

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - Partnerships

Date: 6 December 2023

Time: 5.00 pm

Present: Councillors E Stowell-Corten (Chair), B Davies, P Drewett, F Hussain and A Screen

In Attendance: Sally Ann Jenkins (Strategic Director – Social Services), Finn Madell (Head of Safeguarding), Amy Thomas (VAWDASV Regional Lead Advisor), Neil Barnett (Scrutiny Adviser), Katharine Majer (Deputy Democratic and Electoral Services Manager), Emily Mayger (Governance Officer) and Taylor Strange (Governance Officer)

Apologies: Councillors C Baker-Westhead, J Jones, A Morris, M Pimm and K Whitehead

1 **Declarations of Interest**

None.

2 **Minutes of the previous meeting held on 8th November 2023**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 8th November 2023 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

3 **Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Regional Strategy 2023-2027**

Invitees:

- Sally Anne Jenkins – The Strategic Director for Social Services
- Finn Madell - Head of Corporate Safeguarding
- Amy Thomas - VAWDASV Regional Lead Advisor

The Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Regional Lead Advisor gave an overview of the report.

The Committee asked the following:

- The Committee sought clarification on the term "Regional Movement" used in the development of the Strategy. The Lead Advisor explained that staffing issues resulted in a lack of data collection and analysis. Additionally, changes in the Public Service Boards during that period had an impact.
- The Committee wanted to know the percentage of reported Domestic Abuse crimes that occurred in Newport, considering regional variations. The Lead Advisor acknowledged the request and mentioned that data collected from Gwent Police limited the ability to delve deeper into the data collection process.

This document is available in welsh / Mae's ffurflen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

- The Committee questioned the usefulness of partnerships being aware of differences in prevalence of specific VAWDASV categories within areas. The Lead Advisor explained that confirming such differences was challenging due to variations in data collection and categorisation by each Local Authority (LA). The Head of Corporate Safeguarding emphasised the need for data analysis awareness but prioritised meeting service needs.
- The Committee enquired about the total budget available. The Lead Advisor advised of the funding from WG and contributions from partners, noting that funding grants were given for specific projects. However, sustained funding for supported projects was challenging due to the annual availability and amalgamation of funding sources.
- The Committee asked about future funding allocations. The Lead Advisor indicated that funding would be used to meet the needs of victims, which changed annually. They provided examples of previously funded projects and noted the limitations in cost recovery. The Strategic Director for Social Services explained the challenges of determining funding responsibilities and being stretched between funding grants in this area.
- The Committee expressed concerns about the funding model. The Strategic Director highlighted the difficulties in the current financial climate, particularly when working in areas of high vulnerability with long-lasting impacts. The Lead Advisor echoed these concerns and mentioned that the reliance on short-term grants was not unique to the region. They noted that the Welsh Government (WG) had developed a blueprint workstream for sustainable funding but acknowledged that achieving it would take time.
- The Committee acknowledged the recent focus on VAWDASV and hoped that as it becomes more established, there would be improved structure around funding.
- The Committee requested clarification on the source of unconscious bias in relation to male victims when considering intersectionality. The Lead Advisor explained that the bias was systematic, as systems have traditionally been set up in favour of women. They emphasised the importance of representing men in reporting harm.
- The Committee acknowledged the disadvantage experienced by communities from diverse backgrounds in relation to Domestic Abuse. They enquired about the support provided to women from these backgrounds to help them live independently. The Lead Advisor noted working with specialist providers and the availability of WG funding for those without access to public funds. They also highlighted the importance of providing services in the victim/survivor's first language and facilitating their integration into the new community.
- The Committee asked whether victims were encouraged to access language courses to enhance their independence. The Lead Advisor stated that confirmation from frontline staff would be needed but noted links to local colleges and community classes for learning English.
- The Committee questioned the direct relationship between incidents and areas of deprivation. The Lead Advisor noted that while this may have been the case in the past, increased pressures have affected people from all walks of life. The Head of Corporate Safeguarding added that increased promotion has led to an uptick in reporting, with more focus on subtle indicators through campaigns like SOUND by the WG.
- The Committee noted the increased pressure in the housing sector and its potential impact on VAWDASV. The Lead Advisor emphasised the strong relationship between

Housing and VAWDASV for both victims and perpetrators. They noted the shortage of refuge spaces and the need for adequate support, highlighting differences in funding timescales for housing.

- The Committee enquired about the inclusion of input from victims and survivors in the report. The Lead Advisor noted various victim survivor groups under different organisations and providers. They specifically noted meetings with the established survivor group supported by Gwent Police for their input. The Lead Advisor also noted regular communication with the Gwent Police group for smaller projects.
- The Committee praised the report and the management of the multi-agency partnership. They enquired about how the large number of agencies involved was handled. The Lead Advisor explained that the VAWDASV Regional Team managed the relationships, ensuring representation from each agency in meetings, themes, or groups.
- The Committee acknowledged that the positive effects of increased education would take time to manifest and asked about the relationship with the Education sector. The Lead Advisor informed the Committee about the Whole Regional Approach Sub-Group, which included school coordinators to ensure that WG guidance was relevant and tailored to individual schools.
- The Committee highlighted a report stating that 1 in 3 school-age girls believed that schools would not take allegations seriously. They asked about actions taken with teachers, school board members, and staff. The Lead Advisor noted dedicated education training sessions for teachers and support in responding to concerns and allegations through collaboration between the Whole Education Approach Sub-Group, Education Safeguarding Officers, Designated Safeguarding Leads, and Pastoral Care. They emphasised the inclusion of Misogyny and Harassment as a focus area for the next four years and the commitment of the Local Authority to implement support and policies. The Head of Corporate Safeguarding mentioned dedicated Education Staff located at the Hub to support teachers.
- The Committee expressed concern about the lack of feedback from men and asked about refuge provisions for men and efforts to encourage them to come forward. The Lead Advisor noted the absence of a men's refuge in the region but mentioned collaboration with the Dyn project to ensure accessibility and representation for men. They also highlighted the establishment of a new Sub-Group to ensure representation of all protected characteristics.
- The Committee expressed concern about controlling and coercive behaviour in schools and asked whether information was provided to help school-age children recognise such behaviours. The Lead Advisor noted the WG-funded program Spectrum, delivered by teachers to meet curriculum objectives. Spectrum works with pupils from ages 3 to 18, providing specific sessions on relevant topics. The Lead Advisor noted plans to support Spectrum's work through additional campaigns and support.
- The Committee enquired about the link between societal norms in drug and alcohol use and the perpetration of Domestic Violence, and how this could be addressed. The Lead Advisor acknowledged that while a direct link couldn't be categorically stated, many perpetrators regularly consumed alcohol, including those with dependency issues. They noted collaboration with the Substance Misuse Planning Board to determine causal factors and develop appropriate responses.

- The Committee noted the positive impact of campaigns and advertisements encouraging individuals to call out behaviour in their friends. They emphasised that increased availability of such advertisements empowered people to speak out.

The Committee thanked the officers for attending.

Conclusions

- The Committee noted the Gwent VAWDASV Regional Strategy 2023-2027 and endorsed its contents. The Committee appreciated the huge amount of work that has gone into creating the strategy and wished to congratulate all of the officers involved. The Committee also found the feedback included from survivors to be extremely helpful and insightful.
- The Committee were pleased to hear about the Spectrum campaign. They made a comment that young adults are more likely to listen and engage when approached in school and spoken to on their level. This highlights the importance of effective communication strategies to reach and connect with young adults.
- The Committee expressed concern about the funding model for this service and emphasised the need for sustainable funding, to ensure the people who rely on the service are not left without it.
- The Committee requested to be sent the links regarding the 'Sound' campaign and noted the positive steps forward in the recognition of men as victims of domestic abuse, as a result of such educational campaigns. Additionally, the Committee requested to see the final report, including the animations, once it is completed.
- The Committee requested the breakdown of the figures on page 27 of the report at regional, county and ward level for a comprehensive understanding of the data.

4 Scrutiny Adviser Reports

Invitee:

- Neil Barnett – Scrutiny Adviser

a) Forward Work Programme Update (Appendix 1)

The Scrutiny Adviser presented the Forward Work Programme, and informed the Committee of the topics due to be discussed at the next two committee meetings:

Wednesday 7th February 2024, the agenda item;

- Area Planning Board Substance Misuse Service

The Scrutiny Adviser noted to the Committee that the SenCom Regional Support Services for Schools report would now come to Committee to be discussed around June or July 2024.

Wednesday 28th February 2024, the agenda item;

- Newport Barnardos Partnership Update

b) Actions Plan (Appendix 2)

The Scrutiny Advisor updated the Committee on the one outgoing action in relation to the One Newport Wellbeing Plan Final Report and informed them that the information had been sent to the One Newport Partnership on 9th September 2023.

The meeting terminated at 6.18 pm