorities for the Ministers for Women;
- Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation;
- Proposals for Single Equality;
- Making Legal Rights A Reality;
- Guidance for domestic homicide reviews;
- Law on rape;
- Guidelines on breach of a Protection Order;
- Advancing Equality for Men and Women;
- WAG Single Equality Scheme.

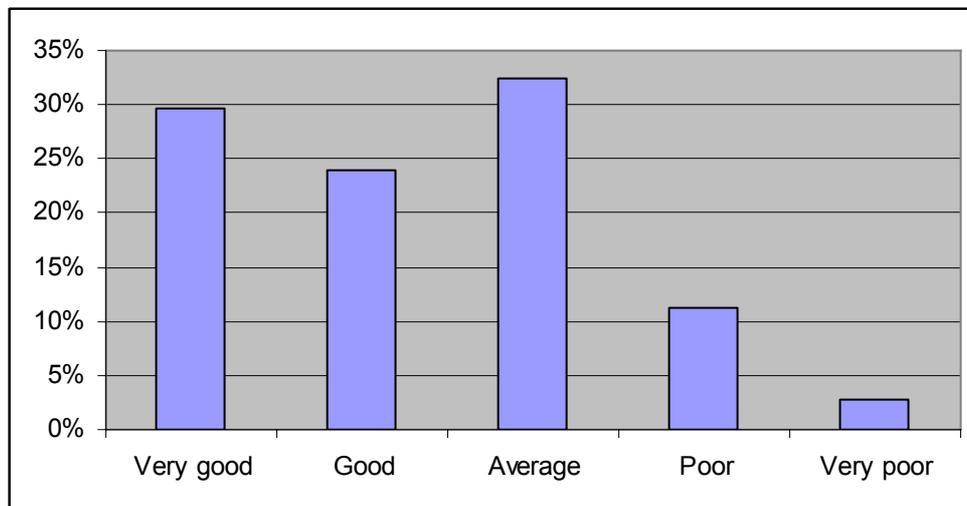
A desk based analysis of the consultations available online shows a marked increase in the quality of recent documentation.

WWA have worked on consultation responses with their counterparts elsewhere in the UK (particular WAFE given that Wales and England has the same criminal justice system). For example, WWA contributed to WAFE's response to the Home Affairs Committee Select Inquiry. Again WWA contribution as well as WAFE's consultation response is published on the members area of WWAs website.

From our programme of interviews it appears apparent that local and national partners across Wales are not aware of the quantity or detail contained within this area of WWA's work. None of our interviewees, outside of the national team, mentioned this resource. Furthermore very few member groups could recall this work and those that had tried to find such materials found them difficult to locate within the members area of WWA website. It is questionable why these important contributions cannot be made more widely accessible (i.e. outside of the members only password protected area of the website).

**Figure 10: Contributions to policy development**

**How would you rate WWA services: Contributions to Policy Development**



[n=82]

Networking and attending high level meetings can provide valuable sources of information, inform organisational strategy, and provide opportunities for WWA to develop a "voice" to influence policy and operational developments. A minority of national stakeholders felt that WWA was not actively operating in this circuit, two or more of these felt the Director or senior personnel were limited in doing this because the organisation did not have the resource to support this work (e.g. policy information is limited because WWA does not have a policy officer and/or research,

because of challenges in obtaining data from local WA groups the organisation can not access accurate and up to date statistics on a given issue quickly.

A minority of national stakeholders reported that the external perception is that because domestic abuse is well supported by a number of high profile persons in Wales (notably several ministers) - although they felt this was rightly so - WWA will inevitably be successful in raising the profile of national issues as policy makers will actively look to the organisation for their contribution.

The most recent consultation response - evidence given to the NAFW Communities and Culture Committee Inquiry into Domestic Abuse - clearly states what WWA recommendations and issues for concern in relation to domestic abuse issues in Wales are:

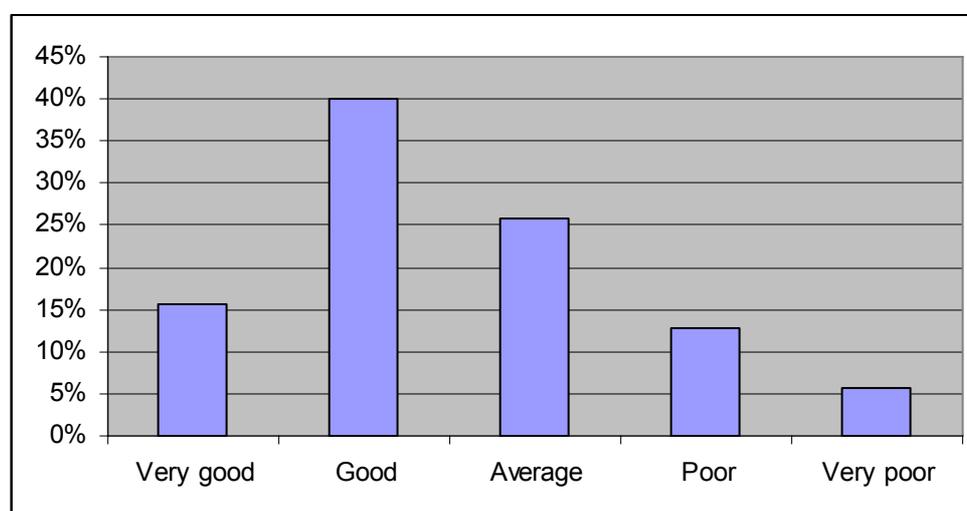
1. *"The government incorporate the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women as a definition.*
2. *An integrated strategy on ending violence against women.*
3. *Funding for specialist refuges in Wales.*
4. *Maintain and support women only services.*
5. *Core funding for Rape Crisis Centre.*
6. *Sexual assault telephone helpline.*
7. *Education campaign around rape and sexual assault*
8. *Provision in Wales for Trafficking, Prostitution and other Violence Against Women support services.*
9. *The Welsh Assembly hold a centralised contact details for all IDVA and DA Co-ordinators in Wales.*
10. *IDVAs must be accountable to the independent agency.*
11. *The Assembly should carry out an independent evaluation of all MARACs in Wales.*
12. *The CAADA risk assessment modal should be used by all agencies referring to a MARAC*
13. *Legal Services Direct should provide advice on family law issues.*
14. *More move on accommodation and social housing.*
15. *Women fleeing violence are exempt from the no recourse to public funds requirement*
16. *Benefit claims of women in refuge are fast tracked.*
17. *More perpetrator programmes running in Wales.*
18. *Register kept of all known perpetrators of domestic abuse held by the police.*
19. *Mandatory domestic abuse training for all police officers.*
20. *Further research is conducted into the low levels of charging in domestic abuse cases, and a strategy developed to address this issue*
21. *Domestic abuse training is made mandatory for all judges and magistrates*

- 22. *Education and awareness campaign around the myths and realities of rape and domestic abuse.*
- 23. *Core funding for children workers". (WWA, 2008c p. 46)*

Through the website consultation we received comments on the contribution of WWA at a national level in terms of informing and challenging government on housing, criminal justice and children's rights issues. See Figure 11, and Figure 13 below.

**Figure 11: Informing and challenging on housing issues**

**How would you rate WWA services: Informing and challenging at the national level on housing issues (in relation to the safety and protection of women and children)**



[n=82]

Very few interviewees and very few website respondents commented that Cymorth is more effectively addressing local WA groups concerns about ring fencing Supporting People funding<sup>35</sup>. However Figure 11 shows more than 80% of website respondents (who felt able to comment) rated WWA average or above for informing and challenging on housing related issues.

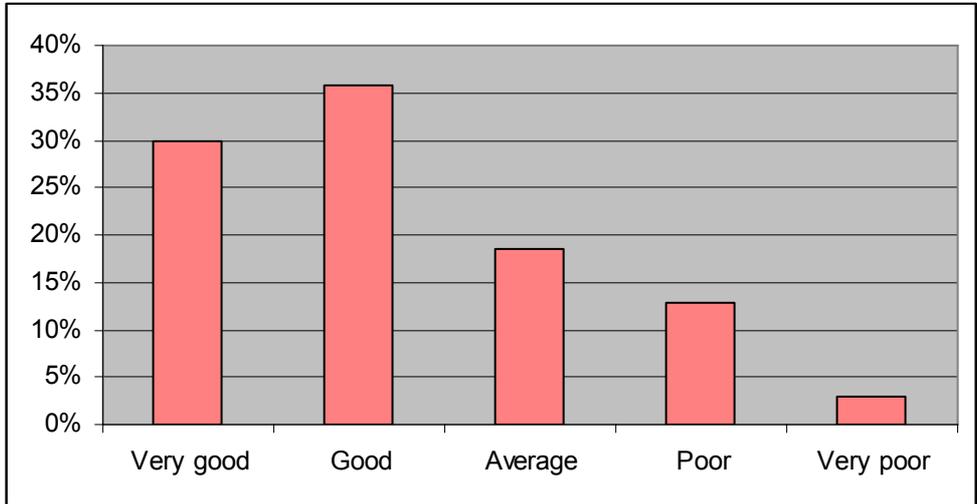
Again,

Figure 12 and Figure 13 below show high levels of satisfaction with WWA informing and challenging the criminal justice system and on children's right issues.

<sup>35</sup> Six of WWA 34 members are members of Cymorth. Cymorth Cymru is the representative body for providers of housing related support, homelessness and other services which enable people to build independent, successful lives which contribute positively to their community.

**Figure 12: Informing and challenging the criminal justice system**

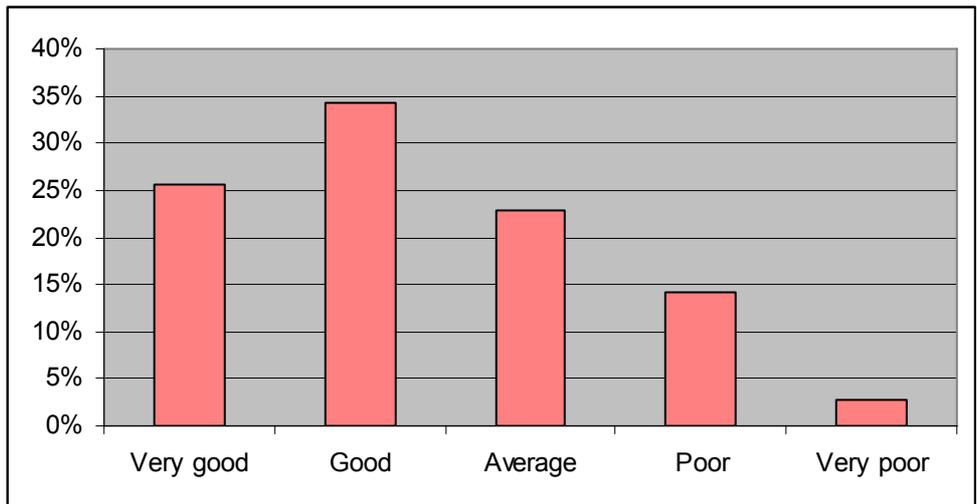
**How would you rate WWA services: Informing and challenging at the national level on criminal justice issues (in relation to the safety and protection of women and children)**



[n=82]

**Figure 13: Informing and challenging on children's rights issues**

**How would you rate WWA services: Informing and challenging at the national level on children's rights issues (in relation to the safety and protection of women and children)**



[n=80]

The figures show a higher proportion of respondents felt that WWA was good or very good at informing and challenging government on criminal justice and children's issues than on housing issues, this could perhaps be related to WWA closer contact

and communication with the Department for SJLG comparative to the Housing Directorate and Ministerial equivalents.

Issues concerning the volume of data WWA receives from local WA member groups was discussed in Chapter 3. Although WWA has successfully increased responses to their data requests from local WA groups in recent years, there is also an issue with the quality of the data WWA reports which is contained within the majority of these consultation documents. WWA 2006/07 and 2007/08 Annual Statistical Reports note that not all groups contributed data. The 2006/07 report does not state how many member groups did or did not offer data<sup>36</sup>. In both reports, the majority of tables, graphs and statements report percentages but do not state the population (i.e. the number of persons to which the figure relates). The 2007/08 report makes comparisons with 2006/07 data. However the data is not weighted and is arguably incomparable (for the reasons stated above). At present the reliability and validity of WWA data is questionable<sup>37</sup>.

There was a concern by a few representatives of local WA member groups and a few national stakeholders who contributed to the evaluation that WWA could be doing more to raise the profile and address emerging issues in the field of domestic abuse in Wales (namely forced marriage, honour killings, people trafficking and genital mutilation). There was a strong feeling by a minority that other organisations were more effectively pushing this agenda nationally, most notably BAWSO and other individual local groups. However, two or more interviewees stated that these emerging issues are being highlighted and addressed by WWA, and that perhaps WWA needs to increase their communication with local groups about their campaign work.

In WWA evidence (2008 p.10) to NAFW Communities and Culture Committee Inquiry into Domestic Abuse WWA state "*WWA is finding increasing pressure to speak on wider issues of violence against women, despite being a domestic abuse focused organisation. We regularly receive requests for comments on prostitution, human trafficking and sexual violence and whilst we do our best to respond appropriately we do not have sufficient resources to effectively represent the whole violence against women sector.*" If WWA were to comment there would be a risk about the robustness and validity of any comments they could make in light of their focus.

## **Promotional work**

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<sup>36</sup> WWA were not able to give us this information retrospectively as the person who compiled the report has now left the organisation.

<sup>37</sup> The WWA Annual Report 2006/07 refers to the document as "*robust*" which we consider misleading (WWA, 2007b, p.4). The WWA Annual Report 2007/08 states that "*WWA is committed to providing robust and accurate data*" (WWA, 2008a p. 12)

At present WWA are in the process of re-branding themselves. The primary objective is to convey the message that they are the umbrella body for groups who provide services to women and children. At present their logo does not mention children.

Nearly all interviewees felt that WDAH was receiving good publicity. Endeavours to increase publication through other public services (e.g. adverts in A&E departments and stickers on police cars) were welcomed and applauded. There was less satisfaction amongst interviewees for central coordination of campaigns to raise awareness of domestic abuse issues, inform women of the options available to them and challenge unhealthy relationships.

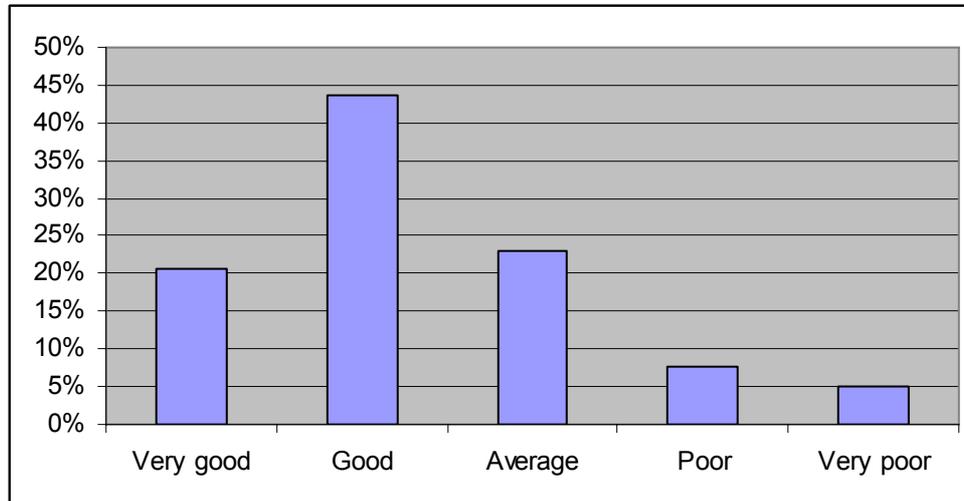
Many local WA groups have sought and achieved funding to these aims independently. Whilst the value of local promotional work is clear (e.g. to let women and children/young people know of the services available to them in their area) it was felt by the majority of interviewees that Wales would benefit from central marketing services. However, WWA's limited resources were acknowledged by most as a severe limitation to them. The necessity to produce bilingual materials in Wales puts additional pressure on scarce resources for promotional activities.

Again, there is an opportunity for WWA to work with their counterparts elsewhere in the UK (although we noted earlier that WWA have tried to do this in the past). Currently WAFE is providing marketing materials on their website that they and partner organisations (e.g. Home Office leaflets) have produced which local groups can use and add their logo/branding to. Several interviewees (including members of WWA and national stakeholders) noted the strengths of WAFE's promotional work.

In terms of promotion over half of interviewees and website respondents from local WA groups said that they would like to see WWA support national and international campaigns either via raising awareness to local WA groups through their various communication channels and ideally by coordinating a central Welsh campaign. An example of a missed opportunity is the Million Woman March. WWA has been involved with a number of national campaigns, for example the BBC Christmas Charity Campaign.

**Figure 14: WWA increasing public awareness**

**How would you rate WWA services: Increasing public awareness of the issues surrounding domestic abuse?**



[n=84]

Around 20% of open qualitative comments to the website consultation called for WWA to increase its profile nationally and raise awareness of domestic abuse issues.

As noted earlier, awareness of domestic abuse issues and organisations working in this arena has increased in recent years. Given WWA limited resources the organisation needs to be careful about where they focus their energies and resource. Should WWA undertake further promotional work their work will need to be properly evaluated in order to ensure that they 'make a difference'.

### **Minimum Standards**

The National Strategy states that *"the aims of the strategy will only be realised if there is a nationwide' commitment to minimum standards of service, and, ultimately, the implementation of 'best practice'. Towards this end, it is imperative that all agencies/organisations and employers ensure that they have the appropriate mechanisms in place to improve individual responses to domestic abuse"*. (WAG, 2005 p.21)

The implementation of quality assurance/minimum standard across local groups has been discussed by WWA for some time. Funding in the third sector from public sector sources has been increasing in recent years, especially since the advent of the National Assembly for Wales. However this trend is unlikely to continue (WAG, 2008b p.18). For the third sector this will mean seeking more diverse forms of income

and adopting more entrepreneurial approaches, including bidding for public service procurement contracts or negotiating service level agreements for the provision of specific forms of services. Providing a quality service, above a recognised minimum standard would be one way to ensure WA remains competitive.

Members will be required to abide by a Code of Practice (see Chapter 7) but many interviewees, including national stakeholders, representatives from WWA, local WA groups, local partners and importantly commissioning agents, require something more concrete, of a high quality mark and for a quality assurance/minimum standards to be guaranteed. If WWA were able to achieve this they would add real value at a national level. It is hoped that WWA status as an ASP, coupled with that hope that more member groups will sign up to WWA as their ASP in the future, that this will be achievable. The feasibility of WWA achieving this in their current position or at a time in the future is explored further in Chapter 7.

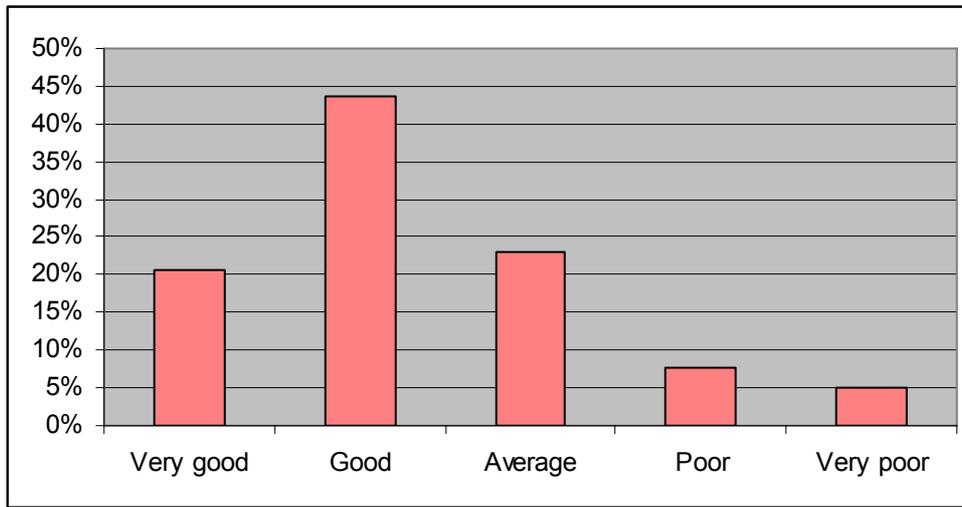
A minority of national level interviewees expressed their frustration that WWA had not taken on the role of ASP when it was first introduced in 2002/03 when they could have added real value at a national and local level. At this time local WA groups and other providers were anxious about what ASP would mean and how it worked. These interviewees would have liked to have seen WWA take a lead on developing the policies and procedures and supporting local groups to access this money and fulfil the associated service delivery and reporting requirements. It has been suggested that it is now too late. Other ASP providers who are currently supporting local WA member groups now have far more experience and expertise to fulfil this role than WWA.

### **All Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline and UK Refuges On-line**

Both the WDAH and UK Refuges On-line were seen by the majority of interviewees (including internal and external representatives) as a significant step forward for the movement. The Helpline provides the link between victims of domestic abuse and the support they need. The service offers information on a range of issues relating to domestic abuse and can refer women and their children to local WA refuges and advice service. The Helpline Support Workers discuss practical options available, including emergency accommodation, face to face support and counselling, welfare and benefit rights, housing issues, legal issues, perpetrator programmes and any concerns about children. The helpline can also discuss what the police, courts and other agencies can do to support and protect people.

**Figure 15: All Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline**

**How would you rate WWA services: WDAH**



[n=84]

A Helpline Working Group has been established and invited representatives from the four regions to ensure that pan-Wales policies and procedures are established. Reportedly encouraging members to join the group and attend meetings is challenging, largely for the same barriers reported for joining the Executive (see Chapter 5).

The Helpline is currently working in partnership with Gwent Police and Victim Support on a referral system. Currently high risk domestic abuse cases are referred to Victim Support, the low and medium risk calls are not monitored or referred. The pilot will ensure all domestic abuse incidents are referred to WDAH and all victims are made aware of the services available to them. The pilot is scheduled to begin in August 2008.

Helpline Support Workers can also access the most up to date information on refuge bed spaces across the UK through UK Refuges On-line.

**UK Refuges Online**

From 2007 onwards WAFE has been the conduit for UK Refuges Online. Comic Relief agreed continuation funding of £40,000 split across all four Federations for 2007/08, of which WWA had been allocated £3,400 towards a budget of £12,241, a shortfall of £8,841 was funded through WWA. This deficit was funded by groups through membership and an additional administration fee of £50 charged to non affiliated organisations who use the system.

Through our fieldwork we have received an indication from at least two local WA groups that they do not accurately update UK Refuges Online because they only have a small number of bed spaces and are nearly always full so do not see the need to do this given multiple pressures on their time. This issue is outside the scope of this research but may need to be monitored and addressed in the future, especially in light of a large unmet demand for spaces<sup>38</sup>.

### **Prevention agenda and perpetrator programmes**

A key part of the National Strategy is "*to prevent domestic abuse happening in the first place*" (2005 p.8). A minority of national level interviewees expressed their frustration that WWA has not, or did not embrace the prevention agenda at an earlier opportunity, in particular they have not seized the opportunity to contribute to the development of perpetrator programmes. Most of these interviewees felt the reason that WWA has not done so is because of the reluctance to work with men by a few within the organisation, although many of these acknowledged that WWA also had resource and capacity issues. Reportedly discussions surrounding WWA taking on a role in work surrounding the prevention of domestic abuse and perpetrator programmes began as far back as 1996. Frustrations now arise out of the fact that perpetrator programmes have been designed and developed without the expertise of an organisation which has unique access to the voices of female service users. A minority would have liked WWA to have embraced this role, leading local WA groups and adding value at a national level in terms of inputting to national programmes of work with perpetrators or potential perpetrators. A minority feel WWA have not only missed this opportunity themselves but have also, and wrongly, prevented local WA groups from adding value to this area work. For example, reportedly one local WA group was approached around eight years ago by a voluntary organisation to input to the supervision of facilitators delivering perpetrator workshops but were prevented from doing so by WWA who stated that it would be unacceptable for a WA group to be involved.

There are examples of women-centred organisations taking on work with men successfully. BAWSO, a member of WWA, have always worked with men and have used male trainers, male consultants and male volunteers. BAWSO believe men can be positive role models and can be more effective at challenging the behaviour. BAWSO do not support men who have been victims of domestic abuse but did support a motion for a project which provided support services for male victims of domestic abuse. Also, there is the Dyn Project<sup>39</sup> which is based at the Cardiff

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<sup>38</sup> 2766 requests for refuge accommodation to local WA groups were unable to be met in 2007/08 (WWA, 2008a)

<sup>39</sup> 'dyn' means man in Welsh

Women's Safety Unit (WSU), which provided services for gay and heterosexual male victims as well as policy advice and a helpline service (see Robinson & Rowlands, 2008).

### **School-based interventions**

The National Strategy (WAG, 2005) aims to encourage the provision of education and raising public awareness. Some local WA member groups (particularly in North Wales) have been doing projects in schools based around healthy relationships and raising awareness of domestic abuse. This was backed up with individual support provided to pupils who came forward and disclosed abuse following the sessions.

We are aware that Tai Hafren has recently been awarded a contract to deliver a pilot programme of awareness raising workshops in schools. In at least one local authority area a local WA group has linked in with this programme of work to provide post programme outreach support to any children and young people identified as an individual who would benefit from one to one support. One RCW in association with the local Domestic Abuse Forum has been involved in this process.

It has become clear from our fieldwork that there are now a variety of providers actively working in schools and other setting with young people to raise awareness of domestic abuse and associated issues, challenge negative attitudes and to encourage healthy relationships. In a minority of areas there appears to be duplication of effort. Perhaps this could be addressed through local Domestic Abuse Forums or via the Domestic Abuse Coordinator.

### **Information sharing**

In order to effectively protect all children and young people from the negative impact of domestic abuse more work is required in terms of inter-agency information sharing. For example, we were told of recent cases where women with children had multiple refuge addresses across Wales but were unknown to social services. The National Strategy clearly states "*fundamentally, without safe information sharing the needs of domestic abuse victims cannot be adequately met and perpetrators will not be held accountable*". (WAG, 2005 p.12). Several interviewees felt that WWA could have a leading role establishing inter-agency information sharing protocols. However guidance already exists, such as the Home Office report "Safety and Justice: sharing personal information in the context of domestic violence - an overview". WAG is a signatory to the Home Office information sharing guidance.<sup>40</sup> Links to appropriate

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<sup>40</sup> This documentation has been endorsed by the WAG and is noted in the National Strategy (WAG, 2005 p. 18)

sources of guidance are available on WWA website in the members only area. Again, it is questionable why these materials are not more openly available.

### **Accreditation of the sector**

During 2006/07 the four Federations of Women's Aid worked on a joint bid for funding from Comic Relief and have now been awarded £400,000 over two years to develop accredited domestic abuse training. The funds awarded to Wales were originally for a part time worker over two years. Match funding from Lloyds TSB has enabled WWA to upgrade this to a full time post.

Although WWA gives equal status to experience as well as qualifications, this work has come about out of WWAs recognition that local WA groups are operating in a climate where evidencing skills and professionalism is increasingly desired or demanded by commissioning agents. Prior to this endeavour there were no National Occupational Standards or specific qualifications around domestic abuse or the work undertaken within WA.

As part of this work the Accreditation Coordinator has undertaken a mapping exercise to identify the range of accredited vocational training and academic qualifications across local WA groups. This exercise achieved a 37% response rate from local WA groups.

As a result of this project WWA has now been awarded the status of an OCN accredited centre. This means that areas of training WWA provides now and in the future can be linked to new and existing units within the OCN framework. OCNs will offer external recognition for funders and meet the WAG strategic aims of workforce development and lifelong learning. A programme of 'Train the Trainer' has now begun to enable trainers within groups to take back this capability to local WA groups.

It is also hoped that in the future this capability can be used to empower the women who use the services provided by WWA.

At the Executive Meeting in January 2008 the group acknowledge that OCN qualifications may not have the same credibility as NVQ's.

### **Conclusion**

The potential for a centralised body for domestic abuse services to add value at a national level is huge. Two or more individuals are widely noted as delivering in several key areas (e.g. legal advice, accreditation of skills), but as an organisation

WWA does not command the desired respect internally or external to the movement (this is discussed in more detail in the next Chapter). The quality of work in some areas has markedly increased in the last twelve months, but it will take time for trust and respect for WWA to be rebuilt. The breadth of activities WWA seeks to undertake has arguably left the organisation under capacity and under performing. The organisation would benefit from a renewed focus.

## 8. Value for Money

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The extent to which the services and contribution of WWA represents value for money and are efficiently delivered are discussed in this Chapter. We think it is appropriate to consider, first, the apparent value for money of different elements of WWA support; then address the question of value for money of current arrangements by comparison with other possibilities.

### ***Economy***

Charities are regularly assessed and measured by the amount of the total budget spent on targeted 'good causes'<sup>41</sup>, which in this case we would define as expenditure on direct work with service users and preventative action. Care needs to be taken over definitions here, but one source of comparative data (Charity Facts, 2008) suggests: "*On average, of every £1 raised by a UK charity, 80p is spent on achieving the objectives of the charity, 20p on administration*" with many charities achieving substantially higher figures for direct work. The WAG found that women seeking refuge from domestic abuse costs £8,240,763 (WAG, 2006), although a large proportion of funding goes to organisations outside of WA, WWA nevertheless is a representative organisation for refuge services in Wales. In 2006/07 WWA received £357,185 of WAG funding for the salaries of the national team (not including the Helpline or the RCW who are now in post). This amounts to 4%. This suggests, in crude terms, WWA provides excellent value for money. However, direct comparisons of this nature are inherently difficult as WWA does not in itself control a budget nor deliver a service. Wider consideration needs to be given to the importance of its role in terms of adding value through a national focus, acting as a single voice to the Assembly and levering in additional funds (as discussed later).

Although large savings have been demonstrated at a local level across domestic abuse service (see Table 2), it is difficult to measure the outcomes of WWA as being an umbrella body the organisation is removed from direct service provision. It is hoped that the new Business Plan (mentioned in Chapter 5 will provide a starting point to measure organisational outputs and outcomes reliably).

### ***Added value through a national focus***

The engagement of member groups is the most complex aspect of WWA value for money. It is easy to argue that some local groups would continue to effectively support the WAG to achieve its domestic abuse strategy objectives without the

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<sup>41</sup> See, for example [www.intelligentgiving.com](http://www.intelligentgiving.com)

support of WWA. WWA is widely seen as improving but there is still a degree of dissatisfaction amongst local WA groups and external parties.

In Chapter 6 we discussed how WWA adds value, or could potentially add value at a national level. One of the main discussions centres on policy development and how WWA can inform WAG policy. We comment on how local WA groups contact WAG directly and independently contribute to NAFW calls for evidence and other WAG consultation exercises. If WWA were to coordinate their voices they would save WAG and NAFW officials time. For this situation to change and WWA bring added value local WA groups will need to value WWA as a central organisation, which at present is not the case as we have noted throughout the report.

Although WAG is the primary funder WWA has been successful in securing funding from a number of sources. If WWA did not exist it is arguable that the movement would not have levied these funds, in particular charitable funds from private sector companies as opposed to designated funding streams reserved for activities and service provision for specific issues.

### ***Other delivery models***

Comparing the value for money of current arrangements with possible alternatives raises the question of what would happen if WWA simply did not exist.

Other options might include a more localised set of support arrangements – regional networks are already very active. These arrangements might lose something in access to specialist support and overall consistency, but gain in terms of local responsiveness and, perhaps sharing of good practice.

### ***Demonstrating outcomes at a local level***

A minority of interviewees (including members of the national team and the executive) see a future role for WWA should be to support for local WA groups to demonstrate value for money. Several suggestions have been proposed.

It has been suggested that WA could survey service users at different points in time in order to measure distance travelled. Issues associated with contacting women once they have left the service (in order to be able to measure outcomes) are an issue for some local WA groups who see this as potentially putting women at risk. Contacting ex service users is requested of local WA groups who receive funds under Supporting People as a funding requirement - but in practice not all providers comply with this requirement.

In very recent months WWA has delivered two or more regional workshop sessions to local WA groups to improve understanding of what outcomes are, convey their

importance and ultimately to work in collaboration with the movement to define outcomes that are measurable. It was noted that hard outcomes in the context of refuge, outreach and floatation support can be difficult to collect and therefore groups would benefit by developing 'soft' outcome measures. Examples of appropriate outcome measures which were used to start discussions with local WA groups are listed below in relation to the support provided to service users:

- *"make them better able to identify and articulate what they want to do*
- *acknowledge their experience of domestic violence*
- *increase their skills or confidence in negotiation*
- *be more able to resist pressure exerted by their family*
- *increase their self-esteem*
- *be able to leave a violent partner or family*
- *be able to refuse to take part in forced marriage*
- *deal with anger and frustration, rather than self-harming*
- *recognise trigger points and avoid violence*
- *be more willing to contact the police and other sources of support".*

However these issues are very subjective and down to individual interpretation. It is difficult to shown value for money measures as many indicators are 'soft'. However, their importance cannot be underestimated as these 'soft' indicators may ultimately have repercussions in relation to 'hard' indicators (e.g. if a victim of domestic violence is given the strength to leave an abusive relationship, would this potentially have cost savings for the health system if it continued, or if children are involved and they see unhealthy behaviour as the norm).

### **Accountability**

A key feature of the domestic abuse agenda in that funding at both local and national level comes from a diverse range of sources. The CSD funds central activity and the Housing Directorate funds local groups but other monies are levered in from local authorities, partnerships with other agencies and the third sector - which itself may be in receipt of public funds. This evaluation had no remit to examine the totality of funding but we feel obliged to comment on the fact that there is no overall oversight of spending on domestic abuse response to prevention. We think this is a serious omission and the Assembly should consider mounting (through the Economic Advice Division (EcAD)) an exercise to map expenditures in this area and to implement an appropriate performance framework for domestic abuse intervention<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> We understand the CSD is currently considering how best to measure performance against the Assembly Domestic Abuse Strategy.

## **Conclusion**

In principle, as a central coordinating body there is huge scope for WWA to provide value for money by ensuring there is no duplication of effort at a local level, representing the movement at a national level, levying funds on behalf of the movement, etc. At present WWA does not demonstrate value for money.

WWA is not naturally accessible to standard value for money measures given the unique role it fulfils - it is not a deliverer nor a coordinator - but there needs to be some sort of accountability when spending public funds. As a result, the lack of key performance indicators and outcome indicators needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency and before the next spending period.

## 9. Conclusions & Recommendations

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The political context has changed dramatically. Women's issues and domestic abuse are high on the political agenda. WAG funds WWA to help the Assembly achieve its domestic abuse strategic objectives. WAG hopes to influence WWA to develop in a way which the WAG believe will best enable WWA to do this. Although WWA is willing to make the required changes (e.g. provide one voice for the movement, introduce minimum standards across local WA groups) its ability to do so is constrained by their lack of influence over local WA groups.

The relationships between WWA and local WA groups are complex – often harmonious and effective, sometimes less so. WWA is meeting the needs of many local member groups who welcome their support in terms of advice, guidance, training, campaigning and help provided by RCW's. However, the lack of engagement by some local member groups and indications of ineffectiveness and malpractice creates serious concerns and is limiting the capability of WWA as a national body.

'History' is holding WWA and many local groups back. A minority are also refusing to rise to the competition (e.g. providing direct 24 hour services) or work in partnership (e.g. attendance at local MARAC by some local WA groups is poor). Other providers are stepping into this breach. WWA is not doing local groups any favours by allowing them to set their own standards and/or avoid accountability. Although WWA has made steps to address these issues they have not yet been made with strong conviction. Funders will walk away from service providers who cannot demonstrate high levels of service delivery and satisfaction. It is too soon to comment on what impact WWA role as an ASP will have.

Historically, the governance of WWA has been thwarted by difficulties. WWA's governance arrangements have improved but further changes are needed to enable the organisation to find its niche. Key drivers for the improvement are changes to WWA management structure which has led to greater clarity between the roles of WWA staff and the Executive Board and the inclusion of external members in meetings. Obtaining a strong mix of skills and experience on the Executive Board is limited by restricting (voting) membership to staff from local WA member groups who face a number of barriers in standing for election. Changes to the composition and functioning of the Board are likely subject to the approval of a number of proposals at the AGM in September and additional WAG requirements (i.e. the request for a Business Plan). WWAs role as an ASP will bring new challenges and opportunities to the governance of WWA.

WWA's move to a hierarchy has resulted in major improvements but the organisations history is still a major cultural impediment to change. Today problems still remain evidenced by high turnover, high staff sickness absence and allegations against members of staff. Funding for core staff and the national office is limited. It is hoped the ASP role will be a key area of capacity building but initial indications show this is likely to swallow already scarce staff resource given the organisations wide remit. Improvements are planned and the appointment of a new Director renews optimism for some.

The quality of WWA work in some areas (e.g. policy contribution, accreditation of training) has markedly increased in the last twelve months, but it will take time for trust and respect for WWA to be rebuilt. The breadth of activities WWA seeks to undertake has arguably left the organisation under capacity and under performing. The organisation would benefit from a renewed focus.

Control and influence, especially in relation to standards of service is what WAG/local government and funders want. It is what they get from other "partner" organisations e.g. housing, police, social services who are all much more accountable. WWA has uneasy relationships with many of its partners stemming from its role as 'facilitator of a loose federation' rather than one which exerts influence.

The potential for a centralised body for domestic abuse services to add value at a national level is clear. However, the fragmentation of funding streams for domestic abuse related services has led to lower accountability procedures for organisations including WWA. Furthermore, WWA is not naturally accessible to standard value for money measures given the unique role it fulfils - it is neither a deliverer nor a coordinator - but there needs to be some sort of accountability when spending public funds. As a result, the lack of key performance indicators and outcome indicators needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency and before the next spending period.

The status quo is not acceptable. The context in which Women's Aid operates has moved on in terms of competition, the requirement for standards and accountability. A step change is needed in respect of WWA management, governance, and their relationship with the WAG, their partners and local member groups.

## **Recommendations**

Our overall recommendations are:

The WAG should look at accountability for domestic abuse services as a whole given the sizeable amount of public funding going into the service. The Department for Social Justice and the Housing Directorate in partnership with WWA should jointly

develop a clearer contractual basis for their work which contains objectively quantifiable outcomes as clearly measurable indicators of progress by WWA towards a set of WAG strategic goals.

WWA valued work (including legal advice and the accreditation project) should continue and the organisation should take forward plans existing plans to improve, (e.g. the development of a business plan, a skills analysis of the Board, the revision of internal policies, etc). WWA should also consider their activities in light of their resource capacity and a clear statement of what they do should be communicated to their partners and members. Most importantly, a membership agreement between local WA member groups and WWA should be implemented at the earliest opportunity. Those unwilling to sign or adhere by the agreement should be disaffiliated.

Local WA member groups should remain mindful of the changing context in which they operate and should work with WWA to demonstrate their hard and soft outcomes.

In more detail, our recommendations have been categorised against each Chapter heading:

***The relationship between WWA and WAG***

- i. The WAG (EcAD) should look at accountability for domestic abuse services as a whole given the sizeable amount of public funding going into the service.
- ii. The CSD should regularly consult with the Housing Directorate on the services it procures from WWA and associated expectations.
- iii. WAG (CSD and the Housing Directorate) in partnership with WWA should jointly develop a clearer contractual basis for their work with WWA – perhaps a Service Level Agreement – which contains objectively quantifiable outcomes as clearly measurable indicators of progress by WWA towards a set of WAG strategic goals. This should consider the services desired from WWA and conclude a definite agreement through which performance might be defined and assessed.
- iv. Meeting arrangements with Minister for SJLG should be formalised.
- v. WWA should initiate formal meeting arrangements with the Housing Minister.

### ***Governance arrangements***

- vi. The Board should prioritise the development and implementation of a Business Plan.
- vii. WWA should continue with a skills analysis of the Board. An action plan should be developed from this. The action plan needs to address serious concerns that with the predominance of local group representation there is insufficient external non-executive direction.
- viii. At elections voters should be made aware of the current skills and knowledge on the Board of Management and gaps or weaknesses should be made explicit. Where interested parties and nominees are low WWA should make concerted efforts to generate interest.
- ix. WWA should consult with members as to whether the organisation would benefit from additional external members and reducing the representation of local WA groups to 1 person per region and 1 deputy (or an alternative variation on this basis). In doing so WWA should inform groups of the advantages of doing so.
- x. Administrative support requirements of the ASP sub-committee should be regularly reviewed during 2008/09.
- xi. Opportunities to share knowledge between Executive Board Members and WWA personnel should continue to be taken.

### ***Management arrangements***

- xii. WWA should revisit personnel arrangements for undertaking the role of an ASP, and consider the feasibility of other staff members alleviating pressure from personnel who are directly involved.
- xiii. WWA should monitor the integration of the RCW with member groups and within the national team.
- xiv. If feasible, WAG should discuss with WWA the feasibility of seconding one or more their staff to support the national team to establish themselves as an effective ASP. Alternatively opportunities to work alongside current ASP organisations should be seized.
- xv. Short-term secondments from the national team to the WDAH (and vice versa where appropriate) should be encouraged.

***WWA added value at a national level***

- xvi. WWA should continue with their endeavour to revisit their mission, aims and organisational objectives, bearing in mind their resource capacity and the changing context in which they operate.
- xvii. WWA should continue to provide valued legal information to member groups and other interested parties more widely.
- xviii. WWA efforts to provide professional recognition for the skills and knowledge across the movement should continue.
- xix. WWA should openly define and communicate its focus to their stakeholders (i.e. the extent to which it is able to comment on violence against women issues more generally).
- xx. WWA should consider central coordination of promotional work.
- xxi. WWA should review its representation on national boards and working groups. The new Director should work closely with WWA's national partners and seek representation/regularly attend boards /forums as appropriate.
- xxii. The potential of WWA's website should be maximised. For example, WWA should identify individual staff members/Executive Board Members and make consultation responses accessible outside of the members only area of their website.
- xxiii. WWA should make proactive attempts to engage their counterparts elsewhere in the UK to share website resources, (in particular with WAFE).

***Relationship between WWA and local WA groups***

- xxiv. A contractual membership agreement between local WA member groups and WWA should be implemented at the earliest opportunity. WWA should make it explicit to local WA groups that those who are unwilling to sign or adhere (e.g. provide data) by the agreement should be disaffiliated. This should incorporate a set of minimum standards (not standardisation).
- xxv. Local WA groups should make best use of WWA. Importantly, to do this they should respond to data requests.

- xxvi. WWA should proactively contact and/or visit groups which are not engaging with their services and discuss the reasons behind this.
- xxvii. WWA should provide leadership and direction to groups over whether/how to engage with men as victims, perpetrators and colleagues. The lack of internal consensus needs to be formally assessed.
- xxviii. WWA communicate the importance of updating UK Refuges On-line to local groups.
- xxix. WWA should review their internal communication strategy and systems.

### **Value for money**

- xxx. A Value for Money Framework based on Key Performance Indicators and measurable or demonstrable outcomes should be developed in conjunction with the WAG CSD and Housing Directorate and other key stakeholders (e.g. members of All Wales Domestic Abuse Working Group) over the next 12 months.
- xxxi. WWA should explore opportunities to demonstrate value for money provided by the organisation. This quest will be made easier with the development of Key Performance Indicators (as mentioned above).
- xxxii. WWA should continue with efforts to encourage and support local WA groups to measure hard and soft outcomes.

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[www.barnardos.org](http://www.barnardos.org)

# **Appendix I**

## **Method Statement**

# Method Statement

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## Overview

The main steps in the research process were as follows:

- An examination of documentary evidence;
- A programme of interviews with:
  - WWA personnel;
  - WWA trustees<sup>43</sup> and external board members;
  - WAG officials;
  - a sample of national stakeholders.
- Case studies based in local groups;
- A web-based survey;
- Quantitative and qualitative analysis and reporting.

## Examination of documentary evidence

Secondary research included:

- A in-depth review of Welsh policy and service delivery;
- A review of academic reports;
- Analysis of annual reports, existing monitoring reports, management information systems and auditing data;
- A study of policy and practice elsewhere in the UK.

The research team are grateful for the support WWA offered in terms of meeting data requests, and providing time at their offices for a member of the team to look through documentation they provided.

The research team are also grateful to WWA for providing continuous access to the members area of their website throughout the course of the contract.

A list of key documents is included in the References Section at the back of this report.

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<sup>43</sup> Referred to as delegates within the movement

## **Programme of interviews**

In total nine interviews (out of a possible 10) were conducted with core personnel from WWA at their offices in Cardiff.

Interviews were also held with Regional Children's Workers (RCWs) either at CRG's offices or in the field. In total the research team interviewed five RCWs.

The Manager of the All Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline was also interviewed in north Wales office.

Two meetings took place with the Director of WWA close to the project inception and prior to her departure. It is regretful that a further meeting could not have taken place in order to discuss and explore our findings further. Her absence also restricted access to information we would have liked to have examined (e.g. succession plans, information relating to human resource issues and industrial relations).

All Executive Board Members were invited to participate in a face-to-face interview. These interviews took place either in local WA group offices or in their homes. In total 10 interviews were conducted (out of a list of 12), including two external board members. 2 members felt unable to add value to the evaluation as they were relatively new members of the Board.

Nearly all interviews with national stakeholders were conducted face-to-face and took place in their organisation offices. In total 10 interviews were conducted with representatives from:

- Police
- Tai Hafan
- Victim Support
- Llamau
- Cymorth
- NSPCC
- BAWSO
- RELATE

Interviews with WAG officials took place either at CRG's offices or at an WAG building. In total we conducted 4 interviews with key government officials representing the Community Safety Unit, Supporting People, and Health and Homelessness.

## **Case studies**

Case studies were used to illustrate and develop the key points arising from previous stages of the research programme.

Initially 8 local groups were carefully selected (based on the range of services they provide, their organisational structure and geographical representation) and invited to be the subject of a case study. The selection was discussed with the WAG and WWA in order to seek to cover partnerships deemed low/ high performing and a mix of those who have taken up significant levels of WWA support and those drawing on little or none. One local WA group was unable to participate due to staff shortages and so an additional group with broadly similar characteristics was selected and agreed to participate.

To undertake each of the case studies a member of the research team arranged to visit the local WA group in their area at a mutually convenient time and asked to speak to a range of staff (ideally representing different roles e.g. the Manager, a Refuge Worker and a Children's Worker). In three cases, time constraints meant some interviews had to concentrate on some topics only, but across the case study as a whole care was taken to ensure all issues were appropriately addressed.

Interviews with local WA group staff during case studies supplemented information on local WA groups and the support they receive from WWA collected through the programme of interviews with Executive Board Members.

Following the visit the research team arranged meetings with local stakeholders, for instance members of the local Supporting People Team. Primarily these interviews were undertaken via telephone.

In total the research team conducted 31 interviews with local WA group workers and interviewed representatives from six partner organisations.

In three instances time restrictions and shortage of meeting room space meant that rather than conduct one to one interviews we facilitated three small group discussions with 3 participants (on two occasions) and four participants of staff (on one occasion) from the same local WA group. In two of the three instances, a respondent from the group contacted the research team after the session to elaborate on their views as they felt unable to speak openly in the group context.

All interviews were based around the semi-structured topic guides given in the Appendix II. Standard qualitative research techniques were adopted to gather information about interviewees' opinions and perceptions (see, e.g. Robson, 2000). The following principles underpinned interviews:

- Maintaining strict anonymity; the majority of interviewees stressed that they wished their comments to be treated in this way;
- Using only skilled, experienced interviewers with good levels of familiarity with key issues;
- Fitting in with interviewees' schedules;

- Gathering 'hard' data rigorously; encouraging interviewees to provide 'softer' perceptions, opinions and interpretations too;
- Recording data in a structured way to allow for collation, cross-referencing, use for different purposes;
- 'Triangulating' data from different sources before reaching specific findings (for example, comparing local WA group staff comments with that of local partners and the RCW).

### **Web-based consultation**

A website consultation was also hosted by CRG to enable the views of local WA groups and stakeholders more widely to inform the evaluation.

All local WA groups were written to and e-mailed to inform them about the evaluation and signpost them to the website consultation.

Throughout our programme of interviews we also took the opportunity to encourage interviewees to inform their colleagues about the web consultation.

We are also grateful to Shelter Cymru, Cymorth and local authorities for promoting the website consultation through their networks. Without their support we would not have received such a high response from such a wide range of respondents.

The consultation was made available from CRG's homepage ([www.crgresearch.co.uk](http://www.crgresearch.co.uk)). The website consultation achieved 105 responses, including representation from a minimum of 15 local groups<sup>44</sup>, with 29 responses from individual workers. Seven respondents indicated that they would rather not say which group they worked for.

The website sought information relating to:

- Perceptions of WWA;
- Information provision and communication systems;
- Training and development provision;
- Support to local groups;
- Management of Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline;
- Management of UK Refuges Online for Wales;
- External national and local partnership working;
- Impact on housing, criminal justice and children's rights agendas;
- Appropriateness of governance and management structures;
- Cost effectiveness and value for money;
- Sustainability and future development.

## **Analysis and reporting**

The work programme provided a wealth of data which has been subjected to a thorough analytical process involving:

- Classifying issues identified in initial data collected from various sources, based on the research questions (listed in Chapter 1 of this report);
- Adding comments, reflection, etc.;
- Using this material to elaborate generalisations and hypotheses for further testing;
- Taking these generalisations and hypotheses into the field for testing and shaping the next wave(s) of data collection;
- Internal data sharing sessions for ensuring consistency in interpretations, identifying themes and emerging trends;
- Bringing this material together to provide drafts to be discussed with the Steering Group.

Quantitative data collected via the website consultations was analysed using specialist computer software.

## **SRA Guidelines**

Throughout the contract we have adhered by The Social Research Association Ethical Guidelines (2003). The research team have been mindful that *"neither consent from the subjects nor the legal requirements to participate absolves the social researcher from an obligation to protect the subject as far as possible against potentially harmful effects of participating"* (SRA, 2003, Section 4.4). In this report views reported as part of the research process have not been attributed any individual or organisation – and no such attribution should be attempted.