

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol](#) ar [Atal trais ar sail rhywedd drwy ddulliau iechyd y cyhoedd](#)

This response was submitted to the [Equality and Social Justice Committee](#) consultation on [The public health approach to preventing gender-based violence](#)

PGBV 07

Ymateb gan: Plismona yng Nghymru | Response from: Policing Wales



Policing in Wales submission for the public health approach to preventing gender-based violence consultation.

Introduction

As a response to the Equality and Social Justice Committee's consultation on the public health approach to gender-based violence¹, Policing in Wales went to all the Office of Police and Crime Commissioners (OPCCs) in Wales to gather their views. Below are their responses to the three questions posed in the Terms of Reference for the consultation.

1. What works in preventing gender-based violence before it occurs (primary prevention) and intervening earlier to stop violence from escalating (secondary prevention)?

Dyfed-Powys OPCC

- Dyfed-Powys OPCC state that engaging and educating men and boys is vital in the primary prevention of gender-based violence. Inputs at schools and across communities are important.
- In October 2022, Dyfed-Powys Police and Crime Commissioner Dafydd Llywelyn, responded to the Welsh Government's response to the Children, Young People and Education Committee's Report "*Everybody's affected: Peer-on-peer sexual harassment among learners*"², highlighting the need for funding and support for specific training for schools linked to peer-on-peer sexual harassment.
- Also, in response to the above Committee Report, the Commissioner recommended that his Youth Ambassadors, together with members of similar Panels and Forums Wales-wide, be involved in an awareness-raising campaign linked to peer-on-peer sexual harassment, engage with their peers who have been victims, and on what education young people consider would be effective in addressing and preventing such harassment³. The Chair of the Committee asked the Senedd for reassurance that young people will genuinely and directly be involved as Mr Llywelyn suggested, and their response was that they continue to work with partner organisation on the best way to deliver a Youth Advisory Board.
- The Regional Adviser of the Mid and West Wales VAWDASV Partnership noted that the Partnership has a great deal of evidence to support the effectiveness of this work with young people, professionals within communities and projects such as Bystander and Community Champions.
- **It is the OPCC's view that prevention needs to be inclusive to raise awareness and must include communities within the response to gender-based violence.**

¹ [The public health approach to preventing gender-based violence \(senedd.wales\)](https://www.senedd.wales)

² [Everybody's affected \(senedd.wales\)](https://www.senedd.wales)

³ [Young people identify three priorities for Police, as Youth Ambassadors come together to form Dyfed-Powys Youth Forum \(dyfedpowys-pcc.org.uk\)](https://www.dyfedpowys-pcc.org.uk) for further information see contact details at bottom of article.

- The Commissioner and his representatives have met with organisations who deliver education to men to empower them to understand and show how they can help to make women feel safe as a positive step towards preventing domestic violence, such as Cardiff-based *What Can I Do?*, to find out more about their services.
- The Commissioner would also advocate giving survivors of gender-based violence a voice in educating and awareness-raising, through sharing their experiences. Dyfed Powys OPCC has previously involved survivors in police training and intend to expand on this in the future.
- Members of the Dyfed-Powys Victim Engagement Forum⁴ were interviewed about their experiences with Dyfed-Powys Police. They provided feedback on what went well, what did not go well, the advice they would give to officers dealing with cases similar to theirs, and how their experience affected their future interactions with the Force. One of the Forum members interviewed was a victim of stalking, and another a victim of coercive and controlling behaviour. The interviews were brought together into one training video which has been incorporated into Dyfed-Powys Police's training package. This video helps to ensure that police officers and staff are provided with a real-life perspective of survivors' views of the policing service.
- The Commissioner would suggest that such an approach, involving survivors in learning, be adopted for educating within our communities.
- In the same vein, the VAWDASV Regional Adviser emphasises the need for there to be open challenge to poor practice, regular and routine opportunity for scrutiny, and the provision of feedback from survivors in terms of their experience. It is also imperative that survivors are updated in terms of what was done/changed as a result.
- The OPCC argues that whole family approaches are very effective and impactful, changing a mindset and involving the women within a family in the education of the boys and men.
- **In terms of secondary prevention, Dyfed-Powys OPCC states that a multi-agency approach is key in achieving a holistic response, effective safeguarding for the survivor, improved offender management, and a better outcome for the survivor.**
- The VAWDASV Regional Adviser highlighted that **it is important to acknowledge that early intervention can happen at any point in the survivor's journey:** It needs to be the right response at the first point/opportunity for the individual to have access to support. Support for survivors of gender-based violence also needs to be uncomplicated with as few steps as possible.
- Survivors also need to have confidence in reporting violence to the police and in seeking support from such services. Considering recent reports and reviews, more work is needed to improve public trust and confidence.

North Wales OPCC

North Wales OPCC acknowledge that education and awareness training is critical in preventing gender violence. Ongoing work in North Wales that the OPCC points out includes:

- **School Liaison Police Officers providing inputs to secondary school children in relation to VAWG offences to prevent primary offences.** These lessons include domestic abuse, sexual violence, cyber bullying and stalking. Stori Cymru⁵ (previously known as Hafan Cymru) also

⁴ [Victim Engagement Forum \(dyfedpowys-pcc.org.uk\)](https://dyfedpowys-pcc.org.uk)

⁵ [Home | Stori \(storicymru.org.uk\)](https://storicymru.org.uk)

provide lessons to primary and secondary children regarding safe relationships and VAWG topics.

- **Activity planned during ‘Freshers’ week at local universities.** This will include **media campaigns and inputs regarding personal safety and ‘spiking’ offences.** A ‘spiking’ trigger plan has been devised as a secondary prevention which focus’ on evidence gathering with a view to securing prosecution as well as hot spot identification;
- **Use of social media alerts** as a preventative strategy to highlight good practice and incidents of concern continues, with specific focus on VAWG offences;
- **The ‘Ask me’ community scheme⁶** has secured funding in North Wales. Delivery is due to start imminently. The aim of the scheme is to end VAWDASV by educating the community to break the silence, raise awareness and to encourage disclosure around domestic abuse.
- The OPCC also notes that additionally **robust policing surrounding the application and policing of civil orders, including stalking prevention orders, sexual harm prevention orders, DVPO’s and DVD disclosures** promotes secondary prevention and ensures that victims have confidence to engage with the police and support services.
- Such robust enforcements also send out a clear message to the perpetrator and the wider community that such breaches will not be tolerated and do indeed have consequences.
- **Good scientific evidence is an essential part of a public health approach to violence prevention** argues the OPCC. There is extensive evidence for the effectiveness of early years and young people’s interventions, parenting training and control of violent and addictive behaviours.

South Wales OPCC

South Wales OPCC broke down its response as to what works into Primary and Secondary Prevention which this report has broken down.

Primary Prevention

- **Culture change** such as identifying harmful language, attitudes and ‘norms’ in workplaces and public spaces and addressing them. Calling out, offering alternatives and educating on negative impact.
- The whole systems approach to culture change would be for example *Change that Lasts⁷* that upskills professionals and develops networks of ‘ambassadors’ to promote change in communities. *Change that Lasts* is a community-based approach which empowers community members and professionals who are likely to encounter victims/ survivors to become familiar with signs and symptoms of gender-based violence, and where appropriate offering safety/support advice.
- **Bystander / upstander approach** which is promoting the view that everyone can play a role in preventing gender-based violence and providing tools and resources to encourage confidence in challenging or calling out harmful behaviours and attitudes.
- **Positive role modelling for children and young people** particularly in male dominated environments such as football/ rugby clubs to challenge stereotypes and promote positive

⁶ [Ask Me project : Welsh Women's Aid \(welshwomensaid.org.uk\)](http://welshwomensaid.org.uk)

⁷ [About Change That Lasts - Women’s Aid \(womensaid.org.uk\)](http://womensaid.org.uk)

messaging. For example, the *White Ribbon campaign*⁸ encourages males to take a stand against violence against women.

- **Commitment to commissioning services which create opportunities for potentially isolated children and young people** to access positive role models and peer networks which may leave them less vulnerable to negative external influences.
- **Communications campaigns** to continually promote messaging of what constitutes unacceptable behaviours, how to access support/ behaviour change interventions, and the outcome of reporting. Using this messaging helps to change the narrative and deter men from partaking in harmful societal norms and empower them to challenge peers when needed.
- **Education** by ensuring children and young people are educated in a space that does not tolerate harmful gender-based attitudes.
- **Avoiding censoring topics which may be seen as controversial** (for example, *Manosphere*⁹) and creating a safe space to openly discuss ‘difficult’ topics in a supportive environment, with staff who are confident in the subject matter and with appropriate resources.
- **A Trauma informed approach** when identifying and challenging harmful attitudes and behaviours, and promoting healthy relationships, acknowledging impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACES) and additional vulnerabilities and ensuring children are treated as victims in their own right

Secondary Prevention

- **Peer support and empowerment** such as the *Everybody’s Invited* movement¹⁰ created a safe space for survivors to share stories with aim to expose and eradicate rape culture.
- **Solution focused approaches** focusing on perpetrator behaviours (such as *Equilibrium*¹¹, *Driving Change*¹², *Re-Provide*¹³) which hold medium risk perpetrators to account but also offer alternative strategies and tools to manage behaviour.
- **Diversions court disposals for first time offences** to provide education and support with the view of preventing further escalation. This works best when victim voice is considered.
- **Programmes focusing on culture change within workforce** such as *Safe and Together*¹⁴ model which reframes children’s services response to families impacted by domestic abuse by focusing on the perpetrator history and behaviour.
- **Suite of interventions and effective referral pathways between them**, incorporating a ‘Step-up/ Step-down’ approach so that individuals can access support prior to crisis situations.
- **Raising awareness with professionals of risks associated with post-separation abuse**, ensuring that support options and risk management is available regardless of relationship status.
- **Specialist child to parent abuse interventions**, ensuring a trauma informed lens to support families to de-escalate risk and provide alternative strategies and coping mechanisms.

⁸ [White Ribbon UK](#)

⁹ Collections of Websites, blogs, online forums etc promoting masculinity, misogyny and opposed to feminism. Particularly related to Incels and Mens rights activists.

¹⁰ [Everyone’s Invited \(everyonesinvited.uk\)](#)

¹¹ [Independent Domestic Violence Advocate – Equilibrium - WeCare](#)

¹² [Drive Project](#)

¹³ [Reprovide | Respect](#)

¹⁴ [About the Safe & Together™ Model | Safe & Together Institute \(safeandtogetherinstitute.com\)](#)



- Age-appropriate peer on peer healthy **relationships interventions and education**.
- **Whole School Approach** to ensure consistent language, processes and training for all staff.
- **Legislation and best practise guidance** that hold organisations to account can provide tools and frameworks for bodies to ensure they are operating within appropriate parameters and that there are processes to follow to prevent and disrupt gender-based violence (for example *VAWDASV Act 2015*¹⁵).

¹⁵ [Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence \(Wales\) Act 2015 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/12)

2. How effective is a public health approach to preventing gender-based violence and what more needs to be done to address the needs of different groups of women, including LGBT+, ethnic minorities, young and older people at risk of violence at home and in public spaces?

Dyfed-Powys OPCC

- **Dyfed-Powys OPCC states that a Public Health approach can be successful with sufficient funding and the right infrastructure. All partners must buy-in to and support such an approach.**
- Linked to what has been highlighted under ‘education’ in the first question, having a whole societal approach to the prevention of VAWDASV is fundamental to achieve true cultural change. It is however dependant on the entrenched cultural beliefs and behaviours within communities and within key organisations.
- Improved data sharing is needed to deliver an effective public health approach to preventing gender-based violence. The Commissioner recently responded to the Deputy Minister for Social Services’ request for information following the Logan Mwangi Case review.

Within this response, the Commissioner stated:

“As Commissioner, I chair the Wales Data Analysis Innovation and Improvement Network (WDAIIN). WDAIIN is a partner Network of the Safer Communities Board for Wales, and aims to support multi-agency evidence-based, intelligence led partnership working to support safe, strong and more confident communities¹⁶. It brings together analysts from across the public sector in Wales to share and promote good practice. On 8th March this year, WDAIIN hosted a national conference titled ‘A Data Driven Approach to Creating Safer Communities’. Discussions at the event highlighted the need for all public sector partners to significantly improve our data sharing practices to develop more efficient and better targeted delivery of services and critically, avoid duplication. The variety of presentations and discussions at the event highlighted many examples of good practice already in existence, such as the Violence Prevention Unit, SAIL databank and Better Outcomes through Linked Data project. However, what struck me most was the lack of consistency of approaches between, and indeed within, sectors across Wales. The challenge was articulated by one delegate as “those at the top think / expect data sharing is happening, those at the bottom are trying desperately to share, and somewhere in the middle it is being blocked.”

“I am not suggesting for one moment that this is an intentional act to prevent data sharing. However, I do feel there is a general apprehension to routinely sharing data across public bodies. This may be due to the strict regulations around sharing sensitive and personal data, the complexity of different bodies’ systems in actually facilitating sharing, or that different agencies have differing thresholds for intervening in complex cases such as Logan’s. We, as leaders of public services in Wales need to flip the narrative: from the data protection restrictions, to “what will be the harm if we don’t share”.”

Additional feedback from the VAWDASV Regional Adviser includes:

¹⁶ [Introduction to the Partner Networks - Wales Safer Communities](#)

- Obtaining and presenting an evidence base for interventions is costly both in time and money which means it then becomes difficult to trial/deliver longer term change investment (e.g., IRIS I).
- This approach also requires running existing provisions alongside the development of new and extensive research-based projects. Careful consideration of funding provision is required as the OPCC notes they cannot take funding away from the provision of existing important services. They are challenged by conflicting priorities of the different organisations; therefore, ring-fenced funding is important.
- Governance structures are key to a public health approach but must be multi-agency. Expertise of specific specialist sectors must be prioritised, but all the partners involved need to be represented within the approach.
- **Finally, the OPCC notes that all regional boards are needed to align to maximise the potential of funding and cross cutting priorities.**

North Wales OPCC

- **North Wales OPCC acknowledges that the links between substance misuse and Domestic Abuse (DA) is key and as such a public health approach, in conjunction with a criminal justice approach, is key to preventing such violence.**
- **There is only so much that policing can do to tackle this issue alone** the OPCC argues. They gave the example of a pilot that is due to commence in one area of North Wales whereby perpetrators of DA will be tested for controlled substances. Those who test positive require bespoke specialist help which is beyond the expertise of policing alone.
- Migrant victims can struggle to access funding/support. Whilst local authorities can agree to fund provisions in some instances (child dependants), general lack of funding/support can be an initial barrier in supporting victims.
- Minority victims can have additional challenges in reporting VAWDASV offences around:
 1. **Language;**
 2. **Lack of knowledge.** Victims can be unaware of opportunities available or how to ask for help;
 3. **Fear and misunderstanding** of statutory authorities and the action they may/may not take.
- Improved awareness within these groups is vital to ensure all communities are protected.
- The health community and the police, as part of partnership working, should adopt information sharing approaches to tackling violence, particularly in adult and children's safeguarding and in crimes such as DA and RASSO (Rape and Serious Sexual Offences) involving alcohol and substance misuse.
- **Primary prevention of conditions which increase the likelihood of gender violence should be a collective objective** and were it is not possible to prevent violence, early intervention should be undertaken to mitigate further escalation. This involves early warning and intervention, de-escalation and conflict handling, alongside effective planning.
- There are several examples of promising public health and partnership interventions across the world including psychological interventions for survivors; economic and social empowerment programmes; community interventions to change unequal gender norms;

programmes that enhance safety in schools and include curriculums that challenges gender stereotypes and promotes relationships based on equality and consent.

- To achieve lasting change, The OPCC states **that it is important to enact and enforce legislation and develop and implement policies that promote gender equality; allocate resources to prevention and response; and invest in effective women’s support services.**

South Wales OPCC

- South Wales OPCC stated that public awareness raising campaigns are effective at casting light on harmful behaviours that may be less recognised by the public such as gaslighting, coercive control, which encourages discourse. The OPCC further argues that targeted campaigns to address the needs of different groups of women could be a way of reaching those with additional barriers.
- Some of the challenges to this approach the OPCC notes include disjointed governance arrangements across statutory and non-statutory organisations can lead to duplication, lack of coordination, unsustainable funding and lack of consistency.
- The OPCC also notes the difficulty in measuring effectiveness of the public health approach without long term data and quality research which incorporates marginalised groups. Better information sharing and consistency of data is required therefore to maximise impact of a public health approach.
- This would include funded research into the specific needs of marginalised communities to provide an evidence base for future planning, as well as long term research to measure impact.
- The OPCC also further argues **to ensure an inclusive approach to survivor engagement and cooperation to gain representation from different groups of women to broaden the range of perspectives.**
- Partnership working and commissioning ‘by and for’ organisations to provide support service tailored to need.
- Ensuring a culturally competent lens for commissioned services, by promoting good practise, through monitoring and supporting to access training and resources
- **Ensuring equitable delivery of interventions respective of protected characteristics and intersectionality**, acknowledging gaps in data of harder to reach communities and engaging and commissioning ‘by and for’ services.
- Financial resources are required to trial, test and roll out of services that support the system change we require, whilst protecting funding already invested in victims’ services.
- **A consistent approach with a clear national steer regarding theory of change and associated measures to assess impact and outcomes for victims, children and perpetrators** (being developed via the Blueprint approach the OPCC argues).
- **Finally, a clear commitment to involvement of survivors to shape and inform the evidence base and scrutinise agreed work** (being established via the Blueprint approach).

3. What is the role of the public sector and specialist services (including the police, schools, the NHS, the third sector and other organisations that women and girls turn to for support) in identifying, tackling and

preventing violence against women, and their role in supporting victims and survivors?

Dyfed-Powys OPCC

- Dyfed-Powys OPCC says that the relevant practitioners and professionals need to be informed, upskilled and confident to be able to maximise the opportunities for identifying, tackling, and preventing gender-based violence. Similarly, individuals must have confidence in the understanding of the professionals they are disclosing crimes to or accessing support from.
- The OPCC's view is that all partners and services must be supportive of a public health approach, from one end of the criminal justice system to the other. The VAWDASV Adviser notes that the role of the judiciary is key for example.
- The VAWDASV Adviser highlighted in her feedback that the current Welsh Government Training Framework is not enough: There needs to be more work done on expanding the training content and themes covered within to ensure practitioners are able to identify and appropriately respond to gender-based violence.
- The routes into specialist support for survivors needs to be robust, clear, and easy to access, whether individuals support police action or not. Awareness-raising and promotion of services in the right places and in the right way is key. Partners' communications teams need to work together to develop consistent and informative messaging.
- As with the routes into survivor support services, robust and clear referral processes onto perpetrator programmes to hold perpetrators to account for their behaviour and to educate them on the impact their actions can have, is also key. Similarly, Op Soteria Bluestone.¹⁷ recommends that investigations must focus on the perpetrator.

North Wales OPCC

Within North Wales, the Force is actively looking at ways in which VAWG/DA offences can be prevented:

- NWP has a team of domestic abuse specialist officers and domestic abuse perpetrator officers. There are regular opportunities within MARAC and ADAPT meetings for all agencies to discuss cases and identify appropriate support. As part of these discussions, victims will be directed to an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor. A recent Joint inspection with Denbighshire LA has highlighted the MARAC meetings as good practice.
- Operation Chrysalis is a domestic abuse pilot to promote an evidenced led approach when investigating incidents of abuse. Such a strategy is particularly relevant when victims are reluctant to engage with police due to fear.
- The Force has recently reviewed and refreshed its internal guidance for Domestic Abuse. The guidance now includes a specific section relating to police perpetrators of DA and the support needed internally to manage the welfare of both perpetrators and victims.

¹⁷ [Operation Soteria Bluestone | College of Policing](#)

- In collaboration with Bangor University, the DA perpetrator programme (ADAPT) is being reviewed. It is hoped that the research will highlight those areas working well and areas of development which may need to be amended.
- A VAWDASV Capital Grant application has been submitted in North Wales. The funding will be used to support victims of domestic abuse on a case-by-case basis with a focus on target hardening. A range of products will be sourced from window locks to Smartwater.
- North Wales has three remote evidence sites across the region. Victims of DA and sexual violence can use the sites to give their evidence remotely and in a safe space. It can remove the worry and fear of victims in having to give evidence and be in the presence of the perpetrator.
- Use of technology to promote the safety of victims to allow easy and covert access to police. Distribution to victims is largely determined during MARAC discussions in the main.
- NWP has a dedicated team (Amethyst) who investigate rape offences. All victims have an allocated detective constable (investigator) and Sexual Offence Liaison Officer (SOLO) allocated to them. Ongoing support for victims is facilitated by independent sexual violence advisors. NWP has adopted Operation Soteria¹⁸ which is a national best practice framework of how best to respond to incidents of sexual violence.

South Wales OPCC

- **South Wales OPCC argues for making tackling VAWDASV an organisational priority across all departments and allocate funding to address.**
- The OPCC further argues each organisation should reflect and take accountability for their own organisational culture, ensuring appropriate measures are in place following disclosures or complaints to send a consistent message that gender-based violence is taken seriously.
- Robust and updated workplace policies to ensure a clear stance on gender-based violence, including support options for victims and any procedures for perpetrators.
- Engaging in the National Training Framework (Wales¹⁹) to ensure staff access the relevant degree of training to upskill them in targeted enquiry and referral processes.
- Appropriate recording of data relating to disclosures/ identification to measure demand to feed into wider picture.
- Where possible incorporate victims feedback into planning and development.
- Recognising that gender-based violence is everybody's business and ensuring any duties are complied with.
- Monitoring the landscape for emerging reports or inquiries that apply, and taking genuine sustainable action to change organisational issues (for example the Casey report etc).
- Commit to working collaboratively and sharing information with other organisations to identify and build on best practise but also shine a light on areas of concern and steps taken to address them, commit to and actively contribute in the delivery of the WG National VAWDASV strategy through the blueprint approach.
- Finally, the OPCC argues that the role of the public sector should include continuous working towards accessible services for *everyone*, through accurate monitoring of demographics, analysis of trends and targeted work for those less likely to present to services.

¹⁸ [Operation Soteria Bluestone | College of Policing](#)

¹⁹ [National Training Framework on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence | GOV.WALES](#)