



**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
The National Assembly for Wales**

**Y Pwyllgor Cymunedau a Diwylliant
The Communities and Culture Committee**

**Dydd Iau, 17 Chwefror 2011
Thursday, 17 February 2011**

Cynnwys
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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Mohammad Asghar | Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives |
| Rosemary Butler | Llafur (yn dirprwyo ar ran Alun Davies) Labour (substitute for Alun Davies) |
| Veronica German | Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru (yn dirprwyo ar ran Eleanor Burnham) Welsh Liberal Democrats (substituting for Eleanor Burnham) |
| Mark Isherwood | Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives |
| Bethan Jenkins | Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales |
| David Lloyd | Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales |
| Sandy Mewies | Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair) |
| Lynne Neagle | Llafur Labour |
| Val Lloyd | Llafur (yn dirprwyo ar ran Joyce Watson) Labour (substituting for Joyce Watson) |

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Paul Dunhill | Uned y Sector Gwirfoddol, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Voluntary Sector Unit, Welsh Assembly Government |
| Jason Lintern | Pennaeth y Gangen Polisi Cam-drin Domestig a Chyfiawnder Ieuenctid, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Head of Youth Justice and Domestic Abuse Branch, Welsh Assembly Government |
| Karin Phillips | Dirprwy Gyfarwyddwr, Is-adran Diogelwch Cymunedol, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Deputy Director of Community Safety Division, Welsh Assembly Government |
| Carl Sargeant | Aelod Cynulliad (Llafur), Y Gweinidog dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol a Llywodraeth Leol Assembly Member (Labour), the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government |
| Wendy Thomas | Rheolwr Polisi, Uned y Sector Gwirfoddol, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Policy Manager, Voluntary Sector Unit, Welsh Assembly Government |

Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

| | |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| Sarah Bartlett | Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk |
| Tom Jackson | Clerc Clerk |

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 8.58 a.m.
The meeting began at 8.58 a.m.*

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Sandy Mewies:** I welcome Members, officials, the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government and his officials, and those in the public gallery to the meeting. I remind you all that we have headsets, which can be used to hear the simultaneous translation or for sound amplification. I ask everyone to switch off all mobile phones, BlackBerrys or any other electronic device. I have not been notified of any emergency procedure run-throughs this morning, so if the alarm sounds, please follow the ushers out.

[2] I invite Members to make any relevant declarations of interest under Standing Order No. 31.6.

[3] **Val Lloyd:** I declare a family interest in that my spouse is a member of the South Wales Police Authority. It is in the register of interests.

[4] **Sandy Mewies:** Thank you; that will be noted.

[5] We have received apologies from Alun Davies, Eleanor Burnham and Joyce Watson. Val Lloyd is substituting for Joyce, Rosemary is substituting for Alun, and I think that Veronica will be substituting for Eleanor Burnham.

9.00 a.m.

Craffu ar y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf gan Lywodraeth Cymru am Weithredu Argymhellion Adroddiad Mis Rhagfyr 2008 y Pwyllgor Cymunedau a Diwylliant ar Gam-drin Domestig Scrutiny of Welsh Government: Update on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Communities and Culture Committee's December 2008 Report on Domestic Abuse

[6] **Sandy Mewies:** I welcome Carl Sargeant, the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government, Jason Lintern, and Karin Phillips, who many of you will recognise from her previous role as head of committee services at the Assembly. Minister, would you like to introduce your paper?

[7] **Carl Sargeant:** Good morning, Chair, and committee members; it would be helpful for me to run through a few things. I am delighted to be able to update you on the Welsh Assembly Government's implementation of the recommendations of the inquiry into domestic abuse in Wales. It is right that we acknowledge the work that goes on in the front line by partner agencies that are tackling this issue and trying to improve the support available for victims of domestic abuse. As the Minister with responsibility for this, my focus within the six-year integrated strategy has been on fairness within society. The issue for me is that being safe is the most basic of human rights. That is a challenge that we need to strive towards collectively. Domestic violence is a crime and, therefore, not a devolved function. However, the responsibility towards our communities and their safety lies with the Welsh Assembly Government. So, the domestic abuse strategy is important.

[8] It would be useful, if I may, Chair, to outline some of the stark statistics to reinforce the importance of recognising the issue. Overall in the UK, more than one in four women will

experience domestic abuse in her lifetime, often with years of psychological abuse as well. There were over 1 million recorded female victims of domestic abuse in England and Wales last year alone, and they are just the ones that we know about. This is just the tip of the iceberg. Most domestic abuse is perpetrated by men. In 2009-10, over seven out of every 10 victims were women who suffered attacks or abuse by men, and almost one in five women will experience sexual assault in their lifetime. Those are just some of the stark reminders of the known scale of this issue. Underlying that, there is an awful lot more hidden crime, and as a Government, we must take responsibility to ensure that people have access to good-quality services and support where they need them. I am happy to take questions; hopefully, that gives us an overview of where we are to date.

[9] **Sandy Mewies:** Thank you, Minister. It is good to be reminded of those statistics. I also need to remind Members that they should have had a brief in their inboxes this morning from Welsh Women's Aid. If you want to ask additional questions on that briefing, please feel free to do so.

[10] The first question is from me. Can you provide the committee with an interim evaluation of the effectiveness of 'The Right to be Safe' strategy?

[11] **Carl Sargeant:** Last year, we commissioned some work under the strategy's implementation plan. It is still early days and, as I said in the introduction, the scale of the problem is not growing—it is already there—but it is being increasingly identified. People are having access to services. The report contained many recommendations. One issue is the all-Wales domestic abuse helpline. In 2004-05, it received around 6,000 calls to its centre. In 2009-10, it received over 20,000 calls. That is a huge increase, but this is not because the crime was not there; the crime has always been there. It is about people being able to access the helpline and we have been very proactive in supporting that. The helpline has recently gone out to tender for the next four years, and I am very keen to support it. We have done some further 'Moneymadeclar' pilots in Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil, where our one-stop shops have been established. We have invested heavily in our one-stop shops—around £4.4 million in the last couple of years—to give people safe access to quality services where they are needed.

[12] **David Lloyd:** Credaf eich bod wedi ateb fy nghwestiwn yn rhannol, ond fe'i gofynnaf beth bynnag. Sut mae'r wefan ddwyieithog ynghylch cam-drin domestig ar gyfer Cymru gyfan, a lansiwyd yn ddiweddar, yn cyd-fynd â'ch cynlluniau i ddatblygu strategaeth wybodaeth arfaethedig yn ystod y flwyddyn ariannol nesaf?

David Lloyd: I think that you have partly answered my question, but I will ask it anyway. How does the recently launched all-Wales bilingual domestic abuse website fit into your plans to develop a proposed information strategy within the next financial year?

[13] **Carl Sargeant:** That is an important question. The bilingual website is important. On points of access, we are trying to be innovative in how we give opportunities to people, because people who suffer domestic abuse find it very difficult to cross that line on informing and seeking support. So, the bilingual website is just one portal that we are using, and we are updating it regularly. It is another tool in our kit for helping to ensure that people can access safe, quality services, such as the helpline. We have done some quite interesting work around modern technology—to do with texting and so on. Numbers can be accessed through text, so young people who are familiar with that service can text. We are also working with our partner agencies, such as Welsh Women's Aid. This is just one element that will help to support that.

[14] **Rosemary Butler:** I want to ask you about older people and domestic abuse. I know that you will be promoting World Elder Abuse Awareness Day in June and that you will use

that as an opportunity to promote this issue. How are you evaluating the impact of the domestic abuse strategy to ensure that it reflects the needs and circumstances of older people? I do not remember seeing a report on that.

[15] **Carl Sargeant:** This is very important. We recognise the whole spectrum. Domestic abuse is not unique to one age group. It can affect anybody and everybody. It is increasingly difficult to capture all that. I recognise the issues that you raise. There was a campaign around older people suffering from domestic abuse. We are supporting and enabling older vulnerable people with the access to justice pilot. We have been doing some work with the protection of vulnerable adults scheme, Age Cymru and the Commissioner for Older People in Wales to look at how best to evaluate this programme. That work is ongoing.

[16] **Rosemary Butler:** Do you have an end time on that? When are you likely to get any results?

[17] **Carl Sargeant:** We are going through the process to agree what the review should look like. I cannot give you a specific date. Jason might have more detail about the timeline.

[18] **Mr Lintern:** The pilot started in December 2010 and we will evaluate the programme right through the first 12 months. So, hopefully, it will be this time next year.

[19] **Mark Isherwood:** I think that my question has probably been answered, as it was on the access to justice pilots you have just referred to. Do you have plans to commence any further projects after the Swansea project finishes?

[20] **Carl Sargeant:** If we see some good practice and action in service delivery, we should act upon that. That is something that we are doing. I am aware that my officials are looking to give presentations to the POVA group. I am very interested in the project. It is also being presented at the next meeting of the domestic abuse co-ordinators in March. This is a rolling project; we think that it is positive, and as Minister with responsible for it at present, I think that it is something that we should pursue. However, Rosemary is right that this is a cohort of people who may find it even more difficult to report domestic abuse. We need to do more work on that and will continue to do so.

[21] **Sandy Mewies:** Bethan, before you ask your question, I draw your attention to the briefing that we have had from Welsh Women's Aid. Feel free to ask any questions on it.

[22] **Bethan Jenkins:** Apologies for being late.

[23] Could you provide us with an update on the evaluation of the all-Wales schools core liaison programme and stage 1 of the counselling strategy in relation to domestic abuse? Secondly, on a point that is not related to youth domestic abuse, could you update us on whether you will be incorporating care and support for sex workers into your future policies? A lot of attention has been given to the fact that only two men in Wales have been prosecuted for kerb crawling in the last year, and this issue is directly associated with domestic abuse, as many of the women who go into this line of work suffer abuse of this kind.

[24] **Carl Sargeant:** Thank you for that important question. The education element is really important. Through the communication strategy, we have been trying to assess how to give people the opportunity to talk about domestic abuse, so that it becomes the norm, because we need people to understand that it is not wrong to talk about it. It is about that communication strategy. The details of the all-Wales schools liaison project will be published later this month and be subject to collective responsibilities, so the Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning and the Minister for Health and Social Services will be linked in to ensure that it is signed off. We expect that evaluation to take place later this

month.

[25] The issue of sex workers is interesting, and I would be happy to look at it in detail in the strategy. We are doing some work on trafficking—there are also strong links with substance misuse and domestic abuse, and we are looking at the issue closely to see how it comes together. As you will be aware, I announced earlier this year that an anti-human-trafficking co-ordinator is being established. This will be the first position of its kind in the UK, which shows that we are recognising the issue in Wales. A lot of that work was done on the back of Joyce Watson's report, which was helpful in informing us as a Government. We are constantly learning; we recognise that elements of trafficking, substance misuse and sex workers are linked and that we need to understand them better. I would be happy to do some more work on those links in the strategy.

[26] **Sandy Mewies:** Minister, do you want to answer the question on counselling, and provide an update on the evaluation of the all-Wales schools core liaison programme?

[27] **Carl Sargeant:** Sorry, Bethan; you did mention those things, but I went off on a tangent. We aim to publish the stage 1 evaluation of the strategy by the end of March 2011. The final report is being considered by the steering group, and once it has been considered, it will be presented to me and other Cabinet colleagues. We hope to have a better understanding of it by the end of March.

[28] **Sandy Mewies:** I will give you a copy of the Welsh Women's Aid briefing. Perhaps your officials might light to take it, so that you can be aware of the concerns that it raises.

[29] **Carl Sargeant:** That would be helpful.

[30] **Lynne Neagle:** Could you tell the committee when you expect the integrated family support teams to start working with families where there is domestic violence?

9.15 a.m.

[31] **Carl Sargeant:** The family support teams are currently focused on substance misuse. As I said, there are links between substance misuse and domestic abuse. I have already talked with the Deputy Minister about how we synergise this so that, when people are signposted to support, they do not have to hear, 'That is not for us; you need to go somewhere else', because taking that step through the door, or making that phone call to the helpline, might be the biggest challenge that they face. I am conscious of the work on the family support units, and we are looking at how we can better integrate that with domestic abuse support. The plan is to roll that programme out and, again, I have been talking to the Minister about how we can better involve ourselves. We must have better joined-up Government support. It is not unique to certain communities; as I explained earlier, it can affect anyone and everyone. Where there is a high proportion of substance misuse, whether that is alcohol or drugs, we see a higher proportion of instances of domestic abuse, so we are looking at how we can concentrate our efforts collectively to support that.

[32] **Sandy Mewies:** As we are where we are in this Assembly session, if you get a date, perhaps you will let us know, because we are looking at legacy papers later on, and it might be useful for us.

[33] **Mohammad Asghar:** Minister, I have no doubt that you are doing well. From my side of the Chamber, I admire the way that you are dealing with domestic abuse. My question is on accommodation for women and families. As the review on provision of move-on accommodation is not expected to be completed until next year, how are you ensuring that move-on accommodation is meeting the needs of women and families fleeing domestic abuse

at present?

[34] **Carl Sargeant:** That is one significant part of the process that people go through to be safe. As I said at the beginning, being safe is the priority, and what we find is that the upheaval of people having to move away from their home is an added issue. We are trying to develop, in the right circumstances, a culture where we can support victims of domestic abuse, and families, in their own home, because that is important—moving a family into an unknown place is just an added complication that is disturbing and upsetting for them. In partnership with the Home Office, we support target hardening projects in homes, which includes locks, additional lighting, closed-circuit television in the right places, chains and personal support alarms. That is one element of creating a safe environment in which the person can feel safe.

[35] The issues around provision of accommodation are important, but the scale of the problem seems to be evident: more people are suffering from domestic abuse. As I said earlier, I do not think that this is new; it is just that it is only now being reported, because people feel more comfortable about coming forward. We therefore have to try to create more and better accommodation, and we are investing heavily in this field; I think that I am right in saying that the domestic abuse line is the only one in my budget out of which we have not taken any money.

[36] **Val Lloyd:** Minister, in December the Government published a review of the role of domestic abuse co-ordinators in Wales, and you followed that up with a written Cabinet statement. You noted in that statement that you would shortly be considering the impact of key recommendations on future arrangements for the domestic abuse co-ordinators. Could you let the committee know your initial thoughts on how you will take forward the key recommendations from the review?

[37] **Carl Sargeant:** The domestic abuse co-ordinators' work should raise the importance of domestic abuse across the key services that are provided, identifying service gaps and then doing something about them. Their role is primarily to understand the problem and then solve it, and we support them in doing that.

[38] Issues relating to domestic abuse are similar. Sometimes the causes and effects are different across communities, due to local factors. The accountability of domestic co-ordinators is an issue that should be dealt with locally; the way in which they respond to issues on the ground is important. They should also be looking at identifying champions in different departments and organisations. This is not about a single person doing the job; we share the practice and identification of support across different sectors and departments. This is a moving feast and there is still a lot to learn. However, the co-ordinators have been well received and are doing a very good job.

[39] **Veronica German:** I will move on to how you are ensuring that different bodies are playing their part in this, such as community safety partnerships, the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service and local health boards, and how you are ensuring that you know what they are doing. I notice that Welsh Women's Aid says in its briefing that it is particularly concerned about CAFCASS, and whether you have reviewed its policies. It is concerned about whether you have looked at these issues in detail, in terms of the contact arrangements, what is happening and what the outcomes are, rather than just saying, 'Oh yes, CAFCASS has a policy in place, and that is all very nice'. It is the same issue with the others. Could you give us some more information on that?

[40] **Carl Sargeant:** Gladly. CAFCASS comes under the portfolio of the Minister for Health and Social Services, although I am not passing the buck; as I said earlier, we have to develop a relationship that works across all Government portfolios. I do not want to create

toolkits that sit on the shelf and do not deliver anything. If we are going to do something, let us ensure that it is implemented. Otherwise, there is just no point; it is a waste of my time, your time and the time of anyone else who develops a kit. If the policy is a living document, it should be used. I have not seen the Welsh Women's Aid briefing, so I am not sure what the specific issues are. I am more than happy to look at the issues if I am offered a copy of the letter. However, my current priority is to look at how we get better services using the multi-agency approach, and I believe that it is important to ensure that the priority of the new Minister who comes in post-May is no different. That approach includes CAF/CASS and community safety partnerships. Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, all CSPs are required to undertake strategic assessments in this context. However, they should not undertake these exercises just because they have to. They should be meaningful. If there are failings, or perceived failings, in the system, I would be happy to look at them.

[41] **Rosemary Butler:** Minister, in response to earlier questions, you have talked about the importance of cross-portfolio working, and you have stressed the importance of local co-ordinators. Co-ordination is obviously at the forefront of this issue. In addition to the work that you have carried out with the Department for Health and Social Services in response to recommendation 17, how are you working with other Welsh Government departments to implement recommendations requiring a cross-portfolio approach? Also, how are you ensuring that this is mainstreamed, and that it is not just left up to you to jolly up the other departments?

[42] **Carl Sargeant:** I have been accused of many things, but never of jolly up other departments. When they see me, they do not call me jolly. This goes back to the crux of the discussion: how we hold responsibility for this collectively. I may hold the reins, but everyone needs to hold on to them, which is something that applies to the other parts of my portfolio as well as this one, such as my equality duties and so forth. I talk constantly to colleagues across the Cabinet about mainstreaming these issues. The departments for education, housing, and health all have a large stake in this. If you disengage from this process, you do not get rid of the problem; you just move it to someone else. The Welsh Assembly Government only has one pot of money, and we are all affected. If you spend more in one area, someone else gets less, so we need to improve how we do that. I think that we are getting better. I have seen much more joined-up government in our decisions. I am constantly telling local authorities that they must work together and not work in isolation, with silo mentality. That also applies to the Government. I think that we are working much better, collectively, because there is less money to go around. An intervention by health might save housing an awful lot of money. Early intervention through this domestic abuse policy will save health and social services huge amounts of money. We all have a responsibility to ensure that this is fully understood, Chair.

[43] **Sandy Mewies:** Lynne wanted to come back on a previous point.

[44] **Lynne Neagle:** I wanted to ask about recommendation 6 and evidence-based guidance. The Welsh Women's Aid briefing that we have received highlights that there is a problem with commissioners pressurising women's aid groups to open their doors to men. I know that this has been an issue in Torfaen. Clearly, the majority of the victims are women, and there are inherent risks in opening the doors to men, in that women will not feel able to access the services, or, even worse, that perpetrators might try to use that as an access point to the women. What are you doing to make sure that local authorities understand, loud and clear, their duties under this gender equality duty?

[45] **Carl Sargeant:** This type of support is a really difficult and sensitive issue. You are absolutely right; as I said before, when I gave you the statistics, seven out of 10 offences are committed on women by men, but that does not get away from the fact that three out of 10 offences are perpetrated on men. It is a really sensitive issue, and I am doing some work with

Welsh Women's Aid on how to get over that issue. We cannot ignore any gender in this regard—domestic abuse is a crime, and is wrong.

[46] I am aware of some of the pressures around access to services. We need to ensure that we have a protective environment for all. I know that some more work needs to be done on this. Again, I regularly meet with Paula Hardy from Welsh Women's Aid, and I am quite keen for us to better understand and support this. I do not want to see services isolated to a specific gender, because I know that it covers both genders, but there are issues around how that service is delivered. I accept that it is not always appropriate for both genders. It is really uncomfortable for men to go to Welsh Women's Aid, for the very reasons that you explained, Chair. I have not seen Welsh Women's Aid's paper. I will better understand the position if I have a copy of the letter, and I would be more than happy to address that. My commitment to tackling this is a high priority for me—it always has been, and, as long as I am in post, it will continue to be a high priority.

[47] **Mark Isherwood:** May I ask a supplementary question, Chair?

[48] **Sandy Mewies:** Yes; of course.

[49] **Mark Isherwood:** I have a question about children or young men who may have been victims or who are the children of an abused mother. During an inquiry, I was invited by Welsh Women's Aid to some refuges, one of which allowed the sons over the age of 16 to continue in residence, while another did not. It is clearly a very sensitive issue. I met some of the young men, and the refuge was providing them with a place of safety with their mother, so that the family relationship was maintained and the mutual support and love continued. Have you any thoughts, in that context, on how to address that issue?

9.30 a.m.

[50] **Carl Sargeant:** That goes back to an earlier question that you asked. We are trying to create an environment in which we can keep a family unit that has been affected by domestic abuse, whether that be physical or mental abuse, safe at home, if that is the best place for them to be. If it is not, and they have to go to a refuge, then that is another issue. As you highlighted, there are some difficulties around support and acceptance.

[51] As you are all aware, these kinds of situations are extremely traumatic for people, and there is no easy fix. It is challenging for me and for my team, but, where issues are raised, we continue to work to try to resolve them. I do not think that anyone here would not support the principle of moving that agenda forward. It is about how we get to that end goal. If we can keep people safe in their own homes, and remove the perpetrator, then that is the ideal for us, because people feel comfortable with that. However, it is not always the right thing to do.

[52] **Mark Isherwood:** The report's recommendation 11 refers to Home Office immigration rules regarding women with no recourse to public funds and the need to identify ways to raise awareness of the domestic violence rule in the interim, working with the Home Office. Recommendation 22 referred to funding for sexual assault referral centres, specialist domestic violence courts and independent domestic violence advisers. In terms of sexual assault referral centres, I note that it was discovered during the inquiry that there is not just public sector involvement by the police and forensic teams, but that the key to their success was third-sector involvement. For example, in north Wales, the north Wales rape and sexual abuse support centre and the NSPCC were involved. So, you need joined-up funding for that. What discussions has the Welsh Government had with the UK Government, and what representations has it made to it, to progress the committee's recommendations covering non-devolved and partially-devolved issues such as these?

[53] **Carl Sargeant:** I met Theresa May earlier this year; it was an interesting meeting, to say the least. I was a little disappointed, and I explained this to Theresa at the time, that, when we travelled up, we discovered that the domestic violence strategy had been removed from the website, so there was no access to it, although that was more to do with technical issues than with anything else. However, they said that they would be updating the policy and strategy soon. I said that that needed to be done pretty quickly, because that is the access point for people who need support.

[54] We had some discussions around how we could better align issues. The crime elements of this are non-devolved, but we are involved in the support mechanisms. So, there are synergies between the Westminster Government and the Welsh Assembly Government that are important. Independent domestic violence advisers, for instance, are funded by the Home Office, but operate within Wales. We have seen some great work from those advisers and I have written to the Home Office seeking clarity around support and funding for them. So, we have dialogue, and a reasonable relationship with colleagues in the Home Office, and it is something that we pursue. There are no boundaries in the way that we seek support. I hope that it will continue to be a positive relationship in the future as well.

[55] **Sandy Mewies:** The final question in this session is from me. Given the current financial climate, how are you ensuring that organisations tackling domestic abuse will continue to receive sufficient levels of funding?

[56] **Carl Sargeant:** That is a difficult question, Chair, in the current climate. All I can say is that my commitment is to ensure that tackling domestic abuse and violence against women remains a priority. As long as I can do that, then I will try to ensure the appropriate relevant funding streams. However, I think that what we recognise is just the tip of the iceberg; there is a lot more that we have not seen. The amount of money needed is therefore unknown. We have to be honest and open with people and say what we understand the scale of the problem to be, and then look at how we can fund and support that. The helpline is an indicator of the increase in service support that is needed: unfortunately, I think that demand will grow. If we have got our strategy right, whereby we are telling people that it is okay to report abuse and to do something about it, I think that demand will grow significantly, although I do not know by how much. I am not under the illusion that it will not grow.

[57] **Lynne Neagle:** All the work that is going on in Wales is great, but the non-devolved side has the potential to seriously undermine that. For instance, there have been difficulties in Gwent, in relation to what you just said about encouraging women to come forward, in that arrest warrants have been issued for women who have decided that they are too scared to go to court to testify. Would you consider raising that with the UK Government, because it raises issues in relation to training for magistrates, CPS policies and so on, and it throws a spanner in our works when we are trying to deal with getting the women away from the perpetrator and resettled?

[58] **Carl Sargeant:** There are some things that we do not have control over, as they are non-devolved areas. I am more than happy to take that specific issue up with my team, but we are already seeing issues, because of the financial challenges that communities and people are facing through changes to benefits—which is a huge issue—and changes in policing. Also, family courts in Wales are being closed, which affects access to local services. You cannot pick just one thing out, because so many areas are involved in the ability to live safely. We are facing huge challenges. We do not know what all the challenges are yet, but if there are any specific issues that the committee would like to raise for me to take forward in discussions with the Home Office, I am more than happy to do so, Chair.

[59] **Sandy Mewies:** That brings this session to a close. We will send a transcript to you, which can be checked for factual accuracy, but I am afraid that you cannot go now, because

you are on next. We do have a change-over of officials.

9.38 a.m.

**Craffu ar y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf yn Ysgrifenedig gan Lywodraeth
Cymru am Weithredu Argymhellion Adroddiad Mis Mai 2008 y Pwyllgor
Cymunedau a Diwylliant ar Ariannu Sefydliadau'r Sector Gwirfoddol
Scrutiny of Welsh Government Written Update on Implementation of
Recommendations of Communities and Culture Committee's May 2008
Report on Funding of Voluntary Sector Organisations**

[60] **Sandy Mewies:** The Minister is joined by Wendy Thomas, the policy manager of the voluntary sector unit, and Paul Dunhill, also from the voluntary sector unit. Thank you for your papers. Minister, would you like to say a few words on this before we move to questions?

[61] **Carl Sargeant:** I will be brief, because I am aware that I have probably been chatting for far too long already. The voluntary, or third, sector is an important part of service delivery in Wales. I have tried to create an environment of mutual respect and support between partners. The voluntary sector is one of the partners that is working with Government and local government, which sits in my portfolio. We hope that we have been able to strengthen the sector's position. Funding is always an issue. However, in the current economic climate, by having a better understanding of who does what and where, we can create solutions for the difficult future that we may be looking at as regards the financial constraints that affect service delivery. I am happy to take general questions, Chair.

[62] **Sandy Mewies:** The paper notes that statutory guidance on community planning, which included the duty to seek third sector reform, was issued in May 2010. What work is being undertaken to ensure that the guidance is being followed?

[63] **Carl Sargeant:** I know that you have a specific interest in this, Chair, because, without breaking confidences, you have written to me about community planning on several occasions, so I will be careful with my answer in case I get it wrong. As you said, we have tried to strengthen the role of the third sector in community planning. It is an important part of the planning process. We see organisations engaging with the public sector, the private sector, the voluntary and community sectors and the community as an important part of community growth and support. The problem with it is that it is guidance and therefore difficult to measure, because it may be implemented or it may not. Therefore, we recognise and continue to press that this is good for the delivery of community planning services and recommend that people refer to it. However, measuring it is difficult because, as I said, it is guidance and therefore not enforceable.

[64] **David Lloyd:** Trown at faterion yn ymwneud â chynghorau gwirfoddol sirol. Yn eich barn chi, a yw ymwybyddiaeth ohonynt wedi cynyddu ers i'r pwyllgor gyhoeddi ei adroddiad, a pha waith y mae angen ei wneud o hyd i wella eu perfformiad a'u heffeithiolrwydd? **David Lloyd:** To turn to matters relating to county voluntary councils, in your view, has awareness of CVCs increased since the committee published its report and what work still needs to be carried out to improve their performance and effectiveness?

[65] **Carl Sargeant:** I believe that CVCs and the work that they do are recognised more. We are working with the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action to identify the services to be provided nationally, regionally and locally and who should provide them. CVCs have a role to play in that. On monitoring and supporting that, six monthly arrangements for evaluation

are currently in place, reviewing service standards and performance against targets with service patterns and best practice. So, there is recognition of CVCs and there is still an opportunity for them to grow, but the monitoring element of that is also important so that we best understand what they do and how they do it.

[66] **Rosemary Butler:** I want to talk about the information on core funding, Minister. You note in your paper that a grants management framework has been developed by the Welsh Assembly Government. Could you briefly explain how this framework operates, and what benefits it brings to those third sector organisations that are seeking funding?

[67] **Carl Sargeant:** My opening remarks were about funding and most of my discussions with the third sector centre on money. Therefore, as we recognise the work that the third sector does, we must try to understand for it how it can better access financial support. We believe that the framework helps in that process. Again, it is about signposting and better processes for accessing funding and who it is appropriate to access that funding. There is an approval gateway process, so applications go through a standard process of approval. Every organisation goes through the same process. Every organisation understands that this is the way that you find funding, so the framework is well established.

[68] What is important, and we sometimes also get caught up in it, is the transparency of decisions. That is really important, in terms of understanding how we make these decisions, and accountability and consistency. Again, we have tried to do that through this framework, so that everyone knows that this is the process that you go through to access funding, these are the outcomes and this is what you can expect. So, it is a level playing field, in effect, and a process that all applicants understand. I hope that that is helpful.

9.45 a.m.

[69] **Mark Isherwood:** Again, this is a question about sustainable funding; several recommendations were made, to which you responded in your paper. What assistance has been provided to the third sector to enable it to secure sustainable funding, including funding from non-governmental sources? Some examples come to mind from previous inquiries. The first inquiry in the second Assembly, which preceded this one, talked about passporting. Where an organisation is delivering a project to the required standard and meeting specified needs, should it have to go through the whole application process again, or should it not be given a passport to move on? You made reference to issues of longer term funding. On transition funding when organisations are coming to the end of the specified grant period, they should be given sufficient notice to reapply without having to put staff on notice of redundancy and finding that they have lost that member of staff before the funding has been confirmed.

[70] There is a reference in our previous report to the potential for more third sector organisations to become less reliant on grants, in other words, to become social enterprises and be more socially entrepreneurial in accessing and drawing down funding on their own. I would be grateful if you could address those issues in your answer.

[71] **Carl Sargeant:** Thank you, Mark; you made some really important points. To support the process of sustainable funding, we have created a framework around funding, as I said earlier, but we have also created the Sustainable Funding Cymru website for voluntary organisations to access. That gives them information on grant support, loan finance and so on, and where they can access this support. It is a database for voluntary organisations that can be accessed across Wales.

[72] On long-term funding, this is a bit controversial, Mark, but I will say it anyway: I am always amazed at the number of organisations that receive programme funding for two or

three years and say at the end of the three years, having known full well that it was a three-year programme, ‘Are you going to fund it next year?’ or ‘What are you going to do with this?’. We say upfront that it is only a three-year or 12-month project or whatever it may be, but there is always an expectation that it will be continued. We have a responsibility there, because we have to be careful about what we invent. You can introduce something, it works and then the voluntary organisation, quite rightly, asks for it to continue. It is very difficult to say ‘no’ because people’s jobs and service delivery are affected by it. So, we have to be careful about what we invent. Nevertheless, if it is a two-year funding package, people should not be under any illusions that two years means five years—two years means two years. After that, we only hope to be able to support those initiatives.

[73] The key thing that you asked was about how we can make organisations sustainable. We can no longer afford to support all organisations because the money is just not there. We have to give organisations some space to develop and that is why my department is working closely with social enterprises to see how we can encourage social enterprise in communities to provide support. Some charities and voluntary sector groups can manage being outside of that very comfortably. Some organisations have seen a 3 per cent reduction in funding this year and have been able to manage that easily enough, but a 3 per cent reduction has meant closure for some other organisations. It is about what their structures will allow, but we must try to create an environment where they can sustain themselves with a little support, but not full support from Government funding, because the money is just not there.

[74] **Sandy Mewies:** I support you on that, Minister. I worked in the voluntary sector for a considerable time and you are absolutely right to say that many organisations undertake to do things within a time limit, but seem to be terribly surprised at the end of that time that their funding is ending. Is it something to do with the way in which it is discussed upfront? If they sign up to a service level agreement, should they not be signing up to a clear declaration that they know that they should make themselves sustainable in the long term? I was always surprised to hear people say, ‘Crikey, we have reached the end of the three years.’ So, it should be discussed upfront and if they sign that SLA, that should be the case. The other reason for what you are saying is that, if you continue to fund certain voluntary organisations that may have achieved what they can—some organisations need continuous funding; I am not disputing that—you are not allowing new and innovative ideas to come forward that meet the needs of the time. Have you given any thought to that?

[75] **Carl Sargeant:** You may be surprised, but people do sign up to that upfront.

[76] **Sandy Mewies:** I am not surprised.

[77] **Carl Sargeant:** They do sign up to understanding that it is a grant for only 12 months, three years, five years and so on. However, it just seems that that goes to the bottom of the drawer until the three-year period, or whatever it is, is nearly up, which is when it comes back out again. I am committed to supporting them where I can. You are right: there has to be innovation. Most organisations are very good at shifting from where they are and keeping up with the times, and the services that they deliver are outstanding in most cases. However, I go back to the point that there has to be an understanding of sustainability and Mark rightly raises the question of how we can encourage them to be financially stable without continued Government support. There are some organisations that will never be there and will always need some support, and that is a fact of life, and there are others that need to be more innovative. I have tasked the WCVA with looking at how we can help them to help themselves and we are working on that currently.

[78] **Sandy Mewies:** Of course, when the big society is in operation, they will be doing it for nothing anyway.

[79] **Mark Isherwood:** I do not think that that will be the case.

[80] In addition to the third sector organisations that you have described, Minister, there are many that I have visited as part of this inquiry and the inquiry on domestic abuse, which we discussed in the previous item, that are delivering key services to a high standard. They have all complained—and they raised the same point independently—that they have to spend an inordinate amount of time filling in grant application forms, using words cleverly and appropriately to meet the latest specified goal or tweak in the Government’s strategy, whereas ultimately they continue to deliver something pretty similar, with the same people. It was almost a tweaked dialogue rather than an honest dialogue, because what they say and how they say it takes priority perhaps over the need to continue to deliver that core service. How do you think that we can overcome that?

[81] **Carl Sargeant:** Government priorities vary, and your Government and our Government will have different priorities. People should be upfront and say to organisations, ‘We will fund you because we want you to deliver this priority.’ For example, the Government would say that it wanted to regenerate communities, and there would be a dialogue about how we do that. That is what funding should respond to, and I do not think that we should shy away from that discussion.

[82] I do have concerns about the issue of constantly reapplying, but I have also asked my team to understand the pattern of applications that come into the Welsh Assembly Government, because some are very clever. Some organisations apply two or three times, and get funding two or three times. I do not think that that is quite right. They have to be upfront, and we have to be upfront about who and how we are funding. So, I have tasked the team with looking at the people that we fund. In the bids, there are sometimes lines for the funding of administration services and we are funding the same person three times. That is not right. I do not blame them for doing that because that is the process that is in place, but we need to change the process so that we understand fully where the money is going and what the organisations do, and so that we have an honest debate about who gets what.

[83] **Sandy Mewies:** On that point, are you also tasking your team with looking at where organisations overlap? That is another issue.

[84] **Carl Sargeant:** Absolutely, and I will not fund it if I know that there is duplication in projects. I am sorry, but that is where we are. I will not fund it. I am saying exactly the same to the local government family as well.

[85] **Lynne Neagle:** Clearly, the situation is going to become much more challenging for the voluntary sector. One of the reasons it keeps coming back to the Assembly Government is that it is very difficult to get sustainable funding from local government, LHBs and so on. Presumably, organisations that are grant funded by the Assembly Government have to report back on, say, a quarterly basis on how much they have spent, what they are achieving and whether they are reaching targets. Does that reporting include any questions on the progress they are making towards reaching sustainable funding?

[86] **Carl Sargeant:** I am not sure. I do not think that it does, and I think that that is a very important point. We have the dialogue at the beginning about the fact that it is three-year funding and that, at the end of three years, it will end so that they should not expect any more after that. Unfortunately, that gets lost in translation sometimes—some people understand it and some do not. However, I do not know whether, as part of the reporting element, we ask the question as to how far along the line they are with regard to sustainable funding. I will certainly look at that, Lynne. Thank you.

[87] **Bethan Jenkins:** If it is okay, I will ask something about that as well. With regard to

your relationship with the Welsh Local Government Association, as Lynne mentioned, local authorities are hard pressed, but I find that the priorities of local authorities vary in terms of those that they deliver on. That is not a bad thing in some instances, but Age Concern has not been funded in Neath Port Talbot, for example, although it will be funded much more proportionately in some other areas. What guidance are you giving to local authorities on the prioritisation of the third sector in terms of grant funding, so that local councils can have some sort of idea about the strategic priorities of the Government, rather than it just being a case of them saying, ‘We, as a council, do not prioritise you’? I will ask another question after you have answered that one.

[88] **Carl Sargeant:** That is a really challenging question. I do not seek to micromanage local authorities, and nor would I want to do that. However, what I have done—and this is my commitment—because I have responsibility for local government and the third sector, is to write on several occasions to local authorities about expectation. My expectation is that they should have clear dialogue with the sector in order to understand service delivery. I do not expect the voluntary sector to be the first in line for cuts. As I said earlier in our discussions, if you do that, you just shunt costs; you do not remove them from the system, and someone has to pay somewhere. So, I expect local authorities to have a good dialogue with the third sector. There are some authorities that are very good at that, and there are some that are not. I address that: every time I see them, I tell them. There is an expectation of opportunity and they should take this as an opportunity to see how they can develop better services and support through the voluntary and third sector. I will continue to press that. As I said, the WCVA has a seat at the table of the efficiency and innovation board, which is working pan-public sector. It has a strong voice. Jane Hutt chairs that.

[89] **Bethan Jenkins:** Thank you. As a follow-up to that, my question is about the progress that is being made on the public sector code of practice. Are organisations that do not have such a code adopting one or in the process of doing so? If they are not doing so, why is that the case?

[90] **Carl Sargeant:** Again, I am pressing local government to introduce that and compacts between organisations. At partnership council meetings, I am constantly saying that. They say that I protest too much sometimes, that I complain and moan at them, but I will continue to do so as long as some fail to react. That is why I am pressing local government hard and I will continue to do so to ensure that they provide good quality public services. That is why we are in the game and that is what they should be delivering with the collaboration of partners in the third sector.

[91] 10.00 a.m.

[92] **Sandy Mewies:** We have quite a few questions to get through, and not a lot of time, so I ask Members and the Minister to be succinct. We will get through them, I hope.

[93] **Lynne Neagle:** Are there any experiences of good practice that you can share with us that you have picked up as a Government from other funders, such as the Big Lottery Fund?

[94] **Carl Sargeant:** The team is constantly looking at who does what best. I have an open-door policy on this—if it works, let us think about it, and I do not mind who is doing it. My team is constantly looking at how to improve through simple methods, which are best. Accountability is key as well.

[95] **Val Lloyd:** Minister, you note in your paper that a third sector group has been established to promote joined-up working—that is a phrase that we hear often—on third sector issues between Welsh Assembly Government departments. How do you intend to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of that group?

[96] **Carl Sargeant:** My understanding is that there will be a further report towards the end of March on how that group works. I hope that I come across as genuine in my commitment to the joined-up working and partnership approach. Far too many people talk about it but do not deliver, and that is what really frustrates me about collaboration and partnership working. They will talk about it until they are nearly there, and then stop. Well, that is not good enough, and I am pushing that hard, and will continue to do so while I am Minister. It is important.

[97] **Val Lloyd:** Minister, I did not mean it personally.

[98] **Carl Sargeant:** That is a relief.

[99] **Val Lloyd:** It was borne of frustration and was not meant personally. Thank you for your answer.

[100] **Sandy Mewies:** Perhaps we could have a copy of that report in March.

[101] **Carl Sargeant:** Yes.

[102] **Veronica German:** If we move on to equality issues, there are a number of recommendations on that subject. How have you ensured that equality issues, particularly those relating to the Welsh language, are addressed? In your evidence, you say that the Welsh Language Board found little evidence of Welsh-language applications for funding being submitted, but did highlight that Farming Connect, which produced a lot of bilingual materials, had seen an increase in Welsh-language applications. Could you give us more information on that?

[103] **Carl Sargeant:** The Assembly Government's human resources equality and diversity team delivers training across the organisation. I am not responsible for applications, but I am responsible for giving people access with no barriers. That is something that my team is working hard on, through bilingual web portals and so on. We go beyond that, actually; it is not just about the Welsh language, but other languages used across Wales, and that is important. I am responsible for equality, but there is also collective responsibility across Cabinet, and there are recent examples of that in our budget. This is the first time that we have published equality impact assessments across the budget, and I was the driver behind that. I think that it is really important. Again, we need transparency about the people who receive funding, explaining the reasons why and the financial pressures that we are under. I do not think that we should hide behind that. We should be open and transparent and tell people, 'This is why we have done it, and this is about the equality duties that we have around that budget'. It is challenging, but it is something that we have to keep pushing.

[104] **Sandy Mewies:** Bethan has a short question, which will no doubt have a short answer, and then Oscar will ask the last question in this session.

[105] **Bethan Jenkins:** I just wanted to ask about recommendation 24, and specifically gender budgeting. Could you expand on that a bit? Is it happening across the different portfolios, especially in economic development? We know that women will be hard pressed by the economic situation that we are in.

[106] **Carl Sargeant:** We use a term on this, but I cannot think of the term right now. When we look at our budget, we consider all aspects of equality, and the issue of gender budgeting specifically does not encapsulate all that we do. People can be missed out. An example that I have used in the past is that, if you are just looking at gender, you miss out other issues; you could have a black disabled woman, but with my equality duties I have to

consider all the impacts. That is why our budgeting processes consider the broader principles of gender as well as other equality elements, such as ethnic minority groups and disabled people. We capture the gender element, but we are much broader than that in our budgetary decisions. I am more than happy to drop you a paper on that. We have had some interesting discussions around that. I think that we go beyond our duties—rightly so—in terms of what we consider in our budgeting decisions.

[107] **Sandy Mewies:** Thank you. We would appreciate that paper.

[108] **Mohammad Asghar:** My question is on recommendation 25, on marketing and branding. We know of the ‘Give a Little–Gain a Lot’ media campaign, which has developed an all-Wales brand. I am pleased that this recommendation has already been implemented. Following the development of an all-Wales brand for the third sector, what role do you see for the Welsh Government in continuing to promote the sector to the wider public and in raising awareness of the sector’s role within communities?

[109] **Carl Sargeant:** The responsibility for volunteering falls under my remit, as does branding and process. There has been a huge debate around the big society over the last few weeks. Some are supportive of it while others are not. We have been doing elements of the big society in Wales for years. Where it works, we should support it. I support the volunteering aspect of it. What you cannot do—this is not a political point, Chair—is ask people to do things without fully funding or supporting them. It just does not work. In terms of how we brand the process, you are quite right that ‘Give a Little–Gain a Lot’ is important for volunteering. We see that as a proactive approach from Government. Again, if you ask people to do something, you have to support them in doing it. That is a principle that I, as the Minister responsible for volunteering, will continue to adhere to.

[110] **Sandy Mewies:** Of course, you cannot make volunteers turn up every Tuesday if they do not want to.

[111] **Carl Sargeant:** No, generally not.

[112] **Sandy Mewies:** Thank you for those two very interesting sessions on inquiries that go back before my time on this committee, and before yours as Minister as well. Later on, we will be talking about legacy papers. I would be grateful for the papers that you said that you will send. We will circulate them to Members. There will probably be some legacy recommendations coming out of today’s discussions. These are important issues from 2008 that the next Assembly will want to pick up on, to see how things are developing, particularly in the context of change that you have mentioned. Thank you to you and your officials for the evidence that you have given. As before, we will send you a copy of the transcript to check for factual accuracy.

[113] **Carl Sargeant:** Thank you, Chair.

10.08 a.m.

Cynnig Trefniadol Procedural Motion

[114] **Sandy Mewies:** We need to go into private session to allow the committee to consider a draft inquiry report on the impact of the UK Government’s Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill, and to allow the committee to discuss potential issues for inclusion in the legacy report, which I mentioned earlier. Therefore, I move that

the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance

with Standing Order No. 10.37(vi).

[115] I see that the committee is in agreement.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10.09 a.m.
The public part of the meeting ended at 10.09 a.m.*