

Scrutiny Report



Performance Scrutiny Committee - Partnerships

Part 1

Date: 6th December 2023

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

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 Regional Strategy 2023-2027, with a focus on pages 24 to 31, and endorse its content
2. Consider the role of the Committee and all Elected Members in the promotion and awareness raising of VAWDASV within Council corporate business and community work
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 Section 5 of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 places a duty on Local Authorities and Local Health Boards to jointly prepare a strategy (“a local strategy”) for the local authority’s area. 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 This Strategy builds on the Gwent VAWDASV Strategy 2018-2023 which set out the regional integrated approach to stop violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence and to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals and families affected by abuse, whilst also holding to account those who perpetrate such abuse. This Strategy will set out how we are looking at achieving this vision across Gwent, in the prevention of VAWDASV, protection from VAWDASV and support for those impacted by VAWDASV. It will show that across Gwent, partners, stakeholders and those with lived experience of VAWDASV are committed to collaborative working and joined up approaches to tackle issues of abuse and violence.
- 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 Campaign, Communications and Engagement Group
 - Gwent VAWDASV Whole Education Approach Group
 - Gwent VAWDASV Commissioning Group
 - Gwent MARAC Steering Group
 - Gwent VAWDASV Tackling Perpetration Group
 - Gwent VAWDASV Training Subgroup
- 2.4 To strengthen the work of the region and beyond, Gwent VAWDASV is represented on Welsh Government groups including: Whole System Approach Workstream, Children and Young Person’s Workstream, Tackling Perpetration Workstream; 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 VAWDASV Communications group. Three new groups that are in the process of being established: Children and Young People Subgroup, Multiple or Co-Occurring Needs Subgroup and the Minority Ethnic and Protected Communities Subgroup. 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 following information is attached for the Committees consideration:

Appendix A - Gwent VAWDASV Regional Strategy 2023-2027

4. Suggested Areas of Focus

Role of the Committee

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

- Establish if the Strategy effectively sets the priorities and focus areas for the next four years to meet needs and have an impact for citizens of Newport
- Establish whether within the Strategy governance arrangements and planned 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 undertaken as part of the development of the new regional strategy:

4.1.1 Partnership Working:

- Are all agencies and organisations connected to VAWDASV adequately represented within the partnership, to support collaboration for a single purpose, joint working and tackling issues together?
- Are there 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:**

- How are the lived experience of survivors represented and embedded within the partnership arrangements, and how are their voices used to continuously improve services?
- Have the partnership arrangements that are in place led to service improvement, and how is learning from partners shared and embedded across the sector?
- Are the appropriate governance structures in place, and are they 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?
- Are the appropriate systems and opportunities 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?

Section B – Supporting Information

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The Gwent VAWDASV Strategy has Six Strategic Priorities based on the Welsh Government National Strategy. Key priorities under the new strategy are included within pages 24 to 31 of the new strategy. A 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.
- 5.2 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. This is still an issue but has been compounded by the cost of living crisis.
- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 Newport Neighbourhood Care Networks led the implementation of the IRISi project across the region was agreed with a start date of 2021-22. This enabled early identification and referral via GP practices of domestic abuse. This is now in its third year and is coming to an end in March 2024.
- 5.5 824 staff attended Group 1 VAWDASV (e-learning) during 2022-2023 which means NCC have trained 75% of their staff in Group 1 since publication of the National Training Framework in March 2016. Following lockdown, Face to face Group 2 training continues to be delivered online and has seen 78 NCC staff complete the training. Group 6 (senior leaders and Councillors) training has also been delivered during 2022-23 with 36 NCC staff completing.

6 Links to Council Policies and Priorities

- The Gwent VAWDASV Regional Strategy 2023-2027 has links to **Well-being Objective 3 – Quality Social Care and Community Services** of the Corporate Plan 2022-2026 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? |
| Involvement 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. | 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 Essentials - Wellbeing of Future Generation Act \(Wales\)](#)
- [Corporate Plan 2022-2027](#)