

Ymchwiliad ôl-ddeddfwriaethol i Ddeddf Trais yn erbyn Menywod,
Cam-drin Domestig a Thrais Rhywiol (Cymru) 2015

Post legislative inquiry into the Violence against Women,
Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015

Ymateb gan: Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Wrexham

Response from: Wrexham County Borough Council

1. To what extent the approach to tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence is improving as a result of the obligations in the Act?
 - The priorities of the Act align quite well with the local authorities strategic priorities in terms of improving the arrangements for the prevention, protection and support for individuals who have been affected by Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) (evidenced via the PSB - PDB3 plans). These priorities are also now integrated into the Wrexham Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategic Group Delivery Plan. The group is made up of key strategic representatives from statutory and specialist third sector service providers across Wrexham. Its work streams include planning and delivering educational, awareness raising campaigns, via training, White Ribbon Campaign and the Wrexham Integrated Care Pathway (which is being updated to include information about the Act, the National Training Framework and the Ask and Act policy, including working with perpetrators).
 - Whilst some departments have been very proactive and receptive to the Act and aware of the obligations that they will face as a result of the legislation, it is clear that there remains some work to do with achieving the same result across the whole local authority.
 - In the coming months, we plan to do more work to promote the Act. We have developed a 2 page flyer that will be circulated across the county borough to publicise and raise awareness. Information about the Act is also included in the updated Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence training, which is still being delivered as we await access to the group 1 eLearning package.
 - We will continue promoting the Act and its obligations as we launch the Group 1 eLearning training package once it is fully accessible on the NHS Wales learning site.
 - Challenges: the lack of information/direction/clarity from the W.G. VAWDA team has meant delays in work progressing.
 - Other challenges are due to work arising from a simultaneous release of legislation across a number of work streams such as VAWDASV, Social Services and Wellbeing Act, the Future Generations Act, and the Renting Homes Act, – which all have the capacity to increase existing workloads. Further information/guidance is needed to highlight just how these different legislations are/can be aligned.
 - Local specialist services have reported encountering significant pressures with regard to carrying out the functions of the Act (i.e. more referrals/demand for the services) and are likely to continue to do so in the foreseeable future. The implementation of the Ask and Act policy is also likely to increase demand of local specialist services.

Final guidance for the Ask and Act has not been made available for services to know what the full impact of its implementation will be and therefore forward plan.

2. What are the most effective methods of capturing the views and experiences of survivors? Are arrangements in place to capture these experiences? And to what extent is this information being used to help inform the implementation of the Act's provisions?
 - Effective methods:
 - o Talking to service users directly, finding out about what their experiences have been during their journey, and doing so at different (but appropriate) stages of the journey to ensure that their needs are continuously being met throughout.
 - o Service user surveys and focus groups have also been effective ways of capturing their views and experiences.
 - In Wrexham, arrangements are in place within the different specialist service providers to capture the views of the service users, these range from service user groups run at Welsh Women's Aid Wrexham (the SUs run these themselves); Bawso also run similar groups for BME clients; Stepping Stones are in the process of setting up a user group for their clients who are adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse; Hafan Cymru are also in the process of setting up a user group for male victims of domestic abuse in Wrexham. All of the service users involved in these groups will be given an opportunity to participate and provide feedback and recommendations as to the implementation of the Act.
 - A service user involvement framework is currently being developed and will assist service providers to engage more consistently and meaningfully with service users.
3. Whether survivors of abuse are beginning to experience better responses from public authorities as a result of the Act, particularly those needing specialist services?
 - Survivors are beginning to experience better responses from public authorities as practitioners begin to learn about and understand the Act and have VAWDASV on their radars. Public services, particularly housing and homelessness teams have been very receptive and proactively seeking to implement the provisions of the Act within their policies and procedures. In the coming months, we plan to do more work to promote the Act within other departments. We have developed a 2 page flyer that will be circulated across the county borough to publicise and raise awareness. Information about the Act is also included in the updated Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence training.
 - We will also continue promoting the Act and its obligations as we launch the Group 1 eLearning training package once it is fully accessible on the NHS Wales learning site as this will assist practitioners in providing better responses to survivors.
4. Whether the National Adviser has sufficient power and independence from the Welsh Government to ensure implementation of the Act?

- Not sure.
5. To what extent the good practice guide to healthy relationships is successfully influencing the development of a whole school approach to challenging violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence?
- Too early to tell if the guidance is making an impact on schools, although a number of schools do already deliver on a number of the recommendations e.g. delivery of education Cat's Paw performance.
 - Roll out of guidance was weak and this needs to be revisited.
 - It is vital that the Donaldson review of Education is maximised to ensure greater time in the curriculum is given for education on relationships to be delivered as currently time in secondary schools is limited.
 - Recommendations within the guidance need to be aligned with the Personal Development section of the Healthy School programme as this would be a way of supporting implementation and monitoring progress.
 - The guidance is specific to children and young people that are in schools/college education settings, however some children and YP affected by/at risk of DA may not be in schools/colleges. Further work and resources need to be made available to reach this vulnerable group of young people that are not in education settings.

Please send your views to: SeneddCommunities@assembly.wales by **Friday 16 September 2016**. It may not be possible to take into account responses received after this date.