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## Communities and Culture Committee

Scrutiny Inquiry : Domestic Abuse

Response from Welsh Women's Aid



National Assembly for Wales

Communities and Culture Committee

Inquiry Into Domestic Abuse



WALES DOMESTIC ABUSE HELPLINE  
LLINELL GYMORTH CAMDRINIAETH YN  
Y CARTREF CYMRU

**0808 80 10 800**

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#### 1. Purpose

1.1 Welsh Women’s Aid (WWA) is the leading established national organisation in Wales dealing with domestic abuse. WWA is one of four UK Women’s Aid Federations and was founded in 1978 to campaign and lobby for improvements in public policy and government legislation in relation to women and children experiencing domestic abuse in Wales.

1.2. WWA is the national umbrella organisation with a membership of 34 local Women's Aid Groups situated throughout Wales. Our member groups provide emergency temporary accommodation, outreach and floating support, information and practical support on legal issues, benefits, housing, children’s issues and other matters related to the experience of domestic abuse. As a national organisation we also provide training, specialist support and information to affiliated groups and challenge and inform national policy on their behalf.

1.3 Welsh Women’s Aid also manages the Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline, a free 24 hour, bilingual, gender neutral and confidential helpline providing support and information on emergency accommodation, welfare and benefit rights, housing issues, legal issues, child welfare and perpetrator programmes.

## **2 Presentation of WWA views to the Committee**

- 2.1 As a national organisation Welsh Women's Aid, through its Director Elen Pierce, would be extremely interested in presenting the views in this response to the Committee in person and to answer any questions that the Committee may have after reading our detailed response. After having consulted with our member groups throughout Wales we have raised herein a number of issues and provided recommendations for the Committee and the Welsh Assembly Government to consider.

## **3 The cost of Domestic Violence**

- 3.1 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 physical injury, psychological consequences, long-term mental health issues, constrained socio-economic opportunities and wider social exclusion. It is estimated that the human and emotional cost of domestic abuse in England and Wales alone is £23 billion a year<sup>i</sup> and violence against women costs £40 billion a year.<sup>ii</sup> The Welsh Assembly Government<sup>iii</sup> found that women seeking refuge from domestic abuse costs £8,240,763 and has a net benefit of £47,946,346 to the Supporting People budget. The funding in Wales of women services dealing with violence against women in 2001 was £151.00 per 1,000 women, which equates to £0.15 per woman in Wales. In Northern Ireland it was £1.25 per woman and in England it was £0.49 per woman.<sup>iv</sup>

## **Protection and Support for Victims**

### **4 Definition of domestic abuse should be gender specific**

- 4.1 Welsh Women's Aid recommends that the definition of domestic abuse and violence is gender specific. The Welsh Assembly Government'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).
- 4.2 The present Welsh National Strategy definition which is being followed states '*Domestic Abuse is best described as the use of physical abuse...by a person who is or has been in a close relationship*'. The 'Tackling Domestic Abuse: The All Wales National Strategy' extends the definition saying that women and men can be victims of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse is a crime committed predominately against women, with 77% of victim's of domestic violence being women, and the government's definition should recognise this. Almost half of women in England and Wales experience domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking during their lifetime.<sup>v</sup> The Home Office Statistical Bulletin on intimate violence shows that women are more likely than men to have experienced domestic abuse, that they experience domestic abuse over a longer period of time compared to men, women are six times more likely to be killed by their partner, ex partner or lover than men<sup>vi</sup> (two women a week are killed by a partner or ex partner) and women are more likely to experience all types of intimate violence than men. Between April 2007 and March 2008 only 2% of calls to the

Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline were from male victims.<sup>vii</sup> By having a clear definition of domestic abuse and violence against women, society and statutory agencies in Wales will then better comprehend the significant abuse that women experience.

## **4.2 Recommendation**

WWA recommend that the government incorporate the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women as a definition. The UN defines it as '*any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women...*' This definition incorporates the fact that domestic abuse concerns the misuse of power and it highlights that it enhances the inequality against women.

## **5 An integrated strategy on ending violence against women**

- 5.1 Welsh Women's Aid recommends that the Welsh Assembly Government has a clear strategy to end violence against women, as has been incorporated by the Scottish Executive. The Scottish Executive has recently published a strategic framework on violence against women and the definition they have adopted is similar to the UN definition. While the UK Government signed up to the UN Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 and made commitments then to create a national action plan to address all forms of violence against women this has not been fulfilled. WWA support the End Violence Against Women (EVAW) campaign calling for the Government to build on the good work that it has done and develop a cross-department strategy to end violence against women.
- 5.2 By having an integrated approach WWA believe it will be cost and time efficient and it will ensure that the energy of vital voluntary organisations is spent helping and supporting women in need, instead of wasting time and energy in reapplying every year for existing and new funding streams. There are a number of benefits to having a strategic approach to ending violence against women, which are clearly set out and explained in the second 'Making the Grade' launched by EVAW in November 2006.<sup>viii</sup> These benefits include; better inter-agency working, raised awareness of the problem, more effective legislation and policies and innovative practice.

## **6 Gender Equality**

- 6.1 The Gender Equality Duty requires all public bodies in Wales to demonstrate that they are taking active steps to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment, and promote equality of opportunity between men and women. The Code of Practice, for the Duty, advises public authorities to prioritise action to address the most significant gender inequalities within their remit and to take actions that are likely to deliver the best gender equality outcomes.
- 6.2 The Equality and Human Rights Commission have recognised that domestic abuse is one of the most serious forms of gender inequality. Trevor Phillips the Chairman of the Equality of Human Rights Commission has recently written<sup>ix</sup> that more needs to be done around violence against women because '*there is evidence of an undeclared war against some women*'. A number of local

authorities in Wales are not aware of the Gender Equality Duty and the fact that violence against women is a form of discrimination. The Equality and Human Rights Commission have put all public authorities and local councils on notice because if they do not have Schemes covering domestic abuse they will be named publicly to ensure more is done on this issue on a local and national level.

## **7 Need for specialist refuges in Wales**

- 7.1 In Wales sustainable funding should be made available to specialised refuge services to enable them to accommodate women who have experienced domestic abuse and have additional needs such as mental health problems, alcohol or drugs misuse, disabilities or who presents a risk, or potential risk, to children or have a criminal record.
- 7.2 Welsh Women's Aid are concerned that non-specialised providers, such as housing associations, are receiving contracts and they are not providing, or are unable to provide, the specialised service that they promise. Housing associations are taking over domestic abuse services but are not providing specialist refuges because of the extra cost of providing this service and therefore they are not accommodating women with complex needs. Refuges which are not specialist are currently unable to accommodate women who have additional mental health issues, women who have misused alcohol or who used illegal substances. Resources need to be identified to ensure that there are appropriate levels of support for women who have experienced domestic abuse and have other complex problems. Specialised domestic abuse services and dedicated workers dealing with these issues are needed due to the number of women who experience domestic abuse and have other complex needs.
- 7.3 Disabled women are twice more likely to experience domestic abuse than non-disabled women.<sup>x</sup> 6% of women in refuges in Wales were disabled in the year 2006/07.<sup>xi</sup> In regards to mental health, women who have experienced domestic abuse are at least three times more likely to experience depression or anxiety disorder than other women and between 50% and 60% of female mental health service users have experienced domestic abuse.<sup>xii</sup> In 2006 – 2007, 17% of women in refuges in Wales had mental health issues and 4% of women self harmed.<sup>xiii</sup>
- 7.4 One of our member groups, WAIMON, conducted research in 2007 to identify any gaps in service provisions for women experiencing domestic abuse. 22 WWA groups responded to the questionnaire and all the member groups commented on the inadequate resources in their area. A number of groups stated that it was difficult to access services for women with mental health problems, there were no local counseling services for women experiencing domestic abuse and there are gaps in refuge provision for women who have drug and/or alcohol issues. Local services do not have the capacity to meet the needs of women who are experiencing domestic abuse and have other complex problems.

## **8 Women only services**

- 8.1 A number of our members and other women only services are under a great deal of pressure. A number of our member groups have been asked by their local authority to open their doors to both women and men. There is no evidence to support for the claim that our member groups or other refuge providers should make their services available to men but there is clear evidence to show that if services are mixed this may deter women from accessing support. Research shows over 90% of women support a woman's right to access women-only services and professionals if reporting domestic or sexual violence.<sup>xiv</sup> Safety, both physical and emotional, is a key benefit of women-only services. As a result, women feel supported and comfortable. They become empowered and develop confidence, greater independence and higher self-esteem. They are less marginalised and isolated and feel more able to express themselves. Women using these services feel that their voices are heard and listened to.
- 8.2 Research also shows that women-only services have positive impacts on society. For example, they enable women to better support their families. Many go on to work or volunteer for the voluntary and community sector as a result of feeling more empowered, having greater skills, improved confidence and being more politicised. The economic benefits of women-only services are likely to be significant, saving the state millions of pounds per year, such as through improving women's job opportunities or through preventing re-victimisation (e.g. domestic abuse) or health problems arising or worsening.
- 8.3 Having a mixed service could also put women at risk; heterosexual men who access men's services were actually more likely to be a perpetrator (either the main abuser or involved in 'common couple violence', meaning he and his female partner were abusive to one another) than a survivor.<sup>xv</sup> In addition it is clear that the Gender Equality Duty does not mean that single sex services should be cut, or that services should necessarily be provided on the same scale for both men and women. Women make up the majority of victims of domestic abuse and rape, therefore it would not be appropriate for a local council to fund or provide refuge services on an equal basis for men and for women or put pressure on established women only services to provide services to men. As the need for men services are a small percentage of current services required for those who have experienced domestic abuse, a way to avoid these generic services is to regionalise services for men cross boundary.

## **9 Sexual offences and voluntary organisations supporting women who have experienced rape**

- 9.1 While Welsh Women's Aid members specialise in supporting women who have experienced domestic abuse there are other offences, such as sexual assault, which is closely linked to domestic abuse. The need for core services for women who have experienced sexual assault is important to WWA due to the link between domestic abuse and sexual assault. 13% of women in WWA refuges between April 2006 and March 2007 had been sexually abused.<sup>xvi</sup> The British Crime Survey shows 56% of rapes are committed by a current or former partner, with 45% of rapes taking place in the victim's home.<sup>xvii</sup>

- 9.2 While it is clear that supporting victims has become more of a government priority and there has been a great deal of strategic work around sexual abuse with the investment in Sexual Assault Referral Centres, core funding still needs to be made available to voluntary organisations and helpline's that provide assistance to rape survivors. The development of provision for victims-survivors of sexual assault has historically been piecemeal and locally specific. Rape Crisis Centres (RCCs) and, more recently, Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs), have been established in certain parts of the UK but there is a lack of uniformity. Both RCCs and SARCs are vital for survivors and delivery of policy targets. While there are four SARCs in Wales there is only one Rape Crisis Centre in the whole of Wales, based in north Wales. Rape Crisis Centers are inadequately funded and they have to apply for funding on an annual basis. There needs to be reliable core funding made available either at a central or a local government level.
- 9.3 Due to the lack in funding the number of Rape Crisis Centres has dramatically decreased. In 1985 there were 84 Rape Crisis Centres in England and Wales, today there are 32, despite the fact that the number of cases of rape recorded by the police has dramatically increased. In 1980, 1,225 cases of rape were recorded to the police in England and Wales. Between April 2004 and March 2005, the total number of rapes of women recorded by the police has increased ten fold to 13,322. In 1980 one in three reported rapes ended in conviction while in 2005 it is one in 20.<sup>xviii</sup> In addition to these statistics, only 15% of rapes are reported to the police each year, so there are over 100,000 women who are raped each year who do not report it to the police.
- 9.4 As stated above Wales have four SARC but only one Rape Crisis Centre. The need for both services is extremely important for women who have experienced sexual assault. As the briefing 'Not either/or but both/and: Why we need Rape Crisis Centres *and* Sexual Assault Referral Centres'<sup>xix</sup> shows there are clear similarities but also differences between Rape Crisis Centres and SARC and that is why it is vital in Wales that both are maintained.
- 9.5 Due to the fact RCCs address historical sexual abuse, which affects a significant proportion of their service users, as well as more recent rape and sexual assault, RCCs have no criteria on when someone has to have experienced sexual violence in order to be eligible. They have also historically tried to provide support for as long as it was needed. Referrals are made by agencies and individuals, many of whom do not want to report their assault to the police. SARCs serve both female and male victims-survivors. Because one of their key roles is to provide forensic examinations, SARCs work with those who have recently assaulted. As forensic evidence deteriorates quickly, the painstaking and uncomfortable examination becomes less and less useful the more time has passed since the assault.
- 9.6 As stated above, while Wales have a number of SARCs there is a clear need for funding to be made available to ensure more Rape Crisis Centres are able to open.



## Recommendations

- Core funding for Rape Crisis Centre.
- Sexual assault telephone helpline.
- Education campaign around rape and sexual assault should be carried out. The recent British Crime Survey found that 43% of people thought too little was being done about rape.

## 10 Lack of provision in Wales for trafficking, prostitution and other violence against women support services

- 10.1 As the recent Map Of Gaps<sup>xx</sup> indicates there is a clear postcode lottery in access to basic support services for women in the UK. This postcode lottery is hugely costly, both to the lives of individual women and to society broadly. There are 52 violence against women support services in Wales, majority of these services (38) being for women experiencing domestic abuse. While Wales have a number of domestic abuse services we have no services for BME women in Mid or West Wales, one rape crisis centre in North Wales, one service for women experiencing prostitution, trafficking and sexual exploitation. The Map of Gaps indicates that *'in Wales, strong domestic violence provision...indicates that the domestic abuse policy has had an impact. However, the lack of voluntary/ third sector sexual violence services suggest that this needs to be extended to all forms of violence against women'*<sup>xxi</sup> and as recommended previously that there is an integrated strategy on ending violence against women.
- 10.2 WWA is finding itself increasing pressured to speak on wider issues of violence against women, despite being a domestic abuse focussed 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. Furthermore, whilst we welcome the increased media and public attention given to these issues and are grateful for the opportunity to highlight the need for an integrated strategy for combating all forms of violence against women, WWA feels that such queries are best answered by dedicated service providers. However, WWA's view is that the lack of such Wales-wide service provision in areas such as prostitution, rape/sexual violence and human trafficking has given rise to these occurrences in the first place.

## 11 Criminal protection

- 11.1 While the police receive a call out for a domestic abuse incident every minute of every day this is still only a small percentage of the number experiencing domestic abuse. A number of women every year do not contact the police for many reasons. The latest Home Office statistical bulletin<sup>xxii</sup> stated that;
- Only 16% of women abused by their partner reported the abuse to the police.

- In 32% of cases where the police came to know about the abuse, no action was taken.
- 29% of victims thought domestic abuse is 'just something that happens', and not necessarily a crime.
- Only 11% of sexual assault victims report the assault to the police.
- The main reason given for not reporting the serious sexual assault to the police was that they did not want more humiliation (24%) and 22% did not think the police could help.

11.2 These statistics are worrying for many reasons. Firstly due to the fact that victims do not report the abuse to anyone indicates there are hundreds of thousands of women experiencing in silence. Secondly the fact that only a small percentage of women who experience domestic abuse go to the police indicates that many perpetrators are not made accountable for their actions. There are many reasons why this crime still goes unreported. The most common reasons are that many women fear that they are not going to be believed or taken seriously, they think that the police only respond to physical assault, the fear that by reporting it to the police it will provoke further or greater violence against them, they may not want their partner/ ex-partner taken to court and they fear that their children will be taken away from them.

11.3 In regards to criminal protection it is also difficult to know how many domestic abuse incidents there are every year. Due to the fact there is no separate recorded offence classification for domestic abuse it is difficult for the police to see the prevalence of domestic abuse and the data is not always accurate due to variations in recording practices between different police authorities. There is no specific offence of domestic abuse. As a result of this it is very difficult for the criminal justice agencies to collect relevant data surrounding offences that come within domestic abuse.

## **12 Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) and Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVA's)**

12.1 In recent years the Home Office has spent millions of pounds rolling-out Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) as the 'solution' to tackling domestic abuse. Welsh Women's Aid fully welcomes both IDVAs and MARACs as a way of protecting women experiencing domestic abuse and supporting them. We are however concerned, that they are being seen as the solution for domestic abuse and will become the sole form of support for survivors of domestic abuse. MARACs are only intended to provide assistance to women who are of high risk, so only supporting a very small percentage of women experiencing domestic abuse (roughly 10%).

12.2 WWA support the important work that the IDVA service provides but we do have concerns around the policy development in regards to the focus on high-risk criminal justice initiatives where local outreach services are being replaced by IDVA services for 'high-risk' only victims, because that is the only funding stream available. Women who experience domestic abuse have a variety of short- and

long-term support needs. Practical and emotional support to enable survivors to re-build their lives can best be given by a range of specialist independent domestic abuse services within the voluntary sector. This includes refuge accommodation, outreach and floating support services, advice and advocacy projects, IDVAs hosted by specialist independent domestic abuse service providers, and services for children and young people. In areas which have IDVA services, Women's Aid groups still continue to support hundreds of women each year as well.

- 12.3 In the light of this and based on evidence from the recent review of Specialist Domestic Violence Courts,<sup>xxiii</sup> it is paramount that IDVAs are located in 'an agency where their independence and focus on client safety is demonstrable to both victims and other agencies'. Independence from the Criminal Justice System and other statutory agencies is key to ensuring women have confidence in the service and will improve levels of engagement.
- 12.4 In addition MARACS have been rolled out to all regions in Wales. While MARAC's have increased survivor's safety they do not always recognise and respect the victim's self determination and autonomy. This has been noted as a concern by some of our members as there is a danger that victims are now not allowed to be active in their own safety planning. An additional concern is the fact that some women who have experienced domestic abuse are not aware that their case is being discussed in the MARAC. In addition MARACs do not acknowledge other preventative and protective services for high, medium and low risk victims e.g. refuge and other outreach services.

## **12.5 Recommendation**

Welsh Women's Aid recommends that;

- The Welsh Assembly hold a centralised contact details for all IDVA and DA co-ordinators in Wales to ensure partnership working between them and voluntary organisations continue and information is shared between agencies on a local and national basis.
- IDVAs must be accountable to the independent agency, not to statutory agencies or their committees.
- The Assembly should carry out an independent evaluation of all MARACs in Wales.
- All MARACs in Wales should follow the basic model for MARACs as developed in Cardiff and by co-ordinated action against domestic abuse (CAADA). There needs to be consistency and a minimum standard in regards to MARAC's running throughout Wales.
- The CAADA risk assessment modal should be used by all agencies referring to a MARAC

## **13 Specialist Domestic Violence courts**

- 13.1 Welsh Women's Aid are pleased that Wales has 11 Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVC). The SDVC have led to an increase in conviction rates, fall in the number of victims retracting their statements and an increase in the number of

perpetrators pleading guilty to the offence.<sup>xxiv</sup> However, while the SDVC have been successful as research shows there is a difference between what criminal justice sees as a success and what victims see as success. Doctor Amanda Robinson has reported in her research, *Measuring Success in Specialist Domestic Violence Courts*, *'it is argued here that these courts also need to re-orient themselves away from typical criminal justice performance measures (such as arrests, prosecutions and convictions) and towards measuring what matters to the service users themselves (in this case, victims of domestic violence). They must do so because case progression and sentencing practices are variable across the courts, but even if they were consistent, these measures still would not help us identify 'success' from a victim perspective. The implications of this change are substantial because what matters to victims is often very different to what matters to police, prosecutors, magistrates and/or judges.'*<sup>xxv</sup> The traditional criminal justice indicators will not do on their own in domestic abuse cases. Criminal Justice agencies need to speak with victims so that they know what the victim wants to achieve by going through the process. By speaking to victims the criminal justice agencies can understand that the best outcome for the victim may be a greater understanding of the criminal justice system; that the crime that they have experienced is recognised but that they may not want their partner/ ex partner punished by being sent to prison, the reasons for this having been discussed previously. Criminal Justice outcomes are not always proxy to victim's safety and satisfaction. As Dr Robinson research indicates 'victims want to have their stories listened to and believed by respectful and well-trained professionals; they want to receive timely information about the progression of the case through the SDVC; and that they want the violence/abuse to cease'. Advocacy is an essential aspect of the process to get victims views across to the Court and monitoring both criminal justice outcomes and victim's outcomes are extremely important.

## **14 Civil system**

- 14.1 The Civil System through the family courts deal with approximately three times the volume of cases of criminal courts in relation to domestic abuse. 30,000 injunctions were ordered in 2007 compared to 10,000 criminal court cases. There are many reasons why women chose to go down the civil route, mainly due to the fact that they just want protection from the abuse that they are experiencing and do not want to punish the perpetrator or get the police involved. Due to the significant number of vulnerable people going through the Civil System it is vital that women are able to get Legal Aid to get protection and there is confidence in the system. Since April 2007 it has been easier for women to get legal aid when she is seeking protection;<sup>xxvi</sup> however Welsh Women's Aid does have a number of other concerns dealing with legal aid, mainly due to the cut backs in civil legal aid.
- 14.2 There have been a number of cut backs to civil legal aid in the past couple of years. In 1999 – 2000 spending was at £564 million while in 2002 -2003 it fell to £483 million. A number of our member groups have raised concerns in regards to the number of women that they support who are not entitled to legal aid and they are not protected by the legal aid system especially in child contact cases. As well as the cut backs in legal aid funding, WWA are concerned by the fact that

the Legal Aid system is under increasing strain because fewer lawyers are prepared to do the work on the terms proposed under the Lord Carter report. There is a serious decline in the take-up of legal aid as a career and this has already affected a number of our member groups resulting in the women that they support being unrepresented. Research by the Law Society in December 2006 indicated that the proposed Government legal aid reform could seriously affect recruitment of legal aid lawyers, blocking access to justice. A Law Society online survey showed that 58% of legal aid solicitors believe that the number of trainee solicitors recruited to their firm will decrease if Government legal aid reforms are implemented. Almost half (45%) believe that there will be substantial reduction in recruitment. In relation to recruitment of qualified solicitors 77% thought that recruitment would decrease including 53% who envisaged substantial decrease. WWA have concerns in regards to this because there will not be a sufficient number of suitably qualified lawyers to undertake legal aid work in the future. There are also a number of areas in Wales where there are 'legal aid deserts' due to the fact that there are no legal aid practitioners available for miles. This is clearly apparent when it comes to firms providing specialist immigration advice for clients. The Legal Services Commission has got five firms providing immigration advice in the whole of Wales. Four of these firms are based in Cardiff and Newport and only one is based in North Wales, in Wrexham. A number of our member groups have informed us that when they are supporting women who are applying for indefinite leave under the domestic violence rules to remain some have to travel up to four hours to have an appointment with a solicitor.

### **14.3 Recommendations**

- Legal Services Direct provides advice over the phone on family law issues such as child contact and injunctions.
- Standard training should be provided to all Solicitors on domestic abuse.

## **15 Issues around housing**

- 15.1 The main issue that is prevalent across Wales is that there is an inconsistent service from Local Authorities, which is through Social Services, Housing and Homelessness and Supporting People. Local Authorities are not using the legislation and guidance in the spirit and purpose it was set out for, this is causing distress to women and children who have experienced domestic abuse and are they further being abused by those local authority staff who continues to do this.

## **16 Support of supporting people**

- 16.1 Supporting People has improved services for service users but there are issues of funding services being cut, due to lack core funding for some posts. The changing role of staff does not allow for security and staff retention so as to provide a consistent service to users.
- 16.2 The only issue that causes concern is the fact that local authority is forcing WA groups to stick to regulations rigidly. In an environment such as domestic abuse,

where groups are dealing with individuals who have had traumatic lives not every woman and child fits into the rigid categories of Supporting People. Women and children may need support for a number of months or a number of years; this cannot be easily defined as it depends on the individuals.

- 16.3 It does not allow for the flexibility needed when working with women and children who have experienced domestic abuse, rigid timescales for working with service users do not allow for the individual needs of the service users.

## **17 Redistribution of supporting people funds**

- 17.1 There are issues with the redistribution of SP funds throughout Wales; agencies are worried that services provided by smaller organisations will be cut if funding is reduced in their Local Authority area. It is unclear how the redistribution will work and what services will be affected in those authorities that will lose SP funds. It is also unclear as to how the Welsh Assembly will ensure fairness when redistributing the funds, will the larger authorities get more funding and the smaller rural authorities lose out and therefore much needed rural provision will be lost.
- 17.2 England has clearly had issues with supporting people funding, one example being that of an organisation that was given SP funding to provide a support service and it was found that the majority of the staff were Thai workers who could speak very little English and had no formal training or qualifications in order to provide the service. The service users were put at risk and could not put across their needs to the workers as there were language issues. The lack of ring fencing has led to the lack of specialist provision in England and organisations can no longer afford to employ suitably trained and qualified workers. The Local Authorities are setting their own tariffs and awarding contracts to those who are the cheapest. The only people losing out are the service users, they get poor quality service from staff that are not trained or qualified to deal with their needs appropriately.

## **18 Move on accommodation**

- 18.1 The lack of move on accommodation and new social housing being built has led to the women and their children having to remain in refuge for longer periods of time. This has a knock on effect for women who need help by blocking much needed spaces.
- 18.2 Women may be ready to move on to their own home, and no longer be in need of support are increasingly having to remain in refuge. The lack of affordable social housing is an issue that affects all homeless people. Local Authorities are turning to private rented accommodation; this may not be suitable for all homeless people. Private rented accommodation does not provide security and stability and for women who have suffered domestic abuse security and stability is a clear need and want.

## **19 Funding from Local Authorities**

- 19.1 There is an inconsistency in the funding provided to WA groups throughout Wales. Women's Aid Groups provide additional support services and accommodation that alleviate the statutory pressures on Housing and Social Services, this unfortunately is not acknowledged by all Local Authority's.

## **20 Accredited support provider**

- 20.1 WWA became an ASP to give the groups a choice of regulatory bodies. WWA have a better understanding of the provision to Women and children who have suffered Domestic Abuse and therefore can provide a more coherent approach to WA Groups. It allows WWA to look at standardisation of services and a minimum standard across Wales. It will strengthen the umbrella body to provide more coherent service to its member groups.

## **21 Standards, commissioning and tendering**

- 21.1 WWA is looking at setting service standards for DA services throughout Wales to ensure that a woman receiving services can expect the same level of service throughout Wales. Commissioning and tendering is a good way to ensure services are best value but commissioning agents tend to look at the savings they can make by giving the services to the cheapest provider, rather than the providers who clearly represent the best cost and benefit to the service user. It is a concern that Commissioners may be more concerned with how cheaply they can get those services than with the service user getting quality services.

## **22 Sanctuary schemes**

- 22.1 Sanctuary schemes are ideal for women who wish to remain in their home; it identifies the security needs and enables the woman with choices.
- 22.2 There are a few problems with this scheme: The current law is insufficient because where a perpetrator will not move out of the house there is no criminal legislation that forces him to leave, to enable the woman and children to remain in their home with the family and friends support network that they have. Some local authorities are using the scheme to give women a lack of choice, women are not being given the options available to them; they are being forced to take the sanctuary scheme rather than being able to move to a place of safety. It is understandable that a lack of affordable housing is an issue but gate-keeping to restrict women's choices is not an acceptable option as it puts women at risk.

## **23 Abolition of 'no recourse to public funds'**

- 23.1 WWA recommend that the no recourse to public funds during the two year 'probationary period' should be abolished where domestic abuse is established and she had been admitted to refuge. By allowing women to receive public funds

during the two year period would mean that less women will return to their abusive partners and the voluntary organisations resources are not diminished.

- 23.2 The no recourse to public funds forces many women to return to their abusive partner and their family due to the fact that she is financially dependent on them. Many women are unable to seek work because of the abuse they have experienced and many women do not speak, or are not allowed to learn English. In addition, a large proportion of women who come to Britain with their partners are financially dependent on their violent partner, they rarely have any documentation or proof of identity and they are reluctant for refuges to contact the Home Office as they are scared that they will get deported due to the fact that their violent partner has used this as part of the threats and abuse against them.
- 23.3 Adequate support and safety for women with no recourse to public funds continues to be a major concern. Large numbers of women and children still have no access to housing and subsistence support despite vulnerability. Local Authorities remain inconsistent in how they apply statutory criteria, where support for no recourse remains very much a post-code lottery being dealt with largely by specialist and some mainstream refuges.
- 23.4 There is a huge inconsistency in the level of service a woman without recourse to public funds can receive, community care assessments are not carried out in all cases due to the lack of understanding from social services as to their duties under the Community Care Act and Section 21 of National Assistance Act 1948. Social Services are not supporting the woman, although they do sometimes support a woman who has children under the Children's Act 2004. Despite case law there is still a poor understanding of their duties to women without recourse to public funds.
- 23.5 There is a lack of clear guidance for all agencies on how they deal with a woman without recourse to public funds. Some social services departments have stated that a woman is not destitute if she is in refuge, therefore forcing the majority of WA Groups to say that they cannot take a Woman without recourse to public funds. That means that there are a large number of women who have been abused who have nowhere to go. The 2 units provided within BAWSO are far from fulfilling the need that has been identified across Wales. Women's Aid Groups across Wales supported 23 women between April 2006 and March 2007 at a cost to their reserves.
- 23.6 This leaves groups with huge losses for rent, the provision of general need items such as food and clothing are left to donations from others. This isn't appropriate for women who have left one controlling relationship only to find that they can't make choices of what they do each day or what they buy, food or clothing, as they are reliant on the generosity of others.
- 23.7 The no recourse rule has a detrimental effect on women trying to survive with a family in the UK and has a significant impact on refuges in Wales. Refuges are continuing to struggle to meet the rental costs of women and thus only able to accommodate a quota of 2 per refuge per year, at most. 2% of women in WWA refuges between April 2006 – March 2007 had no recourse to public funds, and



one of our member groups, BAWSO supported 47 women with no recourse between April 2006 and September 2006. Currently women with no recourse are solely dependent on charities so this has significant implications on their resources. On average our member groups spend £4,500 per annum supporting women with no recourse to public funds. The £5,000 that the Home Office gave WWA as part of the last resort fund in 2005 was spent immediately. The cost of supporting one woman and her children for BAWSO is £15,000 per annum, and in some cases can be significantly higher.

23.8 Children also suffer by the no recourse to public funds rule because it prevents many women, if they leave, from accessing protection, housing or welfare benefits. While local authorities have a statutory power to make appropriate provisions for children to ensure that their needs are met this is subject to interpretation. Some local authorities pay for the housing and subsistence costs for women with children to live in refuge whilst others discharge their duty by taking the children into care.

### 23.9 Recommendations

WWA recommend exempting women fleeing violence from the no recourse to public funds requirement. Housing providers, including local authorities and refuge organisations, should be allowed to apply for both Housing Benefit and Income Support for women fleeing domestic violence. This would cover accommodation and subsistence costs. This will also enable them to leave and access safety and support.

23.9i If the first recommendation is not considered, our second recommendation is that the Last Resort Fund must be reinstated to provide immediate interim funding for refuge organisations. WWA recommend that if some money could be made available to women it would mean that the voluntary organisation would be able to find housing association or rented accommodation for women which would save them money because rented accommodation costs less than staying in refuge.

23.9ii We recommend that the Assembly consider the conclusions in the 'No Recourse' No Safety The Government's failure to protect women from violence' written by Amnesty International and Southall Black Sisters. The report clearly indicates that the UK Government is failing in its international obligations and states that '*women with insecure immigration status face continuous abuse of their fundamental human rights. They are denied access to essential services which are necessary for protection from abuse, such as emergency housing and basic welfare benefits*'.<sup>xxvii</sup> The report recommends that the Welsh Assembly Government do should do the following<sup>xxviii</sup>

- Guaranteeing the right of women with uncertain immigration status fleeing violence or its threat in the UK, access to crisis, temporary and permanent accommodation, specialist support services and essential financial support by: exempting women fleeing violence from the no recourse to public funds requirement.

- To put in place immediate emergency funding to help women across the UK, while the permanent solution of exempting women fleeing violence from the no recourse to public funds requirement is put in place.
- Where relevant that Local Authorities, Councils, Housing Executives and Government Departments provide support (including financial support) to women with uncertain immigration status fleeing violence. Support should include providing the means for women to access safe accommodation and other support services they may need as victims of gender based violence.
- That information on the number and needs of women and girls with uncertain immigration status fleeing violence is gathered systematically by all relevant agencies.

## **24 Benefit claims of women fast tracked**

- 24.1 WWA believe that it is extremely important that women who are in refuge receive their benefits, especially housing benefits, as soon as possible. The inability to support themselves financially is a real barrier to making the decision to leave an abusive relationship. WWA recommend that benefit claims of women who are admitted to refuge are fast tracked to enable them to have resources. At present the delay in receiving benefits, and especially housing benefits, puts significant pressure on charitable organisations resources. Welsh Women's Aid's statistics report<sup>xxix</sup> shows that 94% of women in refuge are on benefits. Without women's benefits being fast tracked, significant strain is placed on charitable organisations resources. To prevent this occurring WWA recommend that when submitting their benefits claim, women who are in refuge have the opportunity, by ticking a box, to have their claim fast tracked.

## **25 Health**

- 25.1 The Domestic Abuse Strategy needs to link with the Health and Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan. There needs to be a consistent and accessible service for mental health substance misuse and counselling for women and specifically for children who have suffered domestic abuse. The waiting lists for these services across Wales are currently 3 months – 2 years varying on the service and the area. Women and children need to have this immediate access to ensure that they are given every possible opportunity to empower them to move forward with their lives and escape the abuse and homelessness cycle.
- 25.2 Many mental health services, specifically those for young people are refusing to take women and children on waiting lists due to the transient nature of domestic abuse, therefore women and children are being discriminated against because they are in refuge.
- 25.3 Access for excluded women and children is also an issue, where do these women and children go to access services?
- 25.4 Access to primary health care such as doctors and dentists are still an issue for groups with many services refusing to take patients that will be a burden on their

finances because they have health issues such as long term illnesses, mental health or alcohol issues. Welsh Women's Aid's statistics show that women who experience domestic abuse have the inability to access a range of services throughout Wales.<sup>xxx</sup> 20% of women have problems accessing a doctor, 9% a dentist, 8% mental health agencies as well as schooling, counseling, drug and alcohol and other services. In addition to the women experiencing domestic abuse, children also have significant problems accessing different services. 6% of children have problems accessing the dentist, 4% schooling, 3% doctor as well as counseling and mental health services.

- 25.5 Domestic abuse has a significant impact on the health service. The total cost of domestic abuse on the health care service has been calculated at £1.2 billion a year.<sup>xxxi</sup> Around 30% of domestic abuse begins during pregnancy. Abuse is more common for pregnant women than gestational diabetes or pre-eclampsia.<sup>xxxii</sup> The impact of domestic abuse during pregnancy is recognised to be a significant contributory factor to maternal and fetal mortality and morbidity, so the indicator surrounding birth rates could be considered. In relation to Welsh Women's Aid statistics, 5% of women in refuge were pregnant between April 2006 – March 2007.

## Welsh Women's Aid as a Support Service

### 26 WWA website

- 26.1 Welsh Women's Aid has a dedicated website for information, advice and support for anyone experiencing domestic abuse; as well as for anyone working within the field of domestic abuse. In addition WWA have a page for details of Group contacts and various links for other organisations, which are non-specific to domestic abuse.
- 26.2 In WWA member's area, we provide Groups with specialist information regarding Training, Children and Young People, Legal Issues and Updates, Annual Conference and events, and information regarding the Criminal Records Bureau. There is also a facility whereby Groups can create their own Forum messages and threads, to communicate with other groups, whom they may not usually have contact with.
- 26.3 Since the launch of the Website on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2007, there have been 83,583 hits, with 240 being the average number of sessions per day. There have also been 3,950 sessions on the member's area. The most popular page on the website is the page giving Group contact details (See Fig.1).

Fig. 1

Page	No. of Hits
<b>Member Group Contact Details</b>	<b>27,184</b>
<b>Links to other organisations</b>	<b>15,840</b>
<b>Publications</b>	<b>10,500</b>
<b>WWA Staff logging into CMS</b>	<b>7,121</b>
<b>Jobs and Volunteering vacancies</b>	<b>7,108</b>
<b>Information on emotional abuse</b>	<b>6,947</b>

#### 26.4 Contact Us

Welsh Women's Aid operates a 'Contact Us' form on the website for anyone requiring information, advice or support (see Fig.2). The direct link for this form is <http://www.welshomensaid.org/contactus/index.html>.

Since 24<sup>th</sup> September 2007, 117 people have contacted Welsh Women's Aid via the 'Contact Us' form (see Fig.3).

**Fig. 3**

<b>Categories of Contact</b>	<b>No. of contacts</b>
Children's	1
Group Info (General)	14
Group Info (Volunteering)	16
Housing	5
Legal Issues	9
Media/Communications	17
Miscellaneous	22
Statistics	2
Service Users	25
Training	3
ASP	2
Personnel/Policies/Other Issues	1
<b>Total Contacts</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>Repeat Contacts (not incl in Total contacts)</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Repeat Contacts as Percentage</b>	<b>20%</b>

- 26.5 Service users made up 22% of all enquiries over a period of less than 6 months. Contacts by service users in this time period, however, did not include enquiries from service users regarding specific issues – i.e. Housing Issues or Legal Issues. Both Housing and Legal Issue enquiries made up 4% and 7% of enquiries respectively. Service User contacts also do not include those contacts we received through contacts to the WWA National Office; either by telephone or by letter. Of the 117 Contacts made via the website, 21% were referred onto the Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline for further information, advice and support.

## **27 Welsh Women's Aid finance**

- 27.1 WWA is core funded by the Welsh Assembly Government. The funding was previously split between 2 divisions - Section 180 Housing grant to Combat Homelessness and Section 28b Support for Child and Family Services. From the start of the financial year 2002-2003 grants for Domestic Violence purposes under the two sections above were combined under the provision of Advice and Services in relation to Youth Crime & Domestic Violence. WWA currently receives WAG Core Funding of £367,901 - to support the staffing costs for 10 full time members of the national team and Domestic Abuse Core Funding for Children's Services of £246,950 – to support 1 Children & Young Peoples Service Delivery Co-ordinator and 7 Children's Services Development Workers. This provision does not cover the organisations running costs.
- 27.2 The membership package offered to WA groups throughout Wales and the comprehensive training programme offered to WA member groups and external organisations provides a service income of approx £16,000 & £10,000 per year respectively. Currently due to the systemic flaw in the way WWA is funded this income cannot be ploughed back into the services we provide but has to be utilised to subsidise our running costs. WWA relies heavily on its depleting reserves to cover essential office costs.

- 27.3 WWA manages the Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline and receives WAG Core funding of £404,410 – to support 10 full time, 4 part time members of the team and the office running costs. This provision does not full cover the cost of the Helpline Service which is currently subsidised by short term project funding.
- 27.4 WWA provides an excellent service for the funding we are allocated but should not have to rely on reserves, self generated income and opportunity funding to provide this core service. WWA is currently under evaluation by the WAG and where is hoped that the issues relating to our organisations funding will be addressed.

## **28 Training provided by WWA**

- 28.1 Staff within Women's Aid across Wales have a wealth of practice based knowledge and experience, as a result of 30 years of service provision. For long standing and newer staff, Welsh Women's Aid (WWA) provides training across a wide spectrum, including; induction, housing, child work services, mediation, listening skills to name but a few. The training programme developed and delivered is based on the results of an annual Training Needs Analysis (TNA). WWA has 30 years of experience of providing internal and external training about Domestic Abuse and the impact it has on women, children, young people and wider society.
- 28.2 Many funders are asking for evidence based qualified and trained workforce and by ensuring this Women's Aid are able to meet funders expectations, and implement strategic and policy objectives at a ground level. The ability to demonstrate experience also raises the credibility of Women's Aid with external and partnership organisations. Many of our member group's workforce do not have any type certification to actually prove their level of experience within Women's Aid or the transferable skills they have developed over their years of experience. Recent research by Welsh Womens Aid highlights that there are high levels of qualifications within the workforce; however, these are not necessarily linked to the overall day to day work and practice of service provision.

## **29 Accreditation project**

- 29.1 In 2007, Comic Relief provided funding for a pilot project to develop accredited training for Women's Aid in Wales. This is part of the development of a UK wide project, and runs until the end of September 2009. WWA has recently completed the OCN's Quality Review process to become an OCN Centre for Accreditation.
- 29.2 The project offers the opportunity to:
- Develop accredited training through the Open College Network (OCN)
  - Acknowledge an excellent team of professional and experienced trainers through the accreditation of the Train the Trainer programme
  - Recognise and accredit the work undertaken by staff in Women's Aid by developing accredited learning outcomes and units
  - Provide a recognised level of qualification to demonstrate a quality service and the continuous professional development for staff

- Develop accredited specialist training for internal and external workforces
- Provide training to women who use Women's Aid services, to develop skills and confidence to enable them to re-engage in learning and the workforce or higher education.

29.3 The short term non government funding for this essential project places the continued development of accredited training in domestic abuse and the opportunities to implement the Domestic abuse strategic aims in jeopardy.

29.4 Accredited training will assist in the implementation of the strategy terms of:

- Improving service provision for victims
- Ensure 'minimum' standards are adhered to and best practice implemented
- Education to prevent domestic abuse
- Encourage agencies and organisations to develop policies on domestic abuse through training and awareness raising

29.5 This fantastic opportunity for the development of accredited and specialised training for the internal and external workforce to provide an evidence base of a quality service, could be lost if future funding is not forthcoming.

29.6 The Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to the Domestic Abuse Strategy, lifelong learning and training as identified in 'The Learning Country' (2001), 'Education for sustainable development – A Strategy for Wales' (2006), must include funding for programmes that cross cut the sectors, for example the Welsh Womens Aid Accreditation Programme.

### **30 Need for specialised Domestic Abuse training**

30.1 Domestic abuse is a specialist area across all sectors, the need to understand the causes and impact on all aspects of life, health, housing, social care, criminal and social justice. Domestic abuse is not a single issue; training is needed for staff in terms of on going development and for external services and policy makers, so that positive outcomes can be achieved for victims of domestic abuse. Education and training are fundamental in continuous professional and personal development.

30.2 In widening working links across the Skill Sector Councils in Wales, WWA is developing the Accredited Training Programme to look at specialist training, with recognised qualifications across all areas including:

- Housing,
- Health (physical & mental),
- Social Care (working with children),
- Community Justice and
- Education

### **31 Development of standards**

- 31.1 Working with Skills for Justice and other partners, WWA is part of the consultation and development of National Occupational Standards for Domestic Abuse. These Occupational Standards link with the development of WWA accredited training programme, enabling the mapping of qualifications, job descriptions and policy development across existing and future service provision. This will provide guidance, best practice and service standards across Wales.

## **32 IT in Women's Aid offices and refuges**

- 32.1 Whilst it is universally acknowledged that IT is an essential tool in the modern work environment, the provision of IT equipment in Women's Aid groups varies widely.
- 32.2 Of the 22 groups who responded to the 2008 IT audit, all possessed at least one computer, with the average being 5 per group. Groups cited examples of workers having to share computers and others having to wait whilst a colleague finished at a workstation before continuing with their duties.
- 32.3 Only 8 out of the 22 groups who responded reported that they had networked their computers. Networking offers many advantages; it allows workers to keep their files on a server, thus enabling access from any other networked computer in the office and, depending on configuration, it allows remote access of files too.
- 32.4 Computer provision and internet access for service users in refuge is an area where due to lack of resources, groups are struggling to make inroads.
- 32.5 Of the 22 groups who responded, 9 had computers in refuge that were accessible by service users. In most cases these computers were not for the exclusive use of service users; rather they are used by staff for work purposes too. Rather than not providing any access at all, these groups have stretched themselves as far as possible to enable some degree of access, despite already limited resources.
- 32.6 Of those 9 groups with service user accessible computers, only 7 had provision for those service users to access the internet.
- 32.7 All groups, with the exception of one, cited cost as the reason for poor levels of service user provision.
- 32.8 A medium term goal must be equal access to the opportunities available via ICT, namely, education, move-on accommodation, jobs, information and recreation for the women and children that use domestic abuse services.

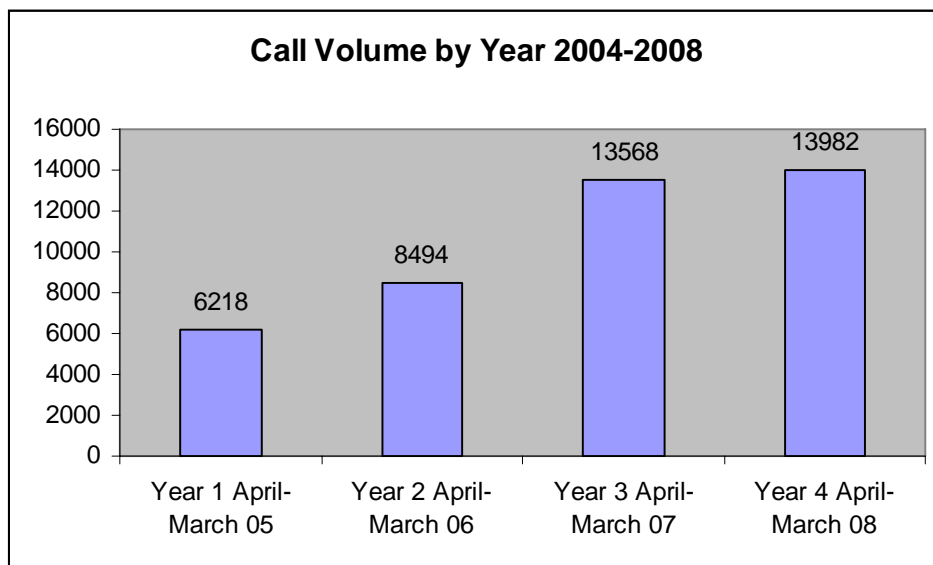
## Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline.

## **33 Helpline Statistics**

- 33.1 The Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline (WDAH) has received over 42,000 calls since it went live in April 2004. In January 2007 the Wales Domestic Abuse



Helpline went 24 hours and since this time the number of calls has dramatically increased and also the types of calls that they receive. Below is the call volume by year of calls received to the helpline since they first went live.



33.2 Over the past year the WDAH have been working on reducing the number of calls from regular callers. This was after they completed a training session from The Telephone Helpline Association on best practice on managing regular callers on a helpline. Since they put policies and procedures in place, WDAH have had substantial developments within this area.

33.3 An example of this would be,  
 January 2007: 2031 total calls  
 Approx 1230 calls from regular callers (including hang ups).  
 This accounted for 61% of our call volume during January 2007.

January 2008: 1233 total calls  
 20 calls from regular callers - noted on yellow monitoring sheets.  
 This accounted for 2% of our call volume during January 2008.

33.4 This is a 59% decrease in calls from regular callers, which means that this amount also turned into new callers phoning the helpline during this month, in comparison to the previous year.  
 February 2007 - 76% of calls were from regular callers  
 February 2008 - 6% of calls from regular callers.

33.5 The substantial change in the number of callers is demonstrating that even though the number of calls received to the helpline has not risen dramatically in numbers comparing the fourth year with the third, but that the callers that are accessing the service are now in actual fact new callers.

### 33.6 Fourth Year Report

The following statistics are based on the fourth year period, April-March 2008. We have received:

- 39 calls from Perpetrators, which were signposted on to relevant support services.
- 35 calls from women with no recourse to public funds.
- 72 calls from women disclosing that they had attempted suicide because of domestic abuse.
- 181 calls from male victims (2% of all calls).

Over the past year, the helpline strike rate has been averaged out at 96%.

33.7 The Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline is in the process of working in partnership with Gwent Police and Victim Support to pilot Police referrals for all reported incidents in the Gwent area. This will dramatically increase the number of calls that the Helpline receive. Currently all reported crimes are referred to Victim Support and non crime which are recorded as incidents are not referred to any organization to provide support for the victim. Currently Gwent Police receive approximately 6000 domestic abuse calls per year and out of these about 800 are crimes that are referred. The other remaining calls will be referred to the Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline. The Helpline is currently in the process of working with the Police and Victim Support to produce an Information Sharing protocol, and the Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline has set up a secure e-mail in order for the information to be referred securely through the Criminal Justice IT system.

### **34 Marketing at the Wales Domestic Abuse helpline**

34.1 The effectiveness of the marketing of the Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline since March 2004 has meant an increase in the percentage of callers that have reported to have called the helpline because of literature, directories and other marketing activities. The percentages of calls as a result of the distribution and other activities, including directory advertising and website are;

- Year 1; 8% of 6,218 calls
- Year 2; 15% of 8,494 calls
- Year 3; 13% of 13,568 calls

34.2 As a result of the 24-hour opening, the helpline now has more scope to increase awareness and calls volume through new marketing channels. Marketing developments at the WDAH have enabled the helpline to focus future plans in a more targeted approach, by developing working relationships with partner agencies. This will enable DA awareness to be mainly carried out by DA Coordinators and various media channels and co-coordinated by the WDAH.

### **35 Distribution update; From September 2007 to March 2008**

**35.1 Packs of literature have been sent to;**

<b>Venue</b>	<b>Number of packs sent</b>	<b>Pack size</b>	<b>Method of distribution</b>	<b>Estimated total cost of distribution</b>	<b>Date distribution carried out</b>

Pharmacies	705	sample	To 3 regional BSC offices	£100.00	Aug / Sept 07
Ysgolion Meithrin	324	sample	Direct	£136.64	Oct 07
Probation	31	Standard	To regional offices	£49.34	4 <sup>th</sup> Jan 08
Relate	16	Standard	Direct	£52.00	4 <sup>th</sup> Jan 08
Ambulance service (desks, call centres & training centres)	107	Standard	Direct	£347.75	16 <sup>th</sup> Jan 08
Information centres	3	standard	direct	£9.75	16 <sup>th</sup> Jan 08
<b>Total</b>	<b>1186</b>			<b>£695.48</b>	

### 35.2 Distribution lists

**Standard packs of literature will be sent out to the following venues;**

<b>Venue</b>	<b>Number of packs sent</b>	<b>Estimated total cost of distribution</b>
Various Orgs	83	£191.73
A&E departments	52	£120.12
Antenatal clinics	93	£214.83
CAB	52	£120.12
CAFCASS	14	£13.33
Community centres		
Courts	72	£166.32
DAF's	21	£48.51
Fire service	151	£119.97
GP surgeries	563	£588.50
Home start	21	£48.51
Hospitals	93	£214.83
Housing Associations	10	£23.10
Housing departments	21	£48.51
NSPCC & Childline	10	£23.10
Occupational	22	£50.82

health visitors		
Police	226	£186.62
Requested mailing list	302	£697.62
Samaritans	12	£27.72
Social Services	38	£87.78
Solicitors	51	£117.81
Student services – uni's & colleges	21	£48.51
Victim Support	35	£57.00
WA groups	35	£80.85
<b>Total standard packs</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>£3,296.21</b> (£4,244.67 @ 2007 pack size)

### 35.3 Sample packs of literature will be sent to the following venues;

Venue	Number of packs sent	Estimated total cost of distribution
AM's	70 (35 x 2 for both addresses)	£18.28
Dentist waiting rooms	584	£291.84
Hairdressers	1852	£666.72
Launch invitations	244	£87.84
Schools	1923	£692.28
Slimming world	500	£180.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>5173</b>	<b>£1,936.96</b>

### 35.4 Other marketing activities to be carried out from April 2008 to August 2008

#### 35.5 Support from external agencies

**Support from the NHS** – after Elen Pierce's initial contact with the Minister and receiving written confirmation of her support, WDAH are looking at marketing the helpline through the NHS.

**35.6 DAF Co-ordinators** – the DAF Co-ordinators are supportive of the helpline in various ways, which include;

- Disseminating our stickers through all public toilets, local authority buildings, all schools in the area.
- Purchasing high quantities of helpline promotional items.
- Producing promotional items with our number on.
- Disseminating our literature
- Raising awareness of the helpline during IWD (International Women's Day).

## **Perpetrator Accountability**

### **36 Perpetrator programmes in Wales**

- 36.1 WWA recommend that there needs to be a clear Assembly strategy on how to deal with perpetrators who abuse their partners/ ex partners. Programmes addressing perpetrators should be one part of a co-ordinated response to domestic abuse. International good practice recommends that all such programmes be accompanied by a support service for women.<sup>xxxiii</sup> The perpetrator agenda needs to be looked at closely due to the limited number of perpetrator programmes available in Wales.
- 36.2 While there are perpetrator programmes running under the auspices of probation areas or other non-statutory services, but not all offer associated support to partners. The lack of programmes working with what is internationally accepted best practice is of concern. In Wales there are only one voluntary/ self referral perpetrator programme and one statutory/probation programme that are also members of RESPECT.<sup>xxxiv</sup> There needs to be adequate and a clear strategy to prevent men re offending.
- 36.3 Recent research carried out by Marianne Hester and Nicole Westmarland<sup>xxxv</sup> found that *'if adequate services are not provided for men who perpetrate domestic violence, they may move on to offend against other women in the future'*. The research carried out found that exactly half of perpetrators were involved in at least one more domestic abuse incident within a three year follow up period, with one in five re-offending against a different partner to the one they were originally reported for.
- 36.4 In addition, previous domestic abuse offending was the strongest predictor of further domestic abuse offending. The research raises a number of recommendations in regards to what should be put in place for domestic abuse perpetrators which WWA support. WWA especially support the recommendation in relation to the police directing perpetrators to perpetrator programmes and/ or providing them with information about help seeking, an increase in the number of perpetrator programmes, including more self-referral programmes which adhere to Respect guidelines, that health services should refer men to perpetrator programmes and not counseling due to the fact that 71% of men who are perpetrators of domestic abuse approach their GP for help and there needs to be a coherent and co-ordinated approach to perpetrators that tackle men's violent

and abusive behaviour while also ensuring safety for the women and children concerned.

### **36.5 Recommendations**

- Should be more perpetrator programmes running in Wales.
- There should be a register of all known perpetrators of domestic abuse held by the police. Abusive spouses should be named on a domestic violence register similar to that established for sex offenders.

## **37 Sentencing in the criminal courts**

- 37.1 Sentencing for domestic abuse-related incidents is a key concern for WWA and our members. Sentences handed down for domestic abuse-related incidents are routinely inappropriate; that the most common sentences for domestic abuse perpetrators are bindovers and fines is highly problematic.
- 37.2 WWA supports the views of survivors of domestic abuse, who most frequently request attendance at a perpetrator programme as part of the sentence. Attendance at a perpetrator programme may be helpful in encouraging some men to change their abusive behaviour. Court-mandated attendance on a perpetrator programme is only effective if sentences are long enough to cover both the waiting period and attendance on the full programme. For perpetrators who receive no sentence – custodial or community – but only a fine, there is even less incentive to attend.
- 37.3 As outlined in the new Public Service Agreements, the Government is committed to increasing public confidence in the Criminal Justice System. When survivors see perpetrators receiving a fine, or a short community sentence (and no accompanying perpetrator programme), they may wonder whether the effort and stress of the court process was worthwhile. Many survivors, however, are only discouraged from engaging with the Criminal Justice System because of inappropriate sentences, but due to extremely low conviction rates. Currently only 23% of women report incidents of domestic violence to the police. Of those reported incidents, only approximately 3.5% end in a conviction. This is significantly lower than conviction rates for rape, which currently stands at around 5%. The reasons for the high attrition rates are multiple. In 32% of reported cases, the police take no action. Furthermore, in only 20% of cases is the perpetrator arrested.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Another study<sup>xxxvii</sup> found that only 25% of arrested perpetrators – and therefore only 5% of those reported - are charged. Due to the Crown Prosecution Service's proactive domestic violence strategy, the rate of successful outcomes, i.e. convictions, in domestic abuse cases has risen from 59/7% in 2005/6 to 68.3% in quarter 2 of 2007/8. However, this still only equates to 3.4% of all reported incidents of domestic violence ending with a conviction. According to the Crown Prosecution Service, a key reason for unsuccessful prosecutions is victim/witness behaviour, either because the witness withdraws her statements or does not willing attend court. Further action needs to be taken at each stage of the Criminal Justice System, from police attending a domestic abuse incident to sentencing.

### 37.4 Recommendations:

- Mandatory domestic abuse training for all police officers. Officers must be trained to collect a range of evidence in cases of domestic abuse, not relying on a witness statement which is retracted at a later date and leads to an unsuccessful prosecution.
- Pro-arrest policies are adopted to improve rates of arrest in domestic abuse cases
- Further research is conducted into the low levels of charging in domestic abuse cases, and a strategy developed to address this issue
- Domestic abuse training is made mandatory for all judges and magistrates
- Evidence from Specialist Domestic Violence Courts shows that training for all personnel – CENTREX-trained police, prosecutors, magistrates, legal

2005			2006		
Convictions	Unsuccessful outcomes		Convictions	Unsuccessful outcomes	

advisors and probation staff – significantly improved the rate of successful prosecutions. Domestic abuse training must become mandatory, and where possible must contribute towards Continuing Professional Development, e.g. for prosecutors and barristers.

37.5 In regards to conviction rates in all police authorities in Wales have increased between 2005 – 2006. All the police authorities, except South Wales, are above the national average (28.68%) for domestic abuse convictions in criminal courts. Also the number of cases that go to Court have also increased;

	Convictions		Unsuccessful outcomes		Total	Convictions		Unsuccessful outcomes		Total
	Number	%	Number	%		Number	%	Number	%	
Dyfed Powys	172	61.6	107	38.4	279	297	70.9	122	29.1	419
Gwent	288	59.8	194	40.2	482	438	64.5	241	35.5	679
North Wales	454	68.2	212	31.8	666	599	70.4	252	29.6	851
South Wales	678	52.2	622	47.8	1,300	849	62.4	511	37.6	1,360
All areas in the UK Total	26,114	59.0	18,130	41.0	44,244	35,820	63.5	20,591	36.5	56,411

37.6 In addition the statistics for policing performance shows that the arrest rate in Wales for domestic abuse incidents is also higher in Wales.

<i>Policing performance assessment framework (PPAF): The domestic violence arrest rate is the percentage of incidents where an arrest was made related to the number of incidents</i>	
	<i>Domestic Violence arrest rate (percentage)</i>
Dyfed Powys	36.9
Gwent	49.5
North Wales	22.0
South Wales	29.6

37.7 The number of women who have been killed in Wales between 1996 – 2006<sup>xxxviii</sup> shows that there are some changes in some police authorities but not in others. These statistics do not show the number of women who have committed suicide as a result of the domestic abuse they have experienced.

Police Authority	1996	1997	1997-1998	1998-1999	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Dyfed Powys (7)	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	0	1	0
Gwent (12)	1	2	2	1	0	1	0	1	1	2	1
North Wales (16)	0	5	3	0	2	0	1	1	0	2	2
South Wales (33)	3	3	4	5	3	3	3	3	3	2	1

## **Prevention and Public Awareness**

### **38 Educating Society around violence against women**

38.1 More needs to be done around educating society around all areas of Violence Against Women. If more money is invested in prevention and education the costs of domestic abuse, which stands at £40 billion a year<sup>xxxix</sup>, would be cut.

38.2 Society needs to be educated in all areas of Violence Against Women as recognised by the poll conducted by Amnesty International<sup>xl</sup> in 2005. The poll



revealed that a significant proportion of the public in the UK believes a woman is either partially or fully responsible for being raped if she was wearing revealing clothes (22%), if she was drunk (30%), or had had many sexual partners (22%). 8% believed that a woman was totally responsible for being raped if she has many sexual partners. In addition the Amnesty poll shows the scale of the public's ignorance of the unacceptably high number of women raped every year in the UK as well as the low conviction rates. The poll shows that the vast majority of the British population have no idea how many women are raped, with 96% of those polled saying they either didn't know the true extent of rape or that they thought it was far lower than the true figure. In addition to this Poll, another poll carried out found that 45% of teenagers believe that in some circumstances it is acceptable for a boy to assault his girlfriend.

38.3 Educating society is also extremely important to ensure that those who are supporting women who have experienced domestic abuse or sexual assault feel confident in providing support and information. The British Crime Survey showed that only 83% of domestic abuse victims told someone what happened (77% told a friend)<sup>xii</sup> and 64% of sexual assault victims told someone what happened (70% of these victims told a friend.)<sup>xiii</sup> The ICM Research survey for Amnesty International's End Violence Against Women campaign concluded that 77% of people aged 16-20 across the UK, feel they do not have enough information and support to advise those they know who may have been the victims of physical or sexual violence. Also two-thirds of female respondents (68%) said that they lacked support and information for dealing with violence against women, while more than half of males (51%) said the same thing. It is only by providing information to people supporting women that have been victims of violence that they will feel confident about the advice they give, the support they provide and the referrals they make.

#### 38.4 Recommendations

- WWA recommend that society should be educated on the myths and realities of rape and domestic abuse to raise awareness. The public should be made aware of the realities of sexual abuse and domestic abuse, its characteristics and that they understand that a woman who has been raped or abused is not responsible for the attack.

### 39 **Awareness raising and the promotion of healthy relationships**

39.1 This is an area where there is again a huge variation in provision, the work is carried out by a number of different agencies, including police, Women's Aid and Tai Hafan and there is no consistency in the age that children receive this in put, who provides the information or the nature of the input, no 'national guidelines' for content or good practice. In one school there may be a 20 minute slot about domestic abuse as part of the 'Crucial Crew' programme with a worker presenting information to up to 100 children and young people at a time, whereas in another school there may be several lessons devoted to the topic working with a single class where pupils have plenty of opportunity to explore the issues and

seek appropriate support. There is an issue about the ability of some providers to give ongoing support to those pupils who do disclose abuse as a result of awareness raising work. WWA recommend that the Department for Education at the Assembly engage in issues surrounding violence against women. This recommendation takes a number of different forms.

- 39.2 Firstly teachers should be trained in issues surrounding violence against women. While in Wales teachers have training on domestic abuse and how they can help children who are experiencing domestic abuse, this needs to be extended to incorporate violence against women. This training should include training on domestic abuse, rape and sexual violence, forced marriage, female genital mutilation and so called 'honour' crimes and killings. In regards to the 1001 children that were accommodated in WWA refuges between April 2006 – March 2007 41% were identified as having been abused. Out of this number 16% had experienced physical abuse, 97% emotional abuse, 55% psychological abuse and 2.5% sexual abuse. Teachers could be a first point of call for many children who are experiencing domestic abuse or violence themselves, or are seeing violence in the home. Teachers need to have the ability and the confidence to be able to provide assistance, information and understanding to these children.
- 39.3 Secondly, teenagers in school need to learn more about healthy relationships and the fact that violence against women is not tolerated in society. The recent research carried out in July 2007 by the Body Shop as part of the Stop Violence in the Home campaign again shows teenagers attitudes to domestic abuse and violence against women. The research shows that 1 in 5 teens (21%) believes it's ok to tell a boyfriend or girlfriend what to do, with the figure rising to more than one in four (27%) in young men. A further 1 in 10 teens think by saying sorry it makes it ok after they've hurt or forced a partner to do something. The research is again very worrying and highlights that young people in relationships are not aware that exerting consistent power and control over a partner in any relationship is abusive and not acceptable. Teenagers and young people need to be educated to make them aware of the risks and the patterns of behaviour to ensure that they realise that domestic abuse does not have to be physical and that emotional abuse to escalate to other forms of abuse in the future. 38% of women experiencing domestic abuse who have entered refuge in Wales are 25 and under, of which 9% are 18 and under.<sup>xiii</sup>

#### **40 Training on forced marriage and honour based violence.**

40.1 WWA recommend that training should be made available to professionals and practitioners in the Health, Criminal and Education sector on forced marriage and honour based violence. A number of professionals do not have sufficient understanding and confidence when they are supporting and come into contact with women who have been forced into marriage or are in danger of so called 'honour' violence. As the recent research paper into Forced Marriage states 'extensive training across all sectors, especially in multi-agency settings, not only to raise awareness, but to share good practice in dealing with forced marriage and so called honour-based violence'.<sup>xliv</sup>

40.2 BAWSO, carried out research in 2007 on forced marriage. As part of the research they sent questionnaires to a number of professionals, including schools, hospitals, health visitors, GP surgeries, solicitors. Out of the questionnaires returned 92.7% requested support or training in the field of forced marriage, information on legislation and good practice, contact list of supporting agencies and support in producing policies and practices.

#### **40.3 Recommendations**

WWA support the recommendations in the report<sup>xlv</sup> and recommend that the Assembly take on the following recommendations;

- Professional guidance issued by the Forced Marriage Unit should form the basis for all training and strictly applied by all agencies.
- The Forced Marriage Unit Action Plan should be implemented and supported by the Assembly with appropriate resources and funding.

## Children's and Young People's Services

### **41 Funding for work with children and young people in Women's Aid groups**

41.1 It is a cause of great concern that the funding for working with children and young people in refuges is very piecemeal and insecure see below for outline of sources of funding for this area of work.

<b>Refuge &amp; Community</b>	<b>Agency/Charitable Trust</b>	<b>No Groups Supported</b>
<b>Statutory</b>	Supporting People	20
	Sure Start/Cymorth(0-5 yrs)	9
	Social Services	16
	Community Safety Partnerships	2
<b>Non-Statutory</b>	Children-in-Need	15
	Comic Relief	1
	Other Charitable	5*

\*2 children's workers are funded from Group Reserves

41.2 Twenty one Women's Aid groups receive charitable funding that requires annual applications and in most cases, the children's workers spend a significant amount of time fundraising for their own jobs, equipment and activities. The charity Children in Need have funded children's workers in groups for many years. They currently fund (wholly or partly) 15 posts and have declared their concern about providing this level of funding for core funding of salaried posts as the purpose of CIN is to provide short term project funding, they regard the current level of support as unsustainable. This instability of funding results in job insecurity, loss of experienced workers, low morale and lack of investment in staff, and very importantly a difficulty in making long term plans for development and improvement of services. One of the most concerning examples is a children's worker having her post funded from 4 different sources all with varying lengths of time. Children's workers within groups operate on different pay structures, which vary from NJC .22 (£19K) to .31 (£25K), which bears no relation to qualifications, experience or levels of responsibility. Over half of groups do not have an element for pension provision within their funding. It has become apparent that in the past year 4 groups have lost statutory funding and 9 groups have lost Childwork hours that were funded from charitable sources.

41.3 A significant number of child work posts are funded by the Supporting People Revenue Grant. This funding is housing related, and as such it restricts the activities of the workers. For example they are not permitted to carry out any direct support on an individual basis to children with identified needs as a result of the domestic abuse. The funding does not allow for workers to participate in any child protection work, attend any child protection meetings, case conferences etc. For those workers funded by Sure Start they may be supporting younger children within a family whilst older children in the same family are not provided with any structured support. This is clearly a very unsatisfactory unequal, and high risk situation in which to be working with very vulnerable children.

Safeguarding children who have witnessed or been victims of domestic abuse is a core part of the service Women's Aid provide to children. In 2006/07 there were more than 250 children staying in refuges who were on the Child Protection register. It can be argued that if these children were not in refuge, they would become 'Looked After' by local authorities at a cost of over £6.5M.

41.4 In this environment of unstable and unsustainable funding, it is not possible for Women's Aid groups to plan services strategically and are unable to commit to the development of services. It also means that WA groups cannot achieve the 7 core aims contained in Rights To Action, reach the standards set out in the NSF for Children, Young People and Maternity Services, or adequately meet the UNCRC Articles on Children's rights, within the current structure.

#### **41.5 Recommendation**

##### **Core funding for children workers**

WWA recommend that the Assembly provide core funding for children's workers, linked with refuge and outreach, which has been done in Scotland. Domestic abuse affects both women and children. Each year in the UK at least 750,000 children witness domestic abuse, and nearly 75% of children on the at risk register live in households where domestic abuse occurs,<sup>xlvi</sup> and nearly 75% of children on the at risk register live in households where domestic violence occurs (Department of Health, 2003). Nearly half of all residents accommodated in WWA refuges are children. 8% of children in refuge were on the at risk register and 19% of children not in refuge were on the at risk register in 2006 – 2007 in Wales.<sup>xlvii</sup> This important factor should be considered and prioritised by Government when considering funding streams because by having one child in care costs more than one children's worker. The Scottish Executive has provided core funding for two children's workers in each Women's Aid refuge in Scotland. Yet despite the clearly growing need for specialist domestic violence services for children and young people, funding such services is increasingly difficult.

#### **42 Childwork funding within Welsh Women's Aid**

42.1 WWA are very appreciative of the support from the Welsh Assembly Government towards funding for improving services for children experiencing domestic abuse. The children's project has decided to pick up the title of a previous 3 year project within WWA called 'Children Matter' (funded through Children in Need) as the promotion of children's right to an equal and quality service is the priority of our work. Our overall focus is to reduce variation and improve quality in domestic abuse services for children and young people throughout Wales. The Children's Services team currently comprises of:

- Children's Services Manager - national
- Children's and Young Peoples Services Delivery Coordinator – national
- Children's Services Development Workers – 7 home-based workers responsible for a region of Wales with direct links to the Women's Aid groups in their area.

42.2 Eight of these posts are new and the workers all took up their positions in September 07. Due to the substantial diversity in resourcing and therefore provision of services by Women's Aid groups across Wales the day to day work of the regional workers is also diverse responding to identified need within their

designated areas. The increased staff working in the field has provided WWA as the umbrella organisation with much more information than was previously held about work with children by groups and has highlighted issues needing to be addressed. The role of the Children's Service Development Workers based in the regions is to support the WA group-based workers, with both resources and worker time. They are able to assist in developing new services and in improving consistency in the core support service that groups are able to offer, they are also actively seeking links with local agencies to increase the opportunities for partnership working in the field of domestic abuse. Partners are also being sought at a national level with meetings having taken place with CAF/CASS, Relate Cymru and NSPCC to date. Given the size of the geographical regions designated to the WWA workers they are in no way a substitute for group based workers who are able to build meaningful relationships and provide more intensive daily support to children using their services.

42.3 The children's project workers decided on 5 core aims for the project which reflect current legislation and the concerns of the Welsh Assembly Government strategic vision for children and young people.

1. To develop consistency in the quality and range of services for children, young people and families across Women's Aid groups in Wales.
2. To ensure that children and young people are enabled to understand their rights, to express their views and to have this taken into account in decision making that affects them.
3. To raise awareness within support agencies and the public of the support provided by Women's Aid groups to children, young people and families affected by domestic abuse.
4. To educate and inform children and young people about healthy relationships, and help protect them from the negative impact of domestic abuse.
5. To enable children and young people experiencing domestic abuse to access a wide range of appropriate services that meet their individual needs and extend their opportunities.

42.4 A comprehensive project plan is almost completed and will be available shortly. Since September the following outcomes have been achieved:

- Mapping of resources and services provided within WA groups completed, issues /concerns picked up in project planning and where relevant passed on to other national WWA staff. Examples of good practice written up and displayed on member's area of website to encourage take up by other WA groups.
- Meetings have taken place in all 7 regions with WA groups providing information on WAG strategies re CYP and drivers for change. Self evaluation tool provided to groups to aid implementation of National Service Framework for children young people and maternity services.
- All policies re CYP under review (priority given to those concerned with protection, some new policies already written to meet identified gaps.
- All WA groups have been provided with new assessment and support plans specific to 3 different age groups 0-4 years, 5-11, and 12-18 years

- these are fully bilingual and increase involvement of CYP in planning process, currently being evaluated for use by regional workers.
- All WA groups provided with activity packs to increase specific direct work with CYP to address issues of domestic abuse on their lives.
  - Regular direct work by some regional workers taking place in groups without refuge child worker or in conjunction with group workers who have only few hours dedicated to this work.
  - Some planned work by regional workers with children in the community where WA group has limited capacity for outreach support.
  - Joint working with groups based worker to provide weekly group work to refuge and outreach children in some areas, to increase opportunities for one to one support to individual children within the group.
  - Awareness raising work on domestic abuse and healthy relationships in schools carried out by regional workers in collaboration with group workers (particularly in north Wales). Ongoing individual support provided to pupils who came forward and disclosed abuse following awareness raising sessions.
  - Increased contact between some WA groups and external agencies as a result of liaison with regional workers, discussions of joint work possible.
  - Exploratory meetings have taken place with NSPCC, Relate Cymru, CAF/CASS on possible areas of partnership working re CYP and domestic abuse.
  - List of designated Child Protection workers in WA groups updated, those workers in need of training identified, and training planned.
  - 'All You Need to Know' packs for all children entering refuge almost completed, generic information (life in a refuge and services available) provided and liaison taking place with local groups to ensure relevant local information on location of support, leisure and transport services provided.
  - 'Settling In' packs for all children entering refuge almost completed, age appropriate items provided to meet immediate basic needs identified by CYP through consultation. Groups provided with CYP's views, prices and stock lists to maintain and develop this provision locally.

### **43 Partnership working**

43.1 Important statutory partners to Women's Aid groups are the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinators, who operate within Community Safety Partnerships. The Key Performance Indicators for CSPs makes no mention of children and young people directly, except to state that CSP should establish links with local safeguarding children boards. Meeting with Co-ordinators have revealed that children are often not a priority within CSPs, where the emphasis is on crime reduction, target hardening and other police oriented initiatives. As CSPs are multi-agency partnerships, which Department a DA Co-ordinator is situated in can influence where the children's agenda sits, as well as the priorities of individual CSPs and post holders. Within WA groups it has been found that some have a good relationship with the local DA Co-ordinator, while others have little contact. WWA regional workers in the role of working across several local authorities have discovered huge variations in the focus, funding and priorities of the DA coordinators across their region.

43.2 A similar picture can be painted in relation to women's aid groups and Local Safeguarding Children Boards; there appears to be no conformity in how LSCBs are structured and which agencies (other than the statutory ones) are involved. Some groups are involved in the training element of LSCBs, two have representation on a subgroup of the Board but others have no contact at all, not even through the voluntary agencies representative that sits on the Board. Welsh Womens Aid is working hard to support women's aid groups to get involved in Children and Young Peoples' Partnerships and the consultation process on the Children and Young People Plans to ensure that the new plans recognise the needs of children experiencing domestic abuse and the need to educate all children about the issues.

#### **44 Young women seeking help**

44.1 Statistics sent into WWA by local groups during the year 06-07 showed that of the 1311 women housed in refuges, 97 were under 18 years (legally children) and 329 were aged 19 – 15 years making a total number of 416 young women directly seeking refuge support for domestic abuse who come under the young peoples agenda of Extending Entitlement. We are not currently able to identify what other support agencies they are in contact with or whether they have previously been in local authority care. There is an issue as to whether abuse of young women aged under 18 years is being treated as a child protection case as police and LA/ other agencies have different definitions re age of someone to be seen as a child (16 or 18) this leads to inconsistent practices. Refuge services are generally divided into adult and children's services with only a few groups having specialist funding for working with young people 11-25 years.

#### **45 Lack of provision for young males aged 16 – 18 years**

45.1 Refuge provision for dependent male children aged 16 years and over remains a problem. There is no consistent response to teenage boys being accepted or refused entry into domestic abuse refuges. Of the Women's Aid groups operating in Wales 20 of these have stated that they are not able to provide refuge for boys of this age. The number of refuges who are willing to take older boys has increased over the last three years and is proportionally much higher than in England where many refuges do not take males over 14 years. Even where refuges do allow boys over 16 years to come to refuge it is not appropriate for them to be sharing bedrooms with their mother and possibly sisters and yet the payment of additional housing benefit for the family to occupy more than one room is only practised by a few more enlightened local authorities. If these young men do not come into refuge with their mothers the options are for them to be placed in bed and breakfast accommodation nearby with all the problems this entails, to be left with the abusive father or to be taken in by friends and family on a temporary basis, these are clearly not options based on the needs of the young person nor will any of these help address any support needs the young people may be facing. The effects on these children are vast, and being separated from their mother can add to their problems. Adolescent boys are also in danger of using and experiencing violence themselves, within their own intimate relationships. Male children over the age of 12 clearly present a unique set of service needs, which needs to be addressed through education at schools and



colleges, support and service provision from the voluntary and statutory sector, and National and local government policies to ensure that the needs of adolescent boys are addressed.

#### **46 Children not living in refuge with their mothers**

46.1 Statistics show that a substantial number of dependent children are not in refuge with their mothers, of the 234 children identified as living elsewhere whilst the mothers were in refuge, 46% of these were under 5 years of age and the most common place for them to be staying was with their fathers, this raises issues of protection.

#### **47 Difficulties faced by children in refuge**

47.1 There are many difficulties faced by children moving to refuge of which access to services is significant. Access to primary schools generally happens relatively smoothly if there are no significant additional educational needs due to behaviour, physical or learning difficulties, but access from refuges to secondary establishments is far more problematic. There are issues about schools being able to match subject choices for those undergoing GCSEs, purchase of school uniform, and lack of provision for additional pastoral support to pupils during what may be a time of great stress and anxiety about the change in circumstances and the reasons for this move. Child and Adolescent mental health services are generally reluctant to provide structured support to children living in temporary accommodation despite some children presenting with extremely distressing and challenging behaviour which is difficult to manage in a communal setting. There are rare examples of CAMHS services providing refuge staff with advice and training on the identification and behaviour management of children with mental health problems using their services although this is a requirement of the National Service Framework (Caerphilly is a good example of where this has worked well). Where children have higher ongoing support needs due to a chronic health condition or disability it is very difficult to accommodate these needs in refuge environment as the waiting time to be linked into the specialist support agencies is extremely long with little leeway for children facing sudden changes due to domestic abuse, these families are likely to be tied into staying in the family home to maintain their complex support networks which may leave them particularly vulnerable to ongoing abuse.

#### **48 Child contact**

48.1 Family courts are dealing with an increasing number of contact cases where domestic abuse is a significant issue. Welsh Women's Aid has long campaigned for greater protection for women and children when domestic abuse has been identified due to the fear, distress and trauma to both mother and child. The Lord Chancellor Department in 2001 stated that domestic abuse is an issue in 19% of contact cases while another study carried out by National Association of Probation Officers in 2002 showed that domestic abuse is alleged in 61% of cases, allegations are proven in a 1/3 of these cases and even when domestic abuse is proven the father continues to have direct contact in 94% of cases and indirect in 5%. Therefore even though domestic abuse is proven the Courts still

presume that contact is best for the child and refusing contact is extremely rare (55,000 contact cases in 2002 and 518 cases where contact was refused). Women's Aid Federation England carried out a survey in 1999 and it showed that as a result of contact visits the following abuse took place; 10% were sexually abused during contact; 15% physically assaulted, 26% abducted / attempted abduction, 36% neglected during contact, 63% suffered emotional harm and 29 children died during contact / residence between 1994 -2004.

48.2 As stated above there is a presumption of contact in domestic abuse. The HMICA report in October 2005 found that the 'perception of the presumption of contact in domestic abuse cases is experienced by women as dangerous to themselves and their children.....In order for the welfare of children to remain paramount, the current emphasis in agreement seeking in the family justice system needs to be recognised as a valuable secondary achievement, rather than a primary goal'. Other research has clearly indicated that there should be no presumption of direct or indirect contact and the onus should be on the non resident parent to show some benefit for the child when domestic abuse is proven.<sup>xlviii</sup>

### 48.3 Recommendations

- The Courts should follow the Department of Constitutional Affairs good practice guidelines that were produced in April 2002.<sup>xlix</sup> WWA recommend that in every case where allegations of domestic abuse are made the Court must at the earliest opportunity consider the allegations and decide whether the nature and effect of the violence alleged in such as to make it likely that the order for contact will be affected if the allegations are proved.
- A cultural change is required, with a move away from "contact is always the appropriate way forward" to "contact that is safe and positive for the child is always the appropriate way forward".
- There should be renewed emphasis on the message that ensuring safety should be paramount when considering whether contact is in a child's best interests.
- There should be improved multidisciplinary training on domestic violence issues for lawyers and the judiciary.

## **Statistics in Wales**

### **49 Statistics collected by Welsh Women's Aid**

- 49.1 For Welsh Women's Aid 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. To this end WWA produced a robust Annual Statistical Report for 2006/ 2007, drawing together information relating to the work of our member groups and the women and children they supported over the preceding 12 months.
- 49.2 Between April 2006 and March 2007 32 Women's Aid groups supplied information from their refuges. During this time period 35 WWA groups ran a total of 52 shared houses and 8 self contained accommodation units. 1180 women and 1001 children were accommodated in WWA refuges in this period. 1358 requests for refuge were turned down.
- 49.3 20 groups responded to a request for key data from across their services. The following statistics are taken from these responses:
- 1651 drop in visits and 7872 telephone calls were recorded by groups from Women requiring support, information and/or refuge. These figures include calls and visits from Women themselves as well as those made on a Woman's behalf by other groups or agencies or by friends or relatives.
  - 835 Women and 921 children were recorded as being supported on Outreach, Floating Support and Resettlement projects. This includes Women who were supported after being re-housed from refuges as well as women who accessed the support services. 10% of children being supported were recorded as being on the At Risk Register.
- 49.4 This information is collected monthly / quarterly / annual stats from most of our groups through a variety of methods, dependent on the group's individual circumstances.
- 15 groups submit stats to us on a standard paper-based pro-forma
  - 14 groups submit stats to us based on the standard pro-forma but in an electronic format
  - 2 groups send their own set of 'non-standard' stats
  - 2 groups send no stats at all
- 49.5 In the future we will be looking to include more stats about the women who receive floating support, which forms an increasing part of work of our member groups. These statistics help WWA to realistically assess the scale of domestic abuse and the effectiveness of services for women and children. In turn, this information allows us to challenge and inform public policy.
- 49.6 Ideally we would like to work towards a system of regular monthly collection of standard data from every group. To this end we have decided, in principle, to invest in a dedicated computer programme that will allow us to do this, whilst also assisting our member groups to simultaneously manage their service-user case notes.

49.7 The current issue that we 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.

## **50 Domestic Abuse Statistics in Wales**

50.1 The Home Office collects data every year and produces a number of statistical bulletins on Crime in England and Wales.<sup>i</sup> These reports have incorporated statistics on domestic abuse since 1995 and there has recently been specific bulletin on intimate violence (domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking).<sup>ii</sup> Such reports break down statistics in relation to domestic abuse in each police authority, so this can also be used as an indicator. Out of all the regions in the recent Home Office Statistical Bulletin 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%.<sup>iii</sup>

## **Welsh Women's Aid Recommendations**

- 1) WWA recommend that 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.

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