PROFIADAU NIWEIDIOL MEWN PLENTYNDOD
ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Uncharted Territory Review

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Executive Summary

Background

In 2013, the Welsh Strategic Migration Partnership (WSMP), with funding from the Home Office and support from Welsh Government, commissioned research into violence against migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women and girls in Wales. The research was conducted by Anne Hubbard, the Director of the WSMP, and Dr Joanne Payton and Dr Amanda Robinson from Cardiff University. The aim of this research was to look in more depth at the WSMP's identification of gender-based violence as a serious issue for women and girls within asylum seeking, refugee and migrant communities, which was complicated through barriers to accessing support and protection.

Since 2013 there have been some significant developments in policy and legislation by both the UK and Welsh Governments. Legislation is now in place for England and Wales including specific offences of stalking, forced marriage, failure to protect from Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and intimate image abuse, as well as the domestic abuse offence to capture coercive or controlling behaviour in an intimate or family relationships. In 2015 the landmark Modern Slavery Act was introduced, along with FGM Protection Orders and an FGM mandatory reporting duty. In Wales, we also saw the introduction of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act in 2015 (VAWDASV). A search of the legislation.gov.uk website finds 23 results of UK primary and secondary legislation relating to domestic violence from 2013.

It is hoped that this review of the recommendations in 2021 will be able to provide an update on the recommendations of the original report; but also reflect on the progress made in the light of the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods

A mixed methods approach to data collection was adopted including secondary quantitative data collection, semi-structured interviews with professionals, and a review of literature and policy documents. There was no quantitative data collection included as part of the review, but it has considered data routinely collected by the Wales Violence Prevention Unit on levels of violence in Wales, Welsh Government and wider statutory and voluntary sector agencies.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with professionals and those working with migrant, refugee or asylum seeking women via Welsh Women's Aid member services. These were voluntary and with consent. The Home Office, Welsh Government, the four police forces, local authorities, Welsh Women's Aid and all other agencies who were given specific recommendations in the 2013 report were invited to update on progress at meetings with the researchers, and by written return. At the outset of the study, it was hoped that there would be an opportunity to interview migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women and girls directly about their experiences of accessing services during COVID-19. Unfortunately at the time the research was taking place, national restrictions were imposed and face-to-face discussions were not able to take place.

Findings

Significant progress has been made in some areas, with the introduction of legislation and policy. But there are still areas that may require further work and research. These have been identified either by a lack of response or information, or as a result of the evaluation process.

a. **No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF).** The original recommendations of the 2013 report identified recommendations for both the UK Government and Welsh Government on NRPF, and yet this still seems to be falling through the gap of devolved/non-devolved responsibility.

Welsh Government state clearly that this is the responsibility of the Home Office. Although this is the case for immigration, in terms of support services, Welsh Government could made funding available for those with NRPF if it chose to. Work undertaken by the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership as recommended still shows that we are unclear on the data, how many people have NRPF and evidence from Welsh Women's Aid shows that accessing any accommodation or support is extremely difficult for women in this position. The question of funding for refuge provision for women and girls was as big an issue in 2013 as it is in 2021, with the case studies showing the challenges faced by helpline staff in securing spaces.

b. **Data.** We understand the global prevalence of violence, but less about the prevalence of violence in our communities. There needs to be more work to develop intelligence, surveillance and data sharing systems that can identify and analyse both qualitative and quantitative data to ensure that the experiences of diverse and marginalised communities are not excluded. This means that where we have the data on police recorded crime, and helpline referrals we should seek to understand where possible how we might be able to identify where specific communities have been impacted. This may require the use of softer data capture methods from engagement with the communities themselves and more specific reporting from specialist agencies working with these communities in Wales.

c. **Inclusion of all agencies.** Some agencies found it difficult to update on their recommendations. More work is needed to understand what progress has been made in policing in Wales and social services in particular as this evaluation was unable to report on these areas.

d. **Invisibility of migrant women and girls** including those from the Gypsy Roma Traveller community, migrant and seasonal workers, students and others on temporary visas. This review found little evidence of work that has addressed the particular experience of these groups directly in in relation to VAWDASV.

e. **Lack of join up between the Nation of Sanctuary Plan commitments on VAWDASV and VAWDASV policy in Welsh Government.** The plan and national strategy both contain key commitments that cross over between policy areas but join up of these, and the VAWDASV and refugee sectors, do not seem to be clear in governance structures. There is also a disconnect with the wider equalities work and less visibility on the experience of older, LGBTI, or disabled women and girls, perpetrators, and the experience of hate crime and race related sexual harassment. This has led to commitments being left ongoing or not visibly taken forward in the Nation of Sanctuary plan and VAWDASV national strategy.

f. **Lack of awareness of Social Services duties under Welsh legislation.** As exemplified by the Case Study where social worker says it's "more of a DV [Domestic Violence] issue" (and therefore not within their remit). Welsh Government have commissioned the NRPF Network to deliver training on this, which recently concluded. But this review finds that there is more work to be done to ensure that there is better understanding of the duties under the Act, which are not mentioned in the updated from Welsh Government in relation to social services and local authorities.

g. **Lack of joint governance** around VAWDASV, Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Migrant, refugees and asylum seekers. Although the Home Office attend the Ministerial Taskforce on Refugees and Asylum Seekers, there is no forum that brings together officials of both governments on this specific issue.

Conclusion

This review has found that there has been some real progress made in terms of legislation in both Welsh and UK governments' jurisdictions and policy, guidance and process that has taken forward many aspects of this work. The gaps have been identified in the findings, and further work to close these and report against progress can be taken forward by the review of the Wales National VAWDASV Strategy taking place in 2021.

Introduction

In 2013, The Welsh Strategic Migration Partnership[i] (WSMP), with funding from the Home Office and support from Welsh Government, commissioned research into violence against migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women and girls in Wales. The research was conducted by Anne Hubbard, the Director of the WSMP, and Dr Joanne Payton and Dr Amanda Robinson from Cardiff University. The aim of this research was to look in more depth at the WSMP's identification of gender-based violence as a serious issue for women and girls within asylum seeking, refugee and migrant communities, which was complicated through barriers to accessing support and protection[1].

In the course of their work to develop a Wales No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) network, through engagement with refugee women and collaboration with partners such as Welsh Women's Aid and BAWSO, the WSMP became increasingly aware that women and girls with insecure immigration status face severe problems in accessing and receiving support, which are unlike those of women born in Britain and which require attention and policy development to enable this group to access services. The report aimed to show that insecure immigration status can also engender or make women *more vulnerable* to forms of violence, harm and exploitation. The intention of the research was to fill an evidence gap in Wales, and identify issues within some migrant communities to inform Welsh policy[1].

The report was published in 2013, and an informal review of progress against recommendations took place in 2015, using the governance arrangements of the WSMP, but no formal update was published. The report has remained as one of the only UK studies on the experience of migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women, and is referenced in a notable publications including the work of Hibo Wadere in her book 'Cut' which describes her personal account of Female Genital Mutilation[2].

During 2015, the report was part of the Home Office work in an Asylum Gender Action Plan. This commitment was made via the National Asylum Seekers Stakeholder Forum, and recommendations from this report were included in a number of the actions and can be later seen incorporated into the guidance for Asylum caseworkers 'Gender in the Asylum System', published in 2018[ii].The Welsh Government also published their Nation of Sanctuary plan in 2019, which includes a recommendation to revisit the Uncharted Territory report to ascertain the actions government could take during 2019. It is not clear if any such review took place[iii].

It is hoped that this review of the recommendations in 2021 will be able to provide an update on the recommendations of the original report; but also reflect on the progress made in the light of the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. Welsh Women's Aid identified a number of important areas that are pertinent to the understanding of the experience of migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women and girls at the current time. These include increased calls to the Live Fear Free Helpline and website during the first lockdown in Wales[iv], and evidence to show an increased complexity of calls, often taking longer, and more frequent abuse. It was also noted that services trying to engage with Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, were facing a multi layered issue with communication and connection, where spaces for face to face contact were removed and digital and phone contact felt ineffective, particularly with a language barrier. This report also seeks to reflect what this has meant for women in communities more reliant on that face to face contact, and dealing with uncertainty and fear around immigration status, and in particular those who have NRPF[3].

Immigration is a non-devolved function and is the responsibility of the UK Government, including asylum policy, which includes asylum application decision making, the provision of support and accommodation for

i For more information visit https://www.wlga.wales/wales-strategic-migration-partnership

ii See https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/699703/gender-issues-in-the-asylum-claim-v3.pdf

iii For Welsh Government Nation of Sanctuary Plan see https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-03/nation-of-sanctuary-refugee-and-asylum-seeker-plan_0.pdf

iv For information on Welsh Women's Aid and the Live Fear Free Helpline see https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/

asylum seekers, and the operation of refugee resettlement schemes. However, as the Welsh Government's Nation of Sanctuary Plan recognises the Welsh Government does have responsibility for the support of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers as members of Welsh society, and the services they need to access. Also, the Welsh Government introduced its own legislation on Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Act in 2015, and in commissioning guidance published in 2019, is explicit about the consideration of the needs, issues and barriers of those protected by the Equality Act 2010 (and specifically lists migrants, refugees and asylum seekers)[4]. It is hoped that this evaluation will also help to support the review of the VAWDASV Strategy, and ensure that the needs of women and girls are fully recognised and supported within that policy area going forward and as the UK has now left the European Union, at a very uncertain and insecure time for people who are migrants.

Objectives

The objectives of the review were:

1. To understand the extent of harm experienced by migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women in Wales, highlighting their particular vulnerabilities in relation to violence and the impact of the current pandemic, including on mental health and wellbeing.

2. To review progress against the recommendations of the 2013 report, to highlight where progress has been made

3. To identify areas where action still needs to be taken, and any new recommendations as a result of understanding the experience of these women during pandemic, and our increased knowledge of the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on BME, and people from more deprived communities in Wales.

4. To inform the action plan to address these concerns for Wales as part of the Welsh Government response to COVID-19 and the commitments of the 'Nation of Sanctuary Plan', including specific links to the exacerbating factors of poverty, discrimination, stigma around mental health.

5. To inform intervention and preventative action aimed at reducing the incidence and impact of violence for some of the most vulnerable of a potential second and third wave of lockdown measures through:
    a. Considering 'what works' in supporting women and girls when there is a need to mitigate the effects of the violence they have experienced;
    b. Informing prevention and early help for communities who are less likely to access mainstream support or digital/online services and rely on community led responses;
    c. Inform policy recommendations to the Welsh Government's VAWDASV sub group on children and young people, and the Honour Based Abuse Leadership Group in relation to Female Genital Mutilation, Forced Marriage and so called Honour Based Violence;
    d. Providing policy recommendations to support wider government and agency responses to safeguarding children and adults in the pandemic, commissioning and funding decisions for specialist services in Wales, and to enable robust recovery plans to be put in place.

Methods

A mixed methods approach to data collection was adopted including secondary quantitative data collection, semi-structured interviews with professionals, and a review of literature and policy documents. There was no quantitative data collection included as part of the review, but it has considered data routinely by the Wales Violence Prevention Unit on levels of violence in Wales, Welsh Government and wider statutory and voluntary sector agencies.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with professionals and those working with migrant, refugee or asylum seeking women via Welsh Women's Aid member services. These were voluntary and with consent. The Home Office, Welsh government, the four police forces, local authorities, Welsh Women's Aid and all other agencies who were given specific recommendations in the 2013 report were invited to update on progress at meetings with the researchers, and by written return. At the outset of the study, it was hoped that there would be an opportunity to interview migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women and girls directly about their experiences of accessing services during COVID-19. Unfortunately at the time the research was taking place, national restrictions were imposed and face-to-face discussions were not able to take place. Digital access for this group was also deemed to be too challenging, given the need to ensure informed consent and access to necessary support including interpretation. However, case studies have been provided and secondary evidence drawn upon to ensure that the voices of women and girls themselves are included.

Uncharted Territory

In 2013, the Home Office and the Welsh Government jointly sponsored research by the WSMP into the experiences of violence against migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women in Wales. It was a ground breaking study at the time and remains the only research in Wales into violence experienced by this group of women and girls. The report examined a range of issues and experiences including incidents of domestic abuse in the home country, how this is explored in the UK Government asylum process including traumatisation during the interview, as well as arrangements for housing and support. It covered a range of specific forms of violence and exploitation such as human trafficking, the experiences of LGBTI asylum seekers, those with NRPF, children and provision of specialist services. The research report helped to fill an evidence gap in Wales, and identified issues within some migrant communities in order to ensure that these particular and very complicated issues are not neglected within Welsh policy. It was directly relevant to both Home Office and Welsh Government strategic aims to end violence against women.

'Uncharted Territory' made several recommendations for a range of partners including the Home Office; in relation to interviewing women and girls who have experienced violence, calling on a review of Home Office guidelines and training on conducting the asylum interview. The report also called for Welsh Government, in the context of its ground-breaking work on domestic abuse[v], to ensure that all women in Wales share the right to be safe by taking steps to extend the protections enjoyed by the majority of women to the most vulnerable women and girls in Wales. The report also contained a number of recommendations for local authorities, health, police and specialist services. An action plan was developed but there was no consistent monitoring of this after 2015 due to a lack of capacity.

v Note this was before the introduction of the VAWDASV Act, and domestic abuse was used in the 2013 report.

What Has Changed since 2013?

Global Perspective

In 'The National Strategy on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence – 2016 - 2021', or VAWDASV Strategy, the Welsh Government recognises in Wales – consistent with the rest of the world – that violence against women is a violation of human rights and both a cause and consequence of inequality between women and men, and it happens to women because they are women and that women are disproportionately impacted by all forms of violence[5].

The UN Declaration defines violence against women as:

- All acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological, or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

This encompasses, but is not limited to:

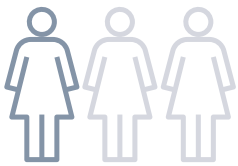
a. Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;

b. Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;

c. Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.

At global, European and national levels, legislation and policy acknowledges that violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence operates as a means of social control that maintains unequal power relations between women and men and reinforces women's subordinate status. As such, VAWDASV is often described as a cause and consequence of gender inequality.

The international community has acknowledged the importance of addressing violence against women and girls through several conventions, policies and frameworks such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)[vi] the Beijing Platform for Action[vii], and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)[viii]. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its Optional Protocol[ix] and the Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Girls[x].



Yet despite all these efforts, gender-based violence (GBV) or VAWG still affects 1 in 3 women in their lifetime.

vi For more information on CEDAW https://rm.coe.int/168046031c

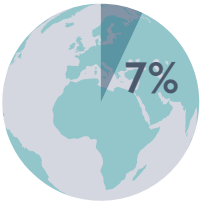
vii Beijing Platform for Action https://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/about

viii The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development.html

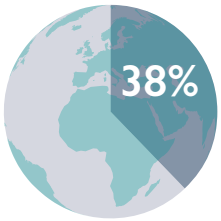
ix The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its Optional Protocol https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html

x The Istanbul Convention: https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/home

35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence[5].



Globally, **7% of women** have been sexually assaulted by someone other than a partner[5].



Globally, **38% of murders of women** are committed by an intimate partner[5].

200 million women have experienced female genital mutilation/cutting[6].

Furthermore, it is estimated that **40.3 million people are enslaved** of which **71% are women**[7].

This issue is not only devastating for survivors of violence and their families, but also entails significant social and economic costs. In some countries, VAWG is estimated to cost countries up to 3.7% of their GDP more than double what most governments spend on education. Overall, in the year ending 31 March 2017, domestic abuse is estimated to have cost over £66 billion in England and Wales according to a report by the Home Office[8]. The costs are related to providing health and social care services and include legal costs. However, they exclude the cost to the victims in terms of unfulfilled potential and the impact on their long-term physical, emotional and mental wellbeing.

From signing and ratifying the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other legally binding international treaties, to policies, strategies and legislations put in place by the UK and Welsh Governments, tackling violence against women and girls has become part of the political agenda in recent years and it is now a key priority for both governments.

UK and Welsh Government Progress

Since 2013 there have been some significant developments in policy and legislation by both the UK and Welsh governments. Legislation is now in place for England and Wales including specific offences of stalking, forced marriage, failure to protect from FGM and intimate image abuse, as well as the domestic abuse offence to capture coercive or controlling behaviour in an intimate or family relationships. In 2015 the landmark Modern Slavery Act was introduced, along with FGM Protection Orders and an FGM mandatory reporting duty. In Wales, we also saw the introduction of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act in 2015. A search of the legislation.gov.uk website finds 23 results of UK primary and secondary legislation relating to domestic violence from 2013[xi]. The Destitute Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC)[xii] formerly the Sojourner Project, remains in place and enables partners/spouses of British citizens or people with indefinite leave to remain (ILR) and women on spousal visas to access public funds for 3 months if they are eligible to apply for ILR under the Domestic Violence Rule. Destitution in this context is a complex consideration, and is set out in UK government guidance[xiii]. For survivors of trafficking and modern slavery there is a package of specialist support that can be accessed following referral to the National Referral Mechanism and a positive reasonable grounds decision whilst they await a conclusive grounds decision. After that they may apply for discretionary ILR.

xi All legislation can be found at www.legislation.gov.uk

xii DDV Concession: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/679269/victims-of-domestic-violence-and-abuse-DDV-concession-v1_0.pdf

xiii For more information as to how destitution is assessed see : https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/845235/assessing-destitution-v3.0-ext.pdf

VAWG UK Strategy (2016-2020)

The UK Strategy to End Violence Against Women and Girls (2016-2020)[xiv] provides an overview of the wide range of actions the government committed to taking over a period of four years to end violence against women and girls. The Strategy does include a section that references the development of the Gender Action Plan under 'Improving the Asylum System' which also took account of the 2013 Unchartered Territory recommendations. The action plan however appears to be have been turned into guidance for caseworkers and not published in a full form. The strategy also focuses on the harmful traditional practices: FGM, honour based abuse and forced marriage. There are elements of the strategy and guidance that look at support for asylum seekers who report domestic abuse, and the expectation of funding of accommodation if appropriate and close to specialist support services if that is what the survivor wants.

In 2019 a refresh of the Strategy was published that makes no further mention of the commitment to improving the asylum system or the gender action plan. The Home Office is currently consulting on the strategy for 2021-2024, and the Domestic Abuse Act was given royal assent on the 29th April 2021. Key elements of the Act include creating a statutory definition of domestic abuse. During its passage through the legislative process, the Bill and, now the Act, has been criticised by specialist organisations working with migrant, refugees, asylum seekers and survivors of VAWG such as Imkaan, Refugee Council and Southall Black Sisters for not including amendments put forward around immigration and the asylum process. The largest area of focus and contention is still around the destitution of women who have suffered or are at risk of abuse and violence and exploitation; women who have NRPF.

Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015

Work to end violence against women and girls in Wales is supported by an international framework of conventions and for many years this complex issue has been prioritised in welsh legislative and policy landscape. The Wales 'Right to be Safe Strategy' was introduced in 2010 which set out an integrated, cross government programme of action to tackle all forms of violence against women and children. In 2015 the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act was introduced and the Wales 'Right to be Safe Strategy' was refreshed in November 2016 and published as the Welsh Government's National Strategy on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (2016 – 2021). In Wales the Well-being of Future Generation Act 2015 also sets out seven wellbeing goals relevant to the prevention of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) and support of survivors.

Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015

The Act seeks to bring about an improved public sector response to violence against women, gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

The key policy aims in implementing the Act are to improve arrangements to:

- promote awareness of, and to prevent, protect and support victims of violence against women, gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence;
- strengthen the strategic leadership and accountability for violence against women, gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence; and
- improve the consistency, quality and join-up of service provision in Wales.

xiv For more information see: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-to-end-violence-against-women-and-girls-2016-to-2020

The Welsh Government National Strategy on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (2016 – 2021) recognises the importance of considering the impact of BME communities and the weight of evidence that identifies that people who identify in this group are disproportionately affected by different forms of abuse e.g. forced marriage, so called honour based violence[xv], FGM, sexual exploitation in the form of commercial sex work, trafficking etc. the multiple vulnerabilities from these overlapping contexts makes it harder for women to flee violence. It also recognises that survivors may face additional barriers to seeking help, such as racial discrimination, religious stereotyping, fear of community dishonour and rejection, and an insecure immigration status, and no recourse to public funds, all of which may prevent them from accessing protection[9]. The limited or lack of knowledge of their rights is also a key element of this.

There is also a separate section in the Strategy that identifies migrant, refugee and asylum seeker women and highlights again the major concern of service providers being their ability to assist migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women who have suffered, or are suffering violence against women and who have no recourse to public funds. The Strategy recognises that this group can often be subject to issues such as FGM, so called 'honour' based violence[xvi] and forced marriage, as well as the already complex issues of domestic abuse and sexual violence. Visa issues, cultural, language and communication barriers can further complicate and isolate these women[9].

What the Strategy does not do is recognise the intersectionality between the different groups the documents identifies which may impact lived experience of violence; for example that migrant and refugee and asylum seeking women can also be LGBTI, or older women, or disabled women, or children and young people, and they may identify as one of these other groups primarily. Perpetrators may also be from the same communities, or still based in the home or transit countries. Also those with NRPF are not exclusively migrant, refugee or asylum seekers; women and girls who have become homeless may also have experience VAWDASV, but not form part of this group. A report conducted by the unity project in 2019 discovered that especially "women, pregnant [women], disabled people and children are more likely to be impacted by the negative effects of the NRPF condition"[10]. Single mothers also appear to fare the worst under NRPF; many are unable to take up full-time employment and without access to the benefits system, they are more likely to fall into destitution than almost any other demographic under NRPF. 77% of the cases taken by the Unity Project were single mothers with children under the age of ten, and just under half (47%) of cases were single mothers with children under five years old. There is no further reference to migrants, refugees or asylum seekers, or tackling NRPF in the objectives set out in the strategy. NRPF is an action that seems to fit more into the broader considerations of the Nation of Sanctuary Plan.

xv Terminology used in the Strategy

xvi This is a direct quote. This report refers to Honour Based Abuse.

The Nation of Sanctuary Plan 2019

The 'Nation of Sanctuary' plan outlines the breadth of work which the Welsh Government is undertaking across Wales to ensure inequalities experienced by these communities are reduced, access to opportunities increased, and relations between these communities and wider society improved. The plan includes many cross-government actions, prioritising key issues which have been highlighted by refugees and asylum seekers during its development and in response to the National Assembly's Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee Inquiry in 2017. The plan is clear that the accommodation of asylum seekers is part of the UK Government's responsibility, and within this the responsibility of tackling the issues of those who have NRPF. There is a section within the plan that identifies key actions around VAWDASV, but it is not clear how much progress has been made against the objectives specifically relating to the Unchartered Territory report or how many asylum seekers and refugees have been included in the national survivor engagement panel[11].

Welsh Government Nation of Sanctuary Plan

Support survivors of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV).

Welsh Government will:

- revisit the recommendations of the 'Uncharted Territory: Violence against migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women in Wales' report to ascertain the actions which the Welsh Government could take during 2019;
- work with stakeholders to develop a sustainable model for the provision of funding to specialist VAWDASV services, including those working with asylum seekers and refugees to ensure reliable support;
- ensure the needs of asylum seekers and refugees are considered within the national VAWDASV communications framework (The overarching theme for our campaign during 2018-20 will be control and will include those from diverse communities such as refugees and asylum seekers).
- directly engage with BME survivors of VAWDASV, including asylum seekers and refugees, via the development of National Survivor Engagement Mechanisms in 2019;
- take forward a pilot in 2019 for a national survivor engagement panel, which will be developed following further engagement with survivors of VAWDASV including BME and refugee and asylum seeking; and
- give further consideration to whether the VAWDASV National Training Framework sufficiently addresses the circumstances of refugees and asylum seekers.

Wider Research

The Uncharted Territory report still remains the only specific work on violence against migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women and girls in Wales. However, there have been a number of research pieces by UK wide organisations that contribute to our current understanding of the experiences of these women and girls in the UK. In particular, they draw attention to the continued challenges of accessing support with NRPF. For example, research in 2018 by the Refugee Council and Asylum Support Appeals Project (ASAP) 'Women Seeking Asylum: Safe in the UK?'[xvii] found that women can be at risk of abuse and violence at any stage of the asylum support system, the findings further advise that women with refused asylum claims are facing destitution and therefore are at heightened risk of abuse. This report focuses on the asylum system and makes recommendations for the Home Office:

Women Seeking Asylum: Safe in the UK?

Summary of key recommendations:

1. The Home Office should ensure that women seeking asylum are firmly included in UK cross-government efforts to address violence against women and girls, and any future cross-government strategy on ending violence against women and girls should reflect this.
2. The Home Office should publish a revised policy that addresses the domestic violence and abuse experienced by women seeking asylum, as a priority, and monitor its implementation. The revised policy should provide an effective and consistent response to domestic abuse, at all points of the asylum support journey.
3. The Home Office should consult and review all key asylum support policy instructions to ensure that these policies explicitly respond to the needs of women who are experiencing or at risk of all forms of gender-based exploitation or abuse.
4. The Home Office should work with accommodation providers, ensuring they act to reduce women's exposure to all forms of gender-based abuse and exploitation and feel safe in their accommodation.
5. The Home Office should ensure that no woman faces homelessness and destitution when exiting the asylum support system after being granted refugee status or another form of leave.
6. The Home Office should amend the current UK cross-Government action plan to end violence against women and girls to include the above recommendations[12].

Research by Refugee Women 'Will I ever be safe?'[xviii] - which spoke with 106 asylum seeking and refugee women from across England and Wales to hear about their destitution - found that women were made destitute at different points during their asylum journey but the vast majority who participated in this research became destitute after their asylum claims had been refused[12]. This leaves women in extremely vulnerable and exploitative situations and around a third of the women they spoke with had been raped or sexually abused while destitute in the UK. Almost all of these women had previously been raped or suffered another form of sexual violence in their country of origin and this emerges as a significant element of women's experiences of destitution[12]. The 2019 guidance published by the Home Office for asylum caseworkers have addressed some of these recommendations, but some Welsh Women's Aid member services suggest there are still issues around the time it takes for funds to reach refuge providers, meaning that financially this is still a potential barrier to these women accessing support.

xvii He full report can be found at https://refugeecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Safe_from_violence_in_the_UK._ASAP-RC_report.pdf

xviii Full report can be found at https://www.refugeewomen.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/WRW-Will-I-ever-be-safe-web.pdf

Data and Prevalence

The 2016-2021 Wales National VAWDASV Strategy identified the prevalence, as far as possible at that time, of VAWDASV. Although not explicit on numbers of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, it does provide an overall baseline for Wales.

These issues affect both men and women but as the evidence below indicates, women and girls are disproportionately impacted by much of the violence and abuse covered by the Act.

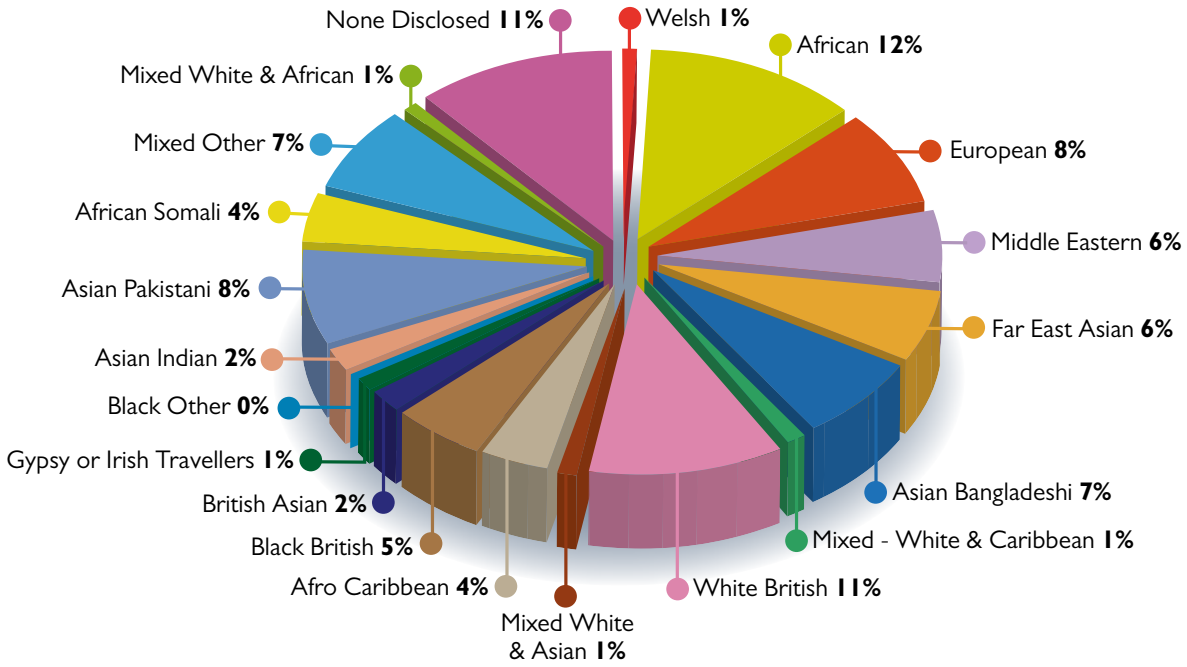
- 1.4 million women and 700,000 men aged 16-59 report experiencing incidents of domestic abuse in England and Wales.
- Extrapolating this data to Wales, shows that 11% women and 5% of men a year experience 'any domestic abuse', while rates of 'any sexual assault' in the last year were also higher for women (3.2%) than men (0.7%).
- In 2011 an estimated 137,000 girls and women were living with consequences of FGM in the UK and in 2011 an estimated 60,000 girls under the age of 15 were living in the UK who were born to mothers from FGM practising countries and therefore could be at risk of FGM. It is estimated there are 140 victims of FGM a year in Wales.
- 80% of cases dealt with by the UK Government's Forced Marriage Unit involved female victims; 20% involved male victims. It is estimated there are up to 100 victims of forced marriage a year in Wales[13].

Data on prevalence amongst women and girls who are migrants, refugees and asylum seekers is, at the moment, sparse. Given that many have fled conflict, humanitarian disaster, spent time in refugee camps or have paid smugglers or been trafficked to the UK, there are assumptions that can be made from the global figures about the likelihood that they have experienced violence and abuse either in their home country, on the journey to the UK, and a percentage will also be continuing to experience abuse in the UK. Specific data collection on this area is limited, particularly as asking about immigration status may actually be a barrier for women and girls accessing the support they need.

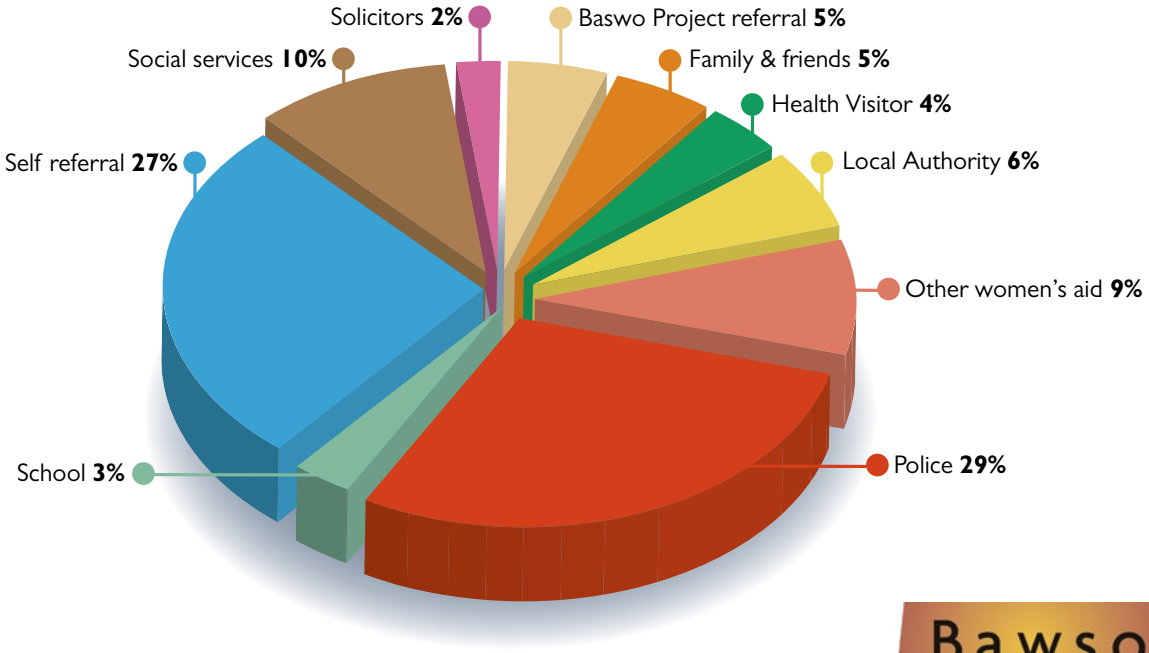
The UK Government publishes statistics that give some information about numbers of people within the system, and in unpublished data, geographical figures. The Local Government Data Unit and the Migration Portal still provides a one stop shop for bilingual data in Wales with specific attention to migration data alongside contextual data. Immigration status is not routinely recorded, but migration data can be analysed with data that is routinely collected by a number of public sector services, such as health and social care or local authorities. Currently, as a result of COVID 19 and the need to ensure that people are not restricted from accessing health services and vaccinations and to take account of concerns about data sharing and their immigration status, people cannot be asked for this information or be required to give it in Wales.

What is clear is that there is a need to understand better, to triangulate both qualitative and quantitative data, and to look across data sources and sharing agreements to see what is possible. Specialist services such as BAWSO provide data on the people they provide services to, but that is only those that are known to them. BAWSO's data from this year from gives a sense of where referrals to their services are coming from (predominantly the police or self-referrals) and which communities are accessing their services the most: African 12% and White British 11%, with not disclosed at 11%. All other percentages are less than 10%.

Ethnicity of all Wales Service Users 2019-2020



Sources of referrals



Bawso
Providing specialist services for BME communities

Adapted from: BAWSO https://twitter.com/BAWSO/status/1355216416815853570

Exploring the Impact of COVID-19 on VAWDASV in Migrant, Refugee and Asylum Seeking Communities

The world is dealing with two global pandemics, Coronavirus COVID-19 as declared by the Director General of the World Health Organisation on 11 March 2020[14] and violence against women and girls declared by the World Health Organisation in 2013[15]. COVID-19 has had a devastating impact around the world disrupting social systems, dismantling economic structures and creating political crisis as governments struggle to respond. As the pandemic intensifies the harm faced by millions of women and children experiencing domestic abuse, sexual violence, forced marriage, 'honour based' abuse, child sexual abuse, FGM and other forms of VAWG is increasing[15].

Emerging data from France for example advised that cases of domestic violence have increased by 30% since the start of the lockdown in March[16]. Helplines in Cyprus and Singapore have registered an increase in calls by 30% and 33%, respectively[17]. In Argentina, emergency calls for domestic violence cases have increased by 25% since the lockdown started. In Canada, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States, government authorities, women's rights activists and civil society partners have indicated increasing reports of domestic violence during the crisis, and an increase in demand for emergency shelter[17].

COVID-19 UK and Wales

While COVID-19 control measures introduced by the UK, such as lockdown, school closures and channelling resources towards emergency service provision, may be critical to saving lives, they can also unintentionally exacerbate violence against women and girls. The closure of schools and day-care centres, and the lack of refuge accommodation, has resulted in many victims having to return to abusive partners and/or family members. The UK's National Domestic Abuse line[xix] has seen a 25% increase in online requests and calls since the start of the lockdown[18]. Deaths from domestic abuse between 23rd March and 12th April had more than doubled to 16 deaths, including those of children, compared with the average rate in the previous 10 years[19].

The Wales Violence Prevention Unit has provided monitoring reports throughout the pandemic, to understand trends in incidents of violence reported to police, or from data gathered from other services including the Live Fear Free Helpline in Wales. In January 2021, it reported that overall police recorded crime in Wales has decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic in comparison with the same period the previous year. All helplines that receive data for the report had seen a considerable increase in contacts, with the Live Fear Free Helpline reporting a 41% increase overall since March 2020. Whilst the reports are not able to identify how many of these calls are from migrant, refugee or asylum seeking women and girls, due to the lack of routine recording of this information, the January report does have data regarding calls to the Karma Nirvana helpline (a charity supporting victims of honour-based abuse and force marriage) which reported 32 case from Wales for 2019/20, of which 72% were referred by a professional agency such as Police, refuge or social services. During a 6-month period between March and September 2020 the helpline has seen 14 cases referred from Wales. Victims self-referring has increased and represents 42% of all cases, compared to 25% in 2019/20. This is reflected UK wide not only in Wales[20].

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on populations across the globe, but not all populations are affected equally. Pre-existing health and socio-economic inequities shape people's vulnerability to the disease, exacerbating unequal societal structures as they determine inequitable

xix This data is England only

health and socio-economic outcomes across different members of society. In the UK the pandemic has disproportionately affected vulnerable communities, the UK Government's review found that higher rates of infection and mortality are becoming evident for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME)[xx] groups[21].

It was also reported by the COVID-19 BAME Advisory Group that (BAME) women are almost three times more likely to die from COVID-19, compared to white women[22]. The intersection of gender, race and immigration status, along with the trauma of their past experiences, means that migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women who already face barriers to housing, employment and healthcare, are among those BAME women most affected by the consequences of the pandemic and the conditions of lockdown which enhances their vulnerabilities to violence.

Migrant women trapped in isolation with their abusers suffer from these structural inequalities and face a unique form of oppression. Perpetrators of domestic violence exploit fear of deportation and detention by threatening to report to authorities if they reach out for support. Insecure immigration status is often manipulated as a tool for coercive control against women[23]. Victims of human trafficking and modern slavery are similarly threatened with deportation if they report abuse. Refuge, a charity for women and children against domestic violence states that "Using victims' fear about their immigration status to control them is a common tactic used by traffickers and perpetrators of other forms of gender-based violence"[24].

Migrant women are in a particularly vulnerable position when it comes to domestic violence as they are subjected to the additional layer of fear that reporting risks their data being shared with immigration enforcement, and ultimately deportation for them and their children. In addition, the NRPF rule prevents domestic violence victims with insecure immigration status from accessing publicly funded refuges or welfare benefits. This was recognised as a barrier to accessing healthcare and has led to a commitment from UK government not to share information relating to immigration status, but this fear is still a barrier to accessing support.

Women from minority ethnic backgrounds may suffer from further pressures due to cultural and community concerns; many women sometimes decide to stay in their abusive relationships due to fear of social exclusion if they leave their abusive partners and the fact that language barriers may prevent them from accessing support. A discussion paper on Inter-Personal Violence (IPV) in Sweden on migrant women with insecure immigration status found that women may experience social isolation, a lack of awareness about services, and racism from services, resulting in a higher prevalence of violence[25].

Concerns were raised by women's charities that during the pandemic, victims of domestic violence are being refused places at refuges which have capacities only because they do not speak English. Karma Nirvana, advised that of 20 women the charity could not find a refuge for during lockdown, five were turned down by six separate refuges for not speaking English, those turned away include a mother with a 14-month-old baby who was fleeing violence after being held as a slave by her ex-husband[26]. The charity advised that the lockdown has exacerbated this problem due to the increases of demand for refuge spaces and the lack of interpreters across the public sector.

There is little in the academic literature in relation to the impact of quarantine or social distancing on migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women, especially in Wales. However, in a from Refugee Women Connect that looks at that looked at forced migration, sexual and Gender Based Violence (GBV) and COVID-19, it is identify evidence that some forced migrants were trapped between remaining in abusive or exploitative situations or facing homelessness as they did not qualify for public housing and support. Service providers were concerned that long-term emotional and psychological impacts of violence would emerge post-crisis, coupled with the longer-term economic implications for resources, access and employment[27].

xx Term BAME is used in the document referenced but not the preferred terminology of the authors

Case Study – 2020

"A[n] [Asian] woman called. She explained that she was from a Muslim family and was desperately looking for help. Her English was very good, but it was hard to understand her because she was crying. She said she lives in [part of England]. She explained that her husband of two years was threatening to chuck her out of the house tomorrow. He had left her midweek following a series of rows. She explained that she had begged him to stay and not leave her. She explained that he was violent at the beginning of their marriage but after she went into refuge her family did an intervention and spoke to him about the violence, the violence did stop but the mental and verbal abuse has continued. Her family have told her they will not support her in leaving him as marriage was for life – no matter what was happening. Today he has been to the house and told her to get out before he returns tomorrow. He threatened that he was going to contact their landlord to inform him that he is no longer paying rent on the property. She is scared to live in the house as he has a key. She has spoken to the police, but they are unhelpful saying he has not committed a crime, so they are unable to do anything at this stage. She requested that she go back to refuge. She has also tried [another] helpline who did not offer her any support. I accessed [refuge database] and did a nationwide search for refuge spaces. She is to self-refer – she is to call back if they are unable to help her.

She later called back and informed me that she was unable to access refuge, when I explored this in more detail it became apparent that she was on a spousal visa and had no recourse to public funds. I reassured her that there was help for her and it was a matter of finding the right service for her. An advanced search identified refuges which would accept women with no recourse to public funds. She was going to self-refer again.

She said she would call back again if she was unsuccessful. Safety to remain a priority – 999."

In a survey conducted by Sisters Not Strangers of 100 asylum seeking women from England and Wales, a third of women were at high risk from coronavirus, reporting a serious health condition such as asthma, heart disease and diabetes. Undocumented migrants were anxious about seeking medical help and fearful of health charges or being reported to immigration authorities and deported. The survey found that some survivors of Sexual GBV required continued treatment for injuries and chronic conditions post-violence but they reported barriers to accessing specialist services, including reproductive health services. Self-isolation was impossible for the 21% of women who were forced to sleep in the same room as a non-family member. In addition, frequent handwashing was a serious challenge for the 32% of women who struggled to afford soap and other hygiene products[28]. Three quarters of women surveyed went hungry during the pandemic, including mothers who struggled to feed their children. A fifth of women surveyed were homeless, relying on temporary arrangements with acquaintances for shelter, or sleeping outside or on buses and 82% of women reported that their mental health was "much worse than before" because of isolation and being cut off from support services[28].

Case Study 2 – December 2020

"We received a voicemail from a worker at [local] Safeguarding who was trying to find accommodation for a female who was experiencing honour-based violence and was at risk of serious harm. She'd fled her husband's house and was currently staying with an uncle. Threats against her life were coming from relatives outside of the country and there were concerns that they may have accomplices within the country who were looking for her. To date, she had [examples of extreme physical abuse/torture]. She did not speak English – speaking only [Asian language]. She was currently with a police officer who was trying to make her safe. The worker disclosed concerns about the female's mental health, stating that she'd disclosed a preference to complete suicide rather than bring shame and dishonour on her family. We looked at options within the [region of Wales] area and then began to look further afield for specialist organisations who may have the language provision she needed. The worker ended the call to arrange for the police officer to contact us.

The officer contacted us a short while later. I discussed refuge with the officer who was worried about sending her too far from the area as she had not been outside in years, had limited social skills and understanding and would not be able to communicate. We discussed means of getting to refuge, the officer feeling that she may not be able to cope should she partake in Rail to Refuge. The officer said that she had contacted [specialist VAWDASV service in Wales] today to ask that she be assessed for their more local safe house and the worker [from the above specialist service] had refused to assess the female… There was a question of the female's recourse to public funds. The safeguarding officer had been under the impression that she had recourse as she had leave to remain until [2021 date] but the officer was unsure. I brought up the 2014 Social Services and Wellbeing Act – specifically Section 35. The officer stated that Social Services had deemed the risk to be more about DV and to try us for support rather than provide it themselves. We looked and I said I'd try [specialist service in other area of Wales] and ask the on call worker to make contact for discussion. I also signposted to housing as needed and told the officer to phone us back if [said service] were not able to help.

I contacted [said service] and briefly explained the situation and that I wasn't sure if it would be a suitable fit but had to try. The worker was driving but stopped to take details and to call the female back. A short while later, the worker phoned us to recount the call. They would not be able to accept the female into refuge as she had no English language skills and they would not be able to support her adequately. They'd had previous cases last year where language barriers had impacted their services and they'd had to write a policy stating females needed at least enough English to get through the risk assessment. They also could not support her due to her having no recourse to public funds. I again mentioned the 2014 Act but this was met with no reply. I asked if the officer would make contact again and the worker replied that the officer felt she'd exerted all her options having been with the female for 3 hours. She would return her to the uncle's property for the night and submit a safeguarding referral in the morning. The worker had suggested refuges nearer to London with language provisions but the officer again said that she was uncomfortable with this option."

Home Office Funding to support Refugee Women during COVID-19

The British Red Cross have been awarded the 'Support for Refugee Women during COVID-19' grant funding [c£585,000] by the Home Office. They will deliver their 'Digital Empowerment and Connect' project which will help deliver support to refugee women, across the UK, to meet needs associated with the COVID-19 restrictions and the COVID-19 recovery. The funding is intended to help spearhead digital empowerment through provision of devices, data, guidance and technical support directly to women across the UK; deliver tailored resilience building and training through online group work sessions to a range of Red Cross and allied refugee women's groups; and create legacy course materials and integration film for online access to thousands of refugee women across the UK, wider cohorts and stakeholders. This in turn should help reduce isolation amongst refugee women and lead to improvements in wellbeing, as well as supporting the British Red Cross' work against gender-based violence through the dissemination of information.

Micro Rainbow have been awarded funding [c£61,000] to support lesbian, bisexual, transsexual and queer refugee women across the UK. Stakeholders report that this group of refugee women is often not supported by either mainstream refugee organisations or LGBTI ones. This project will focus on tackling digital poverty through the provision of devices, alongside activities to improve digital skills, employability, and job interview and life skills.

Progress Against Recommendations

Written responses were received from Home Office, Welsh Government and Welsh Women's Aid. The Police and Local Authorities were unable to complete the requests. The responses are summarised below according to agency.

Home Office

Recommendations	Review of progress/Response
In our focus groups, asylum-seeking women described being 'scared' by their initial interview and being accused of lying. Adversarial approaches should not be used in such sensitive issues as gender-based violence. If gender-based violence arises as part of a claim for asylum, the claimant needs to have a tailored interview in surroundings conducive to facilitating disclosure, conducted by a person with expertise in gender based violence. Women should be able to be accompanied by trained support workers, volunteers or other companions if they choose.	We appreciate that it may be difficult for claimants to disclose sensitive information and have taken steps to make the process gender sensitive. Asylum interviews are non-adversarial and decision-makers must ensure a claimant feels comfortable and able to provide evidence to support their claim. Women who seek asylum can request a female interviewing officer and interpreter if this would make them feel more able to disclose sensitive information. They can also request to bring a friend or companion with them to interview to provide support if there are exceptional circumstances. We do not expect claimants to disclose sensitive information in front of children and recognise the importance of childcare to give claimants the space they need to disclose relevant information. Claimants who are invited to interview, who have young children that require childcare, and who are unable to make alternative care arrangements, should contact the Home Office to discuss options available or whether the interview will need to be rescheduled. If there is a discrepancy between the information someone provides at different stages in the asylum process, we will ask about this. We will take account of the explanation the claimant provides alongside any other underlying factors including gender, feelings of shame, social standing when assessing credibility. This is covered in the policy guidance on Assessing credibility and refugee status which is available on GOV.UK: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/considering-asylum-claims-and-assessing-credibility-instruction.

The initial screening interview document should be amended to ask question around torture (and marks and scars) at this stage. A question around gender-based violence would alert the Home Office to these types of cases at an early stage. Relevant routes to support should be signposted upon the basis of evidence given at the screening interview.	All staff are trained in safeguarding and all claimants are provided with information at the screening stage about their application, support that is available to claimants and staff are able to signpost to support services. This information leaflet can be found on GOV.UK at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/information-leaflet-for-asylum-applications
The Home Office should ensure that women are offered choice of female interpreter at the initial screening event as well as the Asylum Interview.	Where operationally possible, the claimant should be asked before the screening interview commences if they have a preference and their preference should be accommodated as far as possible. Such a preference may not be met in some scenarios, including where, an interpreter of a particular sex is not available, or there may be only one officer attending a police station and to continue to detain to wait for an officer of a different gender would lead to undue delay in completing the screening questionnaire. Where a request cannot be met, this must be clearly noted on the case record. Claimants are asked at the screening interview if they would like a male or female interviewer for the asylum interview and again in the invitation to asylum interview letter and they can also request this later. If this requirement cannot be met on the scheduled day the interview should normally be re-arranged.
The provision of a same-sex interviewer should be offered as standard rather than as a special request. This should not be a person who has worked elsewhere in relation to the same case. The interpreter should be properly vetted and subject to a professional code of conduct.	The provision of same-sex interviewers and interpreters is offered as standard and interpreters are subject to vetting and professional Code of Conduct (CoC). The interpreters CoC is available on GOV.UK at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-conduct-interpreters-working-for-uk-visas-and-immigration The provision of an opposite-sex interviewer should not be precluded solely on the grounds of the asylum claimant's gender.
People who do not speak English as a first language should not be required to sign the Interview Record, given that they may not understand the contents of the document and the implications of signing it; inaccurate screening interview records may later be used to undermine women's claims if statements appear contradictory.	Interpreters are provided at public expense for the purpose of allowing asylum claimants to submit their case, wherever necessary. An interpreter is selected who can ensure appropriate communication between the claimant and the interviewer. (This requirement is set out in Immigration Rule 339ND). Claimants are asked to sign the acknowledgement section on the original copy of the interview record, or in the case of video conference interviews, the acknowledgement proforma, to confirm receipt. This is not to agree to the accuracy of the contents. Interviews are also recorded and it is open to claimants to submit further evidence following the interview.

The Home Office should review the guidelines and training on conducting the Asylum Interview with a focus on how survivors of torture and sexual violence are enabled to give proper account of their experiences, ensuring parity with victims of violence going through the Criminal Justice System.	We are committed to delivering an asylum process that gender sensitive and are committed to treating women who seek refuge with dignity and respect. All decision-makers receive mandatory training on managing cases sensitively and must follow published Home Office policy guidance, including specific guidance on gender issues, which covers specific forms of gender-based persecution and is available on GOV.UK: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gender-issue-in-the-asylum-claim-process. The policy guidance on Asylum Interviews also covers interviews with victims of torture or trauma: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/conducting-the-asylum-interview-process We have a robust quality assurance strategy in place to ensure that asylum caseworkers meet the standard expected of them, and to ensure compliance with the published policy. We have worked closely with partners on a range of initiatives, including those which are reflected in our asylum policy guidance. We continue to work with external partners to develop and review our guidance and training. We train our decision-makers to enable them to interview vulnerable persons effectively and take account of the impact of trauma and memory loss. The recommended model for interviewing is based on a model called the Dialogical Communication Method (DCM), which is based on best practice for investigative interviewing. The model has six phases which give the interviewee the opportunity to provide and explain their oral evidence and also gives the interviewing officer the opportunity to test the evidence. It is designed to activate memory and enable the vulnerable person to recall their evidence as accurately as possible. We also focus on addressing gender specific issues such as the impact of cultural norms and other underlying factors on the interviewee's ability to provide their account. Additionally, trainees are taught more specifically about how they can deal with Female Genital Mutilation and other forms of Gender Based Violence sensitively in the asylum interview.

The Home Office interviewer should not be making/typing verbatim notes during the course of the interview, which means some interviews can take several hours. Instead, the interview should be videoed or tape recorded, with the Interviewer making 'trigger' notes instead of a verbatim record. They should be free to engage with the applicant, build rapport, and be more able to focus the interview on the following four areas: • **Is there a well-founded fear/ convention reason for the claim?** • **Is there sufficient protection in the home state?** • **Is there a safe relocation option?** • **Is the applicant at risk on return?**	Decision makers receive extensive training on considering asylum applications, which includes training and mentoring on conducting interviews. The training includes a focus on how to establish and maintain rapport with the interviewee. Trainees are taught each interview should take into consideration how rapport can be impacted by the individual circumstance of the interviewee (background, education etc), the difference in the power dynamic and the impact of the interview environment (such as taking down a verbatim account/ communicating through an interpreter) and how these can be mitigated against. Trainees are also given chance to conduct practice asylum interviews in a training environment and provided with feedback on whether their interview was conducted appropriately. A verbatim transcript is provided as soon as possible after the interview so that there is a written record. Interviews are also recorded as this increases transparency, improves interview quality and enables any issues raised after the interview to be double checked. This is set out in Paragraph 339NE of the Immigration Rules and applies to all interviews conducted on or after 24 November 2016. The asylum interview guidance is kept under review and is currently in the process of being updated in consultation with external stakeholders to provide updated advice on investigating key issues through focused, professional and sensitive questioning. We believe this is particularly relevant as some evidence may be highly complex and emotive, relating for example to instances of persecution or serious harm. Such evidence is crucial to ensure that asylum claims are properly considered, so that protection is granted to those who genuinely need it and refused to those who do not. Once updated the asylum interview guidance will replace the current version available on GOV.UK at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/conducting-the-asylum-interview-process.

For trafficked women, the Trafficking Interview should be conducted separately from the Asylum Interview.	Having to recount experiences multiple times can often be a trigger for traumatisation. There is no requirement for the Single Competent Authority (SCA) to interview a potential victim and in most NRM cases an interview will not be necessary. The Modern Slavery: Statutory Guidance for England and Wales, which is available on GOV.UK at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/modern-slavery-how-to-identify-and-support-victims details the relevant provisions in sections 14.94 – 105. In particular, 14.99: The SCA must consider whether it would be more appropriate to submit questions in writing or through the support provider, police or local authority (in the case of children and Adults at Risk), or another professional involved in their support. The SCA should also consider whether it would be more appropriate to submit questions to another body to be asked during a different interview, for example, during an asylum or police interview. The decision should be made having regard to the victim's circumstances.
Claimants currently have just five days to submit comments to the Home Office after their interview. This is inadequate, and should be extended to ten days.	There is no set period for submitting follow up comments and any inference that there are five days is untrue and unhelpful. Claimants are provided with a reasonable amount of time on a case by case basis in which to provide additional evidence following the asylum interview.
The Home Office (and also legal and judicial stakeholders) need to consider how their staff are trained and supported on gender issues and enable input from local, expert agencies on training on violence against women issues. They should also ensure the right structures and processes are in place in the Home Office to counter professional 'burn out'/'detachment' from rape and other traumatic narratives.	The Home Office cannot comment with regards legal and judicial stakeholders as that would be for the Ministry of Justice. The Home Office continues to work with external partners to develop and review our guidance and training. The Home Office provides support for staff and training including secondary trauma. The 'Psychological Factors which effect decision-makers' course which was developed alongside external stakeholders with expertise in this area. This is also addressed in the Asylum Interview and Safeguarding Awareness Training. We have also recently introduced a Reflection Day as part of the 'Assessing evidence: Medico Legal Reports' training course which includes a vicarious trauma session, delivered by one of the doctors from Freedom from Torture/Helen Bamber Foundation.

The development of local panels of experts who can provide expert statements in gender-based violence cases, including psychiatric, psychological, medical and cultural expertise, and are able to produce 'Istanbul-Compliant' reports would speed up the process and lead to more accurate understandings of women's situations. Currently, women in Wales who are referred to the Medical Foundation for Victims of Torture or the Helen Bamber Foundation have to travel to London which institutes delays into the process.	Medical evidence can be provided from organisations other than the Foundations. Appropriate weight will be given to medical evidence taking into account whether it has been completed in line with recognised frameworks and standards.
Given the high levels of successful appeals in women's claims for asylum, there is a need for scrutiny of the decision-making process and a review of the given reasons for refusal.	Decision-makers carefully consider protection needs in every case based on all evidence available when the decision is made. There are several reasons why a decision may be overturned at appeal, including introduction of new evidence that was not available to the decision-maker, so it does not necessarily mean the original decision was wrong. We need asylum claimants to disclose all relevant evidence to support their claim at the earliest opportunity so that we can properly consider their case. We aim to reduce the allowed appeal rate by analysing the reasons why appeals are allowed and use this to improve guidance and training. We continue to work with partners on continuous improvement and note that in recent years the allowed appeals rate has been approximately the same for females and males. We have a robust quality assurance strategy in place to ensure that asylum caseworkers meet the standard expected of them, and to ensure compliance with the published policy. Asylum interviews and decisions are subject to internal quality checks and external auditing.

Welsh Government

Recommendations	Review of progress/Response
Welsh policy should reflect the different social and cultural contexts that normalise violence against women while keeping sight of the general and widespread prevalence of gender-based violence across all social groups. **Recommendation: Make teachers aware of the indicators of 'honour'-based violence, FGM and forced marriage.**	The Welsh Government has issued statutory guidance Keeping Learners Safe (KLS) to support schools in creating and maintaining a safe learning environment for children. The purpose of this guidance is to help all education settings ensure they have effective safeguarding systems in place. This guidance was recently updated to reflect changes to legislation and strengthen safeguarding arrangements. This guidance is statutory for maintained schools (including maintained nursery schools), voluntary-aided and foundation schools, and further education institutions. However all education settings should consider the guidance as effective practice. The updated KLS includes a chapter on Domestic abuse, gender-based violence, sexual violence and harmful cultural practices, with specific sections on Female Genital Mutilation and forced marriage. The KLS includes a safeguarding audit tool to provide support to schools (and all other education settings) to ensure that there are effective systems in place to meet their legal safeguarding obligations in line with the KLS guidance. Hwb, our digital learning platform, hosts a series of e-learning modules, which have been developed by the Welsh Government. The Keeping Learners Safe Modules support all staff in education settings to understand their safeguarding responsibilities as set out in the KLS guidance. In addition, a factsheet and e-poster on FGM has been developed for education practitioners to raise awareness of the issue and to provide information, including how to recognise the signs that a girl may be at risk of FGM. The factsheet has been published on Hwb and shared with our networks.

No Recourse to Public Funds: although this is a non-devolved policy area, nevertheless the impacts are felt in Wales as a wider report by the National Assembly into Domestic Abuse outlined in 2009 The response to the report stated that the Welsh Government and the UK Government remain committed to finding a solution to victims of domestic abuse with NRPF. Given the findings of the National Assembly and our own research we recommend that expenses for refuge or other accommodation for women and children with no recourse to public funds should be made available, and underwritten by the Welsh Government where necessary, in order to address their needs and protect their human rights, where they would otherwise be homeless. This should be a cost effective solution and weighted against the overall costs of gender-based violence across the broader economy. In making this provision available, the Welsh Government will be upholding the human rights treaties to which it has signed.	It is totally unacceptable for children's success to be determined by their social or economic circumstances. Underpinning all of our work is a belief that someone's ability to benefit from education should not be determined by where they live, what their background is or what the income of their parents is. We are investing unprecedented amounts – over £110 million in this financial year – to improve outcomes for our disadvantaged learners. Year on year, we have extended the Pupil Development Grant (PDG). It now supports even more of our most vulnerable and disadvantaged learners. We introduced the newest strand to the PDG – PDG Access – in 2018-19, to provide additional support directly to families who need it most to help meet some of the costs associated with the school day, including school uniform. The PDG Access terms and conditions for 2020/21 state that children from families who have no recourse to public funds in reception; Year 3; Year 7; and Year 10 are eligible for the funding. Local authorities are strongly encouraged to exercise their discretion to allow the children of families experiencing severe hardship, because they have no recourse to public funds, to benefit from local authority free school meal provision. We have also funded Children in Wales to develop the Price of Pupil Poverty guides for schools so they can support disadvantaged pupils on a day-to-day basis.

All NHS workers should be made aware that they are a significant route for women in these categories to achieve support and need to be aware of how to identify gender-based violence in all its forms, how to enable disclosure and to provide support and routes of referral. **Trafficking should be recognized as a health issue: health care providers should receive training on the health consequences of human trafficking, in terms of physical, sexual, reproductive, social, and mental health consequences, and culturally competent approaches to supporting trafficked persons.**	**Guidance on access to primary and secondary care:** Following a period of public consultation, in December 2018 the Welsh Government published guidance to address issues and concerns raised in relation to the provision of both primary and secondary services to refugees and asylum seekers. The guidance provides direction and a template for health boards to develop consistent local protocols, policy and practice – underpinned by robust processes, procedures, administrative and governance arrangements for health boards to adhere to ensure continuity of healthcare and equity of access. Health boards are responsible for making reasonable provision for their resident population, including the needs of specific groups or individuals such as refugees and asylum seekers. Key commitments include: » Current health and immunisation assessments of need (formally known as the 'Blue Book') should be reviewed within a reasonable timescale, informed by the national needs assessment and other research currently underway, to reflect the issues and needs affecting the RAS population arriving in Wales, with due regard to safeguarding concerns such as potential trafficking, sexual exploitation, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). **Interpretation Resources:** Refugees and asylum seekers are entitled to access treatment from GPs irrespective of their asylum status and the Equality Act 2010 provides an opportunity to challenge health boards if they are denied access to services. Also, in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, refugees and asylum seekers should not be discriminated against due to a lack of knowledge of English. Health boards need to ensure that adequate interpretation resources are available and are suitable to the case under discussion. **Traumatic Stress Wales:** The Welsh Government has agreed the implementation of a Traumatic Stress Wales service that takes a whole system, consistent approach, and is informed by the current evidence-base and the experiences of the Cardiff and Vale UHB and the Veterans' NHS Wales services. Health boards are developing plans on how they will deliver the specification in their region – and have been allocated additional funding to do this. This is not primarily a 'service' to be referred to – but an improvement programme which will offer evidence based resources for professionals dealing with individuals who have experienced trauma. Specialist work-streams are in place for key groups: » children and young people; » perinatal; » prisoners; » refugees, asylum seekers and other people seeking sanctuary; and » survivors of sexual assault and gender-based violence.

	A cross sector an emotional stabilisation training package aimed at staff working in primary care, social services and the third sector has already been published and the Traumatic Stress Wales Implementation Team are working with partners to develop a complementary training programme. In light of the pandemic and potential increased number of individuals requiring support, the implementation team have worked to accelerate of some aspects of their work plan. E-training modules/information packages that incorporate videos/animations are planned. Early Health Board adopters will aim to go live shortly. **Mental Health Delivery Plan for Wales** • Welsh Government has reviewed the Mental Health Delivery Plan for 2019-2022 to include new commitments and specific actions, which respond to changing mental health needs and the needs of those groups of people who have been disproportionately affected by the Covid-19 pandemic (for instance low income and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities). • As part of the Mental Health Delivery Plan – and through the NHS delivery framework – Health Boards and Trusts in Wales will evidence how they will deliver services equitably and ensure access to information is provided when needed and in a form that is accessible, including consideration of language. We are also ensuring that the BAME Helpline Wales links with the national CALL mental health help-line to provide access to mental health support. • Additional funding is being provided to Diverse Cymru to further embed the BME Mental Health Workplace Good Practice Certification Scheme in Wales. We will continue to work with Diverse Cymru and other key stakeholders to ensure mental health services are accessible and culturally appropriate. • There is also a new commitment in the Delivery Plan to ensure mental health is incorporated within the forthcoming Race Equality Action Plan for Wales.

Training and awareness; the National Training Framework proposed in the Welsh Government's White Paper in 2012 should focus upon those persons most likely to make initial contact with a person at risk of violence, and include police, teachers and other school staff, housing and homelessness officers and social services as a priority, with clear and immediate lines of referral in the event of a disclosure of abuses such as 'honour'-based violence, forced marriage, FGM and trafficking, and how best to assist women with NRPF.	• We are committed to making training, relevant and accessible to everyone • We have opened up our VAWDASV online training to all professionals (not just those who are relevant authority) • Groups 3 of Ask and Act will focus a little more on complexity of needs and issues • We have commissioned additional training this year so any front line professional can access HBA training We have a specialist syllabus - places responsibility on relevant authorities to ensure ongoing / subject matter training to staff
Full training on trafficking, NRPF and the Domestic Violence Concession, 'honour'-based violence, forced marriage and FGM should be part of the requirements of Stage 3 and 4 training within the Wales National Training Framework. Training needs to be developed along with specialists from sectors currently addressing issues of gender-based violence including BME women's organisations and organisations working with the immigration and asylum system. Their insights should be mainstreamed into the leadership and training element.	We have established an Anti-Slavery Training Programme to deliver a wide range of courses across Wales to a consistent level. The training is approved by the Welsh Government National Training Framework. Each year thousands of people across Wales benefit from receiving this training. Slavery is a complex crime to investigate and prosecute which is why we have worked with our partners from the Police and Crown Prosecution Service to develop the Organised Crime and Modern Slavery Course. This is a three-day joint training provision for Law Enforcement Senior Investigating Officers and Crown Prosecutors and Crown Advocates.

Training should include methods of identification and clear and immediate routes of referral for women and girls who need assistance due to NRPF, or because they have been trafficked.	We have developed and operate the Pathway across all of Wales and it incorporates the use of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) process for survivors. This is seen to be good practice and is only taking place in Wales. To support this process a MARAC Co-ordinator has been recruited and initially being funded from assets confiscated from criminals using the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002. The MARAC Co-ordinator is a member of BAWSO staff who works from the Regional Organised Crime Unit. The post is now jointly funded by the Welsh Police Forces.
Services and Support. There is a need for a streamlined identification of victims of trafficking and consistent use of the National Referral Mechanism, which should be monitored, in order to establish and analyse referral rate and identification questions incorporated into the DASH Risk Assessment Checklist.	We have worked closely with key agencies in Wales, and across Welsh Government to determine the scale, types and location of slavery in Wales. This is helping to improve intelligence and recording of incidents in Wales, using the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), and increase cases within the Criminal Justice System. Wales is one of three Home Office funded Early Adapter areas for the Independent Child Trafficking Guardians Programme. Barnardo's Cymru operates the Programme in Wales.
Interpreters and translators should be trained on gender-based violence under the Framework with a robust Code of Conduct—both in the public sector and in other environments. Increasing the availability of trained, preferably female, interpreters will mean that women experiencing domestic violence are more able to disclose their experiences with confidence.	This action is still being progressed - we are looking at ways of getting ask and act opened up to non-relevant authority staff.

Welsh Women's Aid

Recommendations	Review of progress/Response
The All-Wales Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence helpline should include specialist call-handlers with the ability to assist women to make an application for the Home Office Destitution Domestic Violence (DDV) Concession.	This has not been implemented because immigration advice (which includes advising a survivor to apply for the DDVC) must be given by an immigration lawyer. Support staff in the service providers (e.g. refuge) can advise the survivors to seek immigration advice on their options once they have accepted a referral to support a survivor with NRPF. If the survivor is eligible and decides (after getting this information from the lawyer) to proceed, the support worker can help to make the application. So normally it is the support workers which will assist with making this application (not the helpline). In 2021 WWA commissioned Praxis to deliver training to all third sector VAWDASV services in Wales on the rights of survivors in Wales who are subject to immigration control. This included a session on the DVR/DDVC, as well as Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act, the NRM, and Asylum Support.
Call-handlers should be trained to be able to identify 'honour'-based violence, forced marriage and FGM.	All Call Handlers are trained as part of their induction in identifying all forms of VAWDASV-including HBV, FGM, Forced Marriage etc. All Helpline Support Workers have also completed the QCF workbooks (Level 3) which includes an Unit on the subjects mentioned.
Specialists able to provide suitable responses should be available at all times to ensure appropriate and timely responses.	The Helpline operates on a 24/7/365 basis with 4 avenues of accessibility: telephone, webchat, SMS text and enquiries by email. All Helpline Support Workers are bilingual (Welsh & English) but are also able to utilise Language Line for anyone who needs the services of an interpreter. WWA have also developed a Support Pack for specialist services on the rights of survivors subject to immigration control. This was done with input from a wide range of experts, including barristers specialising in public law and asylum and migrant advocacy services.

Other recommendations which we have helped deliver against (e.g. through training, campaigns)	
Relevant Local Authority staff should be made aware of training and information on NRPF and should maintain records of cases supported, and ensure proactive management of cases.	Local authority staff are covered by the National Training Framework - all should complete level 1 training, and specific cohorts should be covered by Ask and Act. Welsh Women's Aid is part of the partnership delivering this training. In the Ask and Act training, NRPF is discussed as one of the barriers to seeking support. All Local Authorities and Local Health Boards have to produce local VAWDASV strategies as well as adhere to statutory VAWDASV commissioning guidance – for both there should be comprehensive needs assessments done as well as Equality impact assessments that should identify the needs regarding NRPF through consultation with local specialist services, survivors and utilising national data and research. At present it is very unclear whether this is done consistently or at all in some areas.

Trafficking should be recognized as a health issue: health care providers should receive training on the health consequences of human trafficking, in terms of physical, sexual, reproductive, social, and mental health consequences, and culturally competent approaches to supporting trafficked persons.	Welsh Women's Aid are working to bring trafficking and exploitation under the VAWDASV agenda. We have written a position paper on this (to be published imminently) and recently organised and hosted a round-table event for various sectors and survivors, including Welsh Government for that purpose. The current National VAWDASV Strategy does note Trafficking and exploitation however there are minimal actions aligned to it and currently this work is siloed. We are calling for this work to be brought under the governance of a cross government approach to VAWDASV.
All service providers should ensure that women dispersed to Wales are aware at the earliest stage of the services available to them, which, for asylum seeking women, should include their rights in relation to the Home Office Asylum Interview according to the Home Office Gender Guidelines.	'Trusted Professional' training was provided to the Wales Refugee Council by Welsh Women's Aid. We have also put on events regarding NRPF to increase awareness, e.g. https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/WWA-Cheques-and-Balances-Economics-of-Abuse-Report.pdf The Nation for Sanctuary Action Plan does note alignment with VAWDASV however there has been limited governance and join up across these agendas to achieve this. https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-03/nation-of-sanctuary-refugee-and-asylum-seeker-plan_0.pdf
Agencies should not be put in a position of turning women away on the basis of their NRPF status. Services should help or signpost eligible persons with NRPF to make an application for the Home Office Destitution Domestic Violence Concession at first contact, either through the helpline or an appropriately trained staff member within the organisation who is able to identify eligibility and provide support throughout the process.	The Live Fear Free Helpline has observed that, more often than not, agencies refuse to allow access to refuges to those with NRPF. Welsh Women's Aid's annual data returns from the membership show that, although the ***number*** of accepted refuge referrals for survivors with NRPF have been increasing year on year for the last 4 years (2016/17-2019/20), proportionally, there was a reduction between 2016717 and 2018/19 (from 79% to 68%), but in 2019/20 this increased again to 79%. It is important to note the real limitations of the DDVC and the barrier this presents to services being able to source funds to accommodate survivors with NRPF. Not everybody is eligible for DDVC (only those on spousal / partner visa whose partner is a British citizen or who has settled status in the UK are eligible). It is the complex immigration and eligibility landscape that people have to navigate that is the issue. WWA are doing quite a lot of work to try and clarify this position and the different options for survivors so that agencies are not put in a position of turning women away. This has now been provided and moreover a toolkit / support pack developed and shared with all third sector VAWDASV services.

Literature in plain language for greater accessibility, and in different media for those who are not literate, as well as extending the languages in use; leaflets to be widely distributed in a variety of settings, including at doctors surgeries, ladies' toilets and police stations.	Welsh Women's Aid have recruited an officer to improve the accessibility of the Helpline for various marginalised and minoritized communities. Materials have been provided in a variety of formats, stickers, coffee cards, posters, etc. and disseminated widely. The Welsh Government's recent "Home should be a safe place" campaign has been translated into a number of languages. Welsh Women's Aid have provided translated materials for survivors and bystanders, including children and young people, in multiple languages and easy read format.
On-going specialist training in gender-based violence for social services, local authorities, police, housing and health on gender-based violence.	This should be covered through the National Training Framework. WWA has a range of training available, including: • Introduction to VAWDASV • Domestic Abuse Awareness • Understanding so-called Honour Based Violence • Trauma informed practice • Understanding Female Genital Mutilation • Impact of VAWDASV on Children and Young People.
Services should recognise women's particular needs rather than focussing upon their immigration status.	This is central to the Change that Last model and approach promoted by WWA which focuses on a strengths based and needs led approach to support survivors. The Change that Lasts model is being piloted with services in Cardiff, but the principles are promoted by all WWA members and the Helpline. WWA have presented this approach to commissioners across Wales. The national commissioning guidance defines specialist support that is needs led – this should be followed by commissioners (in practice, this is limited). The National strategy commits to sustainably funding strengths based, needs led services – again this needs to be delivered on. WWA's National Quality Service Standards evidences services on a needs-led approach. In relation to NRPF, specifically, the Standards require services to demonstrate that: "1.5 No survivor who has a need for support is refused a service because English is not their first language, because of their immigration status or because they have no recourse to public funds".
Abuser programmes which are accessible to people who do not speak English and which are available in community settings.	Respect (the UK domestic abuse organisation leading on developing and implementing safe, effective work with perpetrators and whom WWA partner with in delivering Change that Lasts) asks for evidence of a translation budget as part of service accreditation.
Mentoring and befriending programmes for women experiencing gender-based violence.	WWA piloted the SEEdS model (Survivors Empowering and Educating Services) and are now facilitating the development of a Wales-wide Survivor Engagement Network.
Access to professional female interpreters.	The Helpline, and many members of WWA use Language Line but the interpreters aren't always female.

Better partnership and collaboration between NGOs in Wales supporting BME women.	Austerity has led to a dearth of specialist BME services in Wales. Competitive tendering and commissioning processes have impacted on partnerships and collaboration. Particularly where 'by and for' provision has not been recognised. Also, collaboration and partnerships need to be resourced as part of the sustainable funding model, it takes capacity and resources to work together (particularly in addressing power dynamics). The national commissioning guidance notes the need for 'by and for' provision – this is not being delivered on across wales.
Make teachers aware of the indicators of 'honour'-based violence, FGM and forced marriage.	The All Wales 'Honour'-Based Abuse group has been dedicated to pushing some of this agenda forward. WWA lead on the development of Forced Marriage safeguarding factsheets for schools with WG/ACEsHub/BAWSO, and fed into the HBA's factsheet on FGM. WWA are also pushing for this to be linked in to the Relationships and Sexuality Education/Whole education approach to VAWDASV. The Welsh Government guidance on a whole education approach to VAWDASV references HBV, FGM, Forced Marriage and highlights practice by BAWSO. This needs to be implemented and funded. Teachers should be covered by Ask and Act training, but we know that in many parts of Wales, this has not happened.
Ensure sustainable funding for support services for children and young people affected by violence, in accordance with the increases in demand that this proposal will engender.	We are continuing to campaign for this but don't see us any closer to our aim. See e.g. our State of the Sector report: https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/State-of-the-sector-2020-PDFdesign.pdf and also Children Matter Report: https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Children-and-Young-People-participation-report-FINAL.pdf NSPCC and WWA are currently campaigning together – see e.g. https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/campaigning/children-and-young-people-support-campaign-toolkit/
Specialist agencies providing services to the BME women's sector need secure sources of funding so they can concentrate on supporting and meeting the needs of BME women affected by gender-based violence. Government should ensure that women's BME community groups are able to access sufficient resources to progress this work.	We have been calling for this in our State of the Sectors reports for years. It is a commitment within the national VAWDASV commissioning guidance and national VAWDASV strategy. The Wales Audit Office report recommendations and numerous Equalities and Local Government Committee Senedd Committee Reports have highlighted it. But it is still not delivered.

Findings

This report has set out, as far possible, the current position on the recommendations made by the 2013 report. Significant progress has been made in some areas, with the introduction of legislation and policy. But there are still areas that may require further work and research. These have been identified either by a lack of response or information, or as a result of the evaluation process.

a. NRPF. The original recommendations of the 2013 report identified recommendations for both the UK Government and Welsh Government on NRPF, and yet this still seems to be falling through the gap of devolved/non devolved responsibility. Welsh Government state clearly that this is the responsibility of the Home Office. Although this is the case for immigration, in terms of support services, Welsh Government could make funding available for those with NRPF if it chose to. Work undertaken by the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership as recommended still shows that we are unclear on the data if how many people have NRPF and evidence from Welsh Women's Aid shows that accessing any accommodation or support is extremely difficult for women in this position. The question of funding for refuge provision for women and girls was as big an issue in 2013 as it is in 2021, with the case studies showing the challenges faced by helpline staff in securing spaces.

b. Data. We understand the global prevalence of violence, but less about the prevalence of violence in our communities. There needs to be more work to develop intelligence, surveillance and data sharing systems that can identify and analyse both qualitative and quantitative data to ensure that the experiences of diverse and marginalised communities are not excluded. This means that where we have the data on police recorded crime, and helpline referrals we should seek to understand where possible how we might be able to identify where specific communities have been impacted. This may require the use of softer data capture methods from engagement with the communities themselves and more specific reporting from specialist agencies working with these communities in Wales.

c. Inclusion of all agencies. Some agencies found it difficult to update on their recommendations. More work is needed to understand what progress has been made in policing in Wales and social services in particular as this evaluation was unable to report on these areas.

d. Invisibility of migrant women and girls including those from the Gypsy Roma Traveller community, migrant and seasonal workers, students and others on temporary visas. This found little evidence of work that has addressed the particular experience of these groups directly in in relation to VAWDASV

e. Lack of join up between the Nation of Sanctuary Plan commitments on VAWDASV and VAWDASV policy in Welsh Government. The plan and national strategy both contain key commitments that cross over between policy areas but join up of these, and the VAWDASV and refugee sectors do not seem to be clear in governance structures. There is also a disconnect with the wider equalities work and less visibility on the experience of older, LGBTI, or disabled women and girls, perpetrators and the experience of hate crime and race related sexual harassment. This has led to commitments being left ongoing or not visibly taken forward in the Nation of Sanctuary plan and VAWDASV national strategy.

f. Lack of awareness of Social Services duties under Welsh legislation. As exemplified by the Case Study where social worker says it's "more of a DV issue" (and therefore not within their remit). WG have commissioned the NRPF Network to deliver training on this, which recently concluded. But this review finds that there is more work to be done to ensure that there is better understanding of the duties under the Act, which are not mentioned in the updated from Welsh Government in relation to social services and local authorities.

g. Lack of joint governance around VAWDASV, VAWG and migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Although Home Office attend the Ministerial Taskforce on Refugees and Asylum Seekers, there is no forum that brings together officials of both governments on this specific issue.

Conclusion

This review has found that there has been some real progress made in terms of legislation in both Welsh and UK governments' jurisdictions and policy, guidance and process that has taken forward many aspects of this work. The gaps have been identified in the findings, and further work to close these and report against progress can be taken forward by the review of the Wales National VAWDASV Strategy taking place in 2021.

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