



## Report of the Cabinet Member for Well-being

Council – 7 September 2023

# Swansea Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Strategy 2023 - 2026

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| <b>Purpose:</b>                    | <p>The report outlines the Strategy ensuring that we meet our statutory duty as specified in the VAWDSV Act 2015 and the priorities to be taken forward, driving change.</p> <p>It is a strategic partnership document for delivering priorities for ending Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse &amp; Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) in Swansea.</p> |
| <b>Policy Framework:</b>           | <p>Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse &amp; Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015<br/>Social Services &amp; Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014<br/>Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015<br/>Corporate Plan and Well-Being Objectives 23-28</p>  |
| <b>Consultation:</b>               | <p>Access to Services, Finance, Legal. VAWDASV Partnership Groups, service users, public consultation</p>  |
| <b>Recommendation(s):</b>          | <p>It is recommended that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) The Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse &amp; Sexual Violence Strategy 2023-26 is approved.</li></ol>   |
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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) (Wales) Act 2015 aims to improve the public sector response in Wales to VAWDASV. This strategy sets the agenda for the Welsh Government and the agencies it directs and funds. It is also a strategy for the whole of Wales, across government, including non-devolved bodies, the public and private sectors and, importantly, the whole of Welsh society.
- 1.2 The Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) (Wales) Act 2015 places a duty on Local Authorities and Local Health Boards to jointly prepare and publish a local strategy. This will provide a strategic focus and ensures consistent consideration of preventative, protective and supportive mechanisms in the delivery of services.
- 1.3 A Blueprint Framework has been recently developed to support the delivery of the VAWDASV National Strategy (22-26). The VAWDASV Blueprint has created a new shared governance structure, with joint ownership across devolved and non-devolved public bodies, also in partnership with the private and specialist sectors.
- 1.4 In Swansea Council's Corporate Plan and Well- Being Objectives 2023-28 prioritises 'safeguarding people from harm - so that our citizens are free from harm and exploitation'.

## **2. Partnership Strategy**

- 2.1 The Swansea Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Strategy 2023-2026 has been developed co-productively across the partnership over the past 12 months and is a partnership document that can be found under Appendix A English and a Welsh Language version under Appendix B. We have also developed a summary version Appendix C in English and Appendix D in Welsh. The IIA Report is Appendix E. We are also in the process of developing an 'Easy Read' version to ensure that this document is accessible to all.
- 2.2 The Strategy covers:
  - 2.2.1 The prevalence of VAWDASV in Wales and the financial direct cost to the economy in terms of services notwithstanding the emotional costs to victims. An estimated 2.4 million adults experience some form of domestic abuse in one year, 1.7 million of them women. On average every week 2 women are murdered by their current or former partner. The cost to the economy is considerable, In terms of services, costs to the health services are estimated at £2.3 billion, the police, £1.3 billion and housing costs, £550 million. The Home Office estimate the economic and social costs of domestic abuse, placed the annual cost at £66 billion suggesting that the costs of all forms of VAWDASV are considerably higher.

2.2.2 Our partnership vision and commitment to ending violence against women, domestic abuse & sexual violence in Swansea. We want 'all citizens in Swansea to be safe, happy and healthy and live fear free from violence, exploitation, harassment and abuse, in all its forms. With many aspirations including, ensuring the voice of the service user is heard and listened to.

2.2.3 The definitions and legal framework for VAWDASV including the Welsh context. In Wales, the cost of Domestic Abuse is estimated to be £303.5m annually: £202.6m in service costs and £100.9m to lost economic output. These figures do not include any element of human and emotional costs.

2.2.4 Priorities of prevention, protection and support including the Blueprint governance structure which identifies the 6 Work Streams:

- ❖ Gender- based Harassment in all Public spaces
- ❖ Workplace Harassment
- ❖ Tackling Perpetration
- ❖ Sustainable Whole System Approach
- ❖ Older People needs
- ❖ Children and Young People Needs.
- ❖ Survivor's voice with embed through all 6 work streams.

2.2.5 Resources and Service Mapping- all services that provide support for those affected by VAWDASV in Swansea, including statutory services and specialist providers. The number of referrals to each services is captured, providing a wider lens on the prevalence VAWDASV in Swansea.

2.2.6 The voice of victims /survivors supporting us to shape our services providing a strength-based, needs lead approach ensuring that victims/survivors have the right support at the right time.

2.2.7 The overarching framework and the 7 strategic objectives in line with Welsh Government's, what we will do on a local and regional basis.

- ❖ Objective 1- Challenge harmful public attitudes to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence across Swansea through awareness raising and space for public discussion, promoting a positive response.
- ❖ Objective 2- Increase awareness in children and young people of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships and empowering them to make positive personal choices.
- ❖ Objective 3- Increase the focus on holding those who use abusive behaviour to account and support those who may carry out abusive or violent behaviour to change their behaviour and avoid offending.
- ❖ Objective 4- Make early intervention and prevention a priority.

- ❖ Objective 5 -Relevant professionals are trained to provide effective, timely and appropriate responses to victims and survivors.
- ❖ Objective 6 -Provide all victims with equal access to appropriately resourced, high quality, needs-led, strength-based, inter-sectional and responsive services across Wales
- ❖ Objective 7- Prepare robust evidence to inform our work.

### **3. Governance Structure**

- 3.1 The strategic direction and oversight of the Swansea VAWDASV Strategy is held by the VAWDASV Leadership Group, which is accountable to the Safer Swansea Community Safety Partnership (CSP), under the Public Service Board (PSB) arrangements.
- 3.2 To measure success, Safer Swansea will draw on qualitative and quantitative data from a number of sources, including evaluation of projects and public consultation and feedback. Each of the Safer Swansea Partnership priorities will be underpinned and supported by individual action plans. Progress will be monitored on a quarterly basis by the steering group and an annual report will be presented to the Public Service Board. The Public Services Board will provide challenge and support to the Community Safety Partnership in progressing this Strategy.
- 3.3 In addition, any concerns or issues regarding the delivery of the Strategy will be presented at the Leadership Group where the Head of Service will escalate to the Director and then to the CMT for discussion.

### **4. Integrated Assessment Implications**

- 4.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
  - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
  - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
  - Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
  - Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
  - Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 4.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.
- 4.1.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.
- 4.2 Through completion of the screening it was identified that the impact of this proposal will have a high positive impact on the protected characteristics, therefore we have completed a full IIA which can be found in Appendix E.
- 4.3 The positive impact will be across all areas, for example: improving the quality of life for families and victims, holding perpetrators to account, the sharing of responsibilities with all agencies, embedding a cultural shift in attitudes, promoting and supporting healthy relationships, providing equal access to services and children being recognised as victims in their own right. Communities will be better informed enabling them to gain a better understating of the impact, services and support available for victims of VAWDASV. Victims and survivors voice is central throughout the proposal ensuring the risks and impact is minimal and we deliver and develop services that meet their needs.
- 4.4 We also envisage that we will be able to reduce the financial impact VAWDASV has on the Welsh economy through prevention strategies reducing risks at the earliest opportunity ensuring victims get the right support at the right time. Having a multiagency commitment to the proposal we can improve services and support. Robust monitoring of the proposal we will be able to evidence the impact and delivery, enabling modifications to mitigate any issues that arise.
- 4.5 The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 was considered in the development of this initiative with key area of focus on education ensuring that we deliver on the National Training Framework, challenge negative behaviours and attitudes, a commitment to tackling work place harassment and harassment in public places. Integration strengthens our local Well- Being Plan, working together to improve the well- being of everyone in Swansea. Making Swansea safer, more cohesive, and prosperous is central to our proposal. Collaboration is central to our proposal, this a joint proposal which brings together keys partners to take a collective responsibility to deliver on the proposal. We recognise that we

need to continue to involve, engage and develop our services to ensure that there is equal access for all victims/families of VAWDASV. We will work closely with service users from different communities to ensure that their voice is heard and we are able to shape our support and delivery of the services based on the reality of those that have experienced and accesses services. For the longer term landscape, there is a whole suite of interventions that supports from prevention to crisis to recovery. Providing consistent services with time limited funding is challenging, however through the delivery of the proposal and the guidance of the Welsh Government Blue Print work streams, we are regarding sustainable commissioning and how we can achieve this. We will be guided by the action plan of the full IIA report ensuring we are meeting our objectives and statutory duty.

## **5. Financial Implications**

5.1 There are no financial implications associated with this strategy.

## **6. Legal Implications**

6.1 The Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 ensures a focus across the public sector on the prevention of these issues, the protection of victims and the support of those affected. Section 8 of the Act imposes a duty on local authorities to take reasonable steps to achieve the objectives specified in the most recently published local strategy for its area. Section 15 of the Act introduces a process of targeted enquiry referred to as “Ask and Act” to be practised across the public service to identify violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

**Background Papers:** None

### **Appendices:**

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| Appendix A | Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2023-26 English                    |
| Appendix B | Domestig a Thrais Rhywiol Abertawe 2023-2026 Welsh  |
| Appendix C | Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2023-26 English ( Summery Version) |
| Appendix D | Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2023-26 Welsh ( Summery Version)   |
| Appendix E | IIA Screening Form- VAWDASV Strategy 2023-26  |