

Scrutiny Report



Performance Scrutiny Committee - Partnerships

Part 1

Date: 7 December 2022

Subject Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) 2021/22

Author Scrutiny Adviser

The following people have been invited to attend for this item:

Invitee:	Area / Role / Subject
Natalie Poyner	Head of Children Services
Finn Madell	Head of Corporate Safeguarding
Amy Thomas	VAWDASV Regional Lead Advisor

Section A – Committee Guidance and Recommendations

1 Recommendations to the Committee

The Committee is asked to

1. Review the Gwent VAWDASV Progress Report and scrutinise progress against the objectives aligned to the VAWDASV Regional Strategy
2. Consider the Implementation Plan and the key strategic priority work plans for VAWDASV within the corporate arrangements for the whole Council
3. Determine if it wishes to make any comment / recommendations to Cabinet regarding the report and how the Council is incorporating its VAWDASV requirements and obligations under the Act

2 Context

Background

- 2.1 The Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 places a duty on Local Authorities and Local Health Boards to publish a report of the progress made

during each financial year in achieving the objectives specified in local/regional strategies. The statutory responsibilities under the VAWDASV (Wales) Act 2015 are discharged through the VAWDASV Partnership Board and annual reporting against the regional strategy and delivery plan are submitted into Gwent Public Services Boards.

- 2.2 The Gwent Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) strategy 2018 – 2023, approved by each of the Gwent Public Services Boards in 2018 prior to publication in May 2018, sets out Gwent’s aims against the six strategic priorities. This report describes the progress made against the Strategy in 2020/21. A glossary of abbreviations used within the document can be found at the end of the report for reference.
- 2.3 Through a structure of working groups the VAWDASV Partnership Board, ensures that the priorities identified in the regional Strategy translate into actions that can make a real difference to the well-being and safety of people living in Newport and across Gwent, both now and in the future.
- 2.4 Newport City Council are the host for the regional VAWDASV team.

Newport council Officers are involved in all the working groups that report into the VAWDASV Board, as listed below:

- Gwent VAWDASV Strategic Delivery Group
 - Gwent Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) Planning Group
 - Gwent VAWDASV Communication and Engagement Group
 - Gwent VAWDASV Whole Education Approach Group
 - Gwent VAWDASV Commissioners Group
 - Gwent MARAC Steering Group
 - Gwent VAWDASV Perpetrator Response Group
 - Gwent VAWDASV Training Subgroup
 - Gwent VAWDASV Community of Practice
- 2.4 To strengthen the work of the region and beyond, Gwent VAWDASV is represented on Welsh Government groups including: Sustainable funding group; National Training Framework Ask and Act Steering Group; Single Unified Safeguarding Review Steering Group and associated subgroups; All Wales Honour Based Abuse Leadership Group; and the Welsh Government (WG) Perpetrator Work Stream and associated task and finish groups. All learning from these groups is shared with Board and relevant subgroups and provides Gwent with the opportunity to raise any concerns with the appropriate members of Welsh Government.
 - 2.5 As Scrutiny is not a decision-making forum, the Scrutiny Committee’s review and subsequent comments / recommendations on this matter will be reported to the Cabinet for consideration and action.
 - 2.6 As Elected Members, and Scrutiny Members, the Committee has an important role in considering the arrangements that the Council has in place as a relevant authority within the VAWDASV Act. To ensure the Council is carrying out all key requirements of the Act to ensure citizens affected by VAWDASV have services available to them on a local footprint.

3 Information Submitted to the Committee

- 3.1 The Gwent VAWDASV Strategy has Six Strategic Priorities based on the Welsh Government National Strategy. Key headlines for 2020-2021 are highlighted below with the full VAWDASV Gwent progress report attached at section 8. A new Gwent VAWDASV Commissioning Board convened in November 2021 with the Director of Social Services of Newport Council as Chair, this Board will provide governance and oversight and hold all relevant authorities to account against the regional and national strategy and Acts.

- 3.2 2020-21 was an unprecedented year due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, this resulted in reduced ability of victims and perpetrators to seek support and necessitated a change in practice for all partner organisations.
- 3.3 Despite media reports of increased calls to helplines in England, in Newport and across Gwent we saw a drop in police calls and referrals to specialist support services. As a response we worked with key partners to develop and share a social media campaign encouraging people to seek help and support.
- 3.4 Additional regional funding bids to Welsh Government and the Ministry of Justice were successful and allocated to support specialist sector organisations in Newport and wider Gwent. This included Barnardos Opening Closed Doors projects based in NCC that secured Home Office funding to continue their work with families affected by Domestic Abuse. Senior leaders in NCC were instrumental this year in securing sustainable partnership funding for the regional IDVA and MARAC coordination resource.
- 3.5 A regional conference was facilitated in March 2021 aimed at improving awareness of all forms of VAWDASV, including domestic abuse, coercive control, domestic homicide, honour-based abuse and forced marriage. 92 individuals from across Gwent and beyond attended during the day. With 16 of those from NCC. In September and October 2021, we followed this conference with a series of three regional group 6 seminars aimed towards senior leaders. 10 NCC senior leaders attended one or more of those sessions which demonstrates the commitment across the council for this agenda.
- 3.7 Representatives from NCC and wider Gwent have been instrumental in piloting a new approach for Domestic Homicide and other practice reviews, with a senior leader from NCC leading the work with Welsh Government on a Single Unified Review Process (SUSR), and piloting conducting Domestic Homicide Reviews using the Adult Practice Review methodology.
- 3.8 Newport Neighbourhood Care Networks led the implementation of the IRISi project across the region was agreed with a start date of 2021-22. This will enable early identification and referral via GP practices of domestic abuse.
- 3.9 Group 1 VAWDASV training saw a greatly increased update during 2020-21 in comparison with previous years with NCC reporting completion by 60% of the workforce. In their letter responding to the National Framework annual reports, Welsh Government states 'the average completion rate for the combined local authorities is: 68%', Newport City Council is currently 13 in the table of 22 local authorities across Wales in relation to Group 1 completions. Face to face training at Group 2 and 3 was significantly affected by the lockdown, however, 29 NCC staff completed Group 2 during the year.

4. Suggested Areas of Focus

Role of the Committee

The role of the Committee in considering the report is to:

- Establish whether the Implementation Plan is effectively prioritising workstreams to meet needs and having an impact for citizens of Newport
- Establish whether within these workstreams, associated key priorities and themes are appropriately addressed and support commitment to addressing VAWDASV with clarity of purpose
- Consider the level of partnership working to effectively improve outcomes for Newport citizens affected by, or impacted by VAWDASV
- Consider how the Regional Team can work closely with Members in their roles as Councillors and Members of Scrutiny Committees to plan and access suitable training pursuant to the statutory National Training Framework requirements.

4.1 Suggested Lines of Enquiry

The following broad lines of enquiry are following reflection of work currently being undertaken as part of the review and updating of the current regional strategy:

4.1.1 Partnership Working:

- Are Members satisfied that all agencies and organisations connected to VAWDASV are adequately represented within the partnership, to support collaboration for a single purpose, joint working and tackling issues together?
- Is there evidence that there are adequate partnership arrangements on both a strategic and operational level to implement the requirements of the Act?
- Is it evident that Newport CC is maximising its potential in respect of partnership working to meet its statutory requirements and obligations under the Act?

4.1.2 Quality and Performance:

- Is it clear how the lived experience of survivors is represented and embedded within the partnership arrangements, and their voices are used to continuously improve services?
- Are Members able to establish if the partnership arrangements in place have led to service improvement, including how learning from partners is shared and embedded across the sector?
- Are Members satisfied that there are appropriate governance structures in place, and these are clear and working effectively to improve outcomes for Newport citizens?

4.1.3 Practice:

- Are members confident that there is sufficient focus on prevention as well as adequate and effective early intervention and prevention services in place to reduce problems for the future?

- Is there evidence that appropriate systems and opportunities are in place to support the VAWDASV workforce in building resilience and developing skills to deliver high quality services?
- Are appropriate systems in place across NCC to meet statutory requirements, including training targets at each level of the National Training Framework?
- Are Members clear in their roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities in respect of VAWDASV and the Act?

Section B – Supporting Information

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The Gwent VAWDASV regional delivery plan 2020-2021 provides an update of key actions against each of the strategic priorities.
- 5.2 The Gwent VAWDASV implementation plan 2021-2022 details this year’s objectives and actions.

6 Links to Council Policies and Priorities

- The Annual VAWDASV report has links to both the *Aspirational People and Resilient Communities* Corporate Plan Commitments.

7 Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act

The Committee’s consideration of the delivery of the VAWDASV Strategy in Newport should consider how the Partnership is maximising its contribution to the five ways of working. The following are examples of the types of questions to consider:

5 Ways of Working	Types of Questions to consider:
Long-term The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.	What long term trends will impact upon the delivery of the VAWDASV Priorities?
	How will changes in long term needs impact upon the delivery of the VAWDASV Priorities in the future?
Prevention Prevent problems occurring or getting worse.	What issues are facing the Partnership’s service users at the moment?
	How is the Partnership addressing these issues to prevent a future problem?
Integration Considering how public bodies’ wellbeing objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.	Are there any other organisations providing similar / complementary services?
	How does the Partnership’s performance upon the delivery of the VAWDASV Priorities impact upon the services of other public bodies and their objectives?
Collaboration Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the organisation itself).	Who has the Partnership been working with to deliver the VAWDASV Priorities?
	How is the Partnership using knowledge / information / good practice of others to inform / influence delivery of the VAWDASV Priorities?

<p style="text-align: center;">Involvement</p> <p>The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.</p>	How has the Partnership sought the views of those who are impacted by the delivery of the VAWDASV Priorities?
	How has the Partnership taken into account diverse communities in decision making?

8. Background Papers

Include all additional documents that are referenced in the report, and those that you have used as background reading. Hyperlink to online versions of them if available.

- [The Gwent Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2018 - 2023 \(gwentsafeguarding.org.uk\)](https://www.gwentsafeguarding.org.uk/2018-2023-strategy)
- [The Essentials - Wellbeing of Future Generation Act \(Wales\)](#)
- [Corporate Plan 2022-2027](#)



- 1. Letter - National Training Framework

Report Completed: 7 December 2022