



Live Fear Free Helpline **Llinell Gymorth Byw Heb Ofn**

Providing confidential support and information on domestic abuse, sexual violence and violence against women in Wales

Darparu gwybodaeth a chefnogaeth cyfrinachol ynghylch trais domestig, trais rhywiol a thrais yn erbyn merched yng Nghymru

0808 80 10 800




Cymorth i Ferched Cymru
Welsh Women's Aid
Rhoi Merched a Phlant yn Gyntaf
Putting Women & Children First

Embargoed until 00:01am 24/04/2020

Welsh Women's Aid Press Release

Welsh Women's Aid stresses urgent need for funding for support services due to COVID-19.

Welsh Women's Aid have publicly released their letter to Deputy Minister and Chief Whip, Jane Hutt stating that they are deeply concerned that despite previous correspondence with Welsh Government, there has been no ringfenced emergency funding provided to specialist support services to meet the needs of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Services providing violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) support across Wales are in urgent need of ring-fenced emergency funding. The funding that has been announced so far are existing funds announced in December, pre-allocated on pre-existing needs prior to COVID 19. This is hugely troubling, as a survey of specialist services in Wales has confirmed that at least 90% of services are incurring additional costs due the circumstances caused by COVID-19.

The letter released publicly, follows the Deputy Minister's statement on 16 April 2020¹: *"Last week, I announced £1.2 million to fund community accommodation for victims of domestic abuse, as well as an additional £200,000 for furnishings, computer equipment and white goods."* These announced funds were allocated last year and are not in direct response to the unprecedented measures that have been taken due to the circumstances caused by COVID-19 as the statements wording would suggest.

Sara Kirkpatrick, CEO of Welsh Women's Aid said: *"Specialist services are working incredibly hard to maintain provision. While Welsh Government has alluded to funds in its announcements, there appears to be a clear disconnect between this and the process of money being allocated to front line VAWDASV services."*

"We know that even before this crisis 512 survivors were unable to be supported in refuges because of a lack of service space, capacity or resources.² During a time of national crisis when survivors do not have the same access to support networks as usual, it is more vital than ever that services are sustainable and we leave no one behind. Additional flexible funding must now be provided to the VAWDASV specialist sector."

The letter sets out why the VAWDASV specialist sector requires:

- **A ring-fenced pot of funding for VAWDASV specialist services** at least equivalent to funding being invested elsewhere in the UK.

¹ <https://gov.wales/domestic-abuse-services-wales-are-ready-help>

² <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Annual-Membership-Report-2018-19-FINAL.pdf>

Pendragon House, Caxton Place | Pentwyn, Cardiff | CF23 8XE
Tel: 02920 541551
info@welshwomensaid.org.uk | www.welshwomensaid.org.uk

Registered Charity Number: 1140962





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- A clear plan to replace the funding that has been repurposed to meet the impact of COVID-19.
- Funding that can be flexibly utilised for revenue and support costs – current funding only covers capital costs and not the additional costs to meet the support needs of survivors.
- Swift access to funding. In Scotland, £1.5 million was provided with immediate effect to invest in support needs as and when they developed, recognising that services have to be responsive to changing needs and do not have capacity to fill in endless application forms.

Funding must meet the diversity of needs including BME specialist services who are faced with additional costs associated with maintaining social distancing and minimising the spread of infection by replicating provision to meet religious and cultural practices. Sexual violence services that anticipate a backlog in demand that could impact on waiting lists for support following the end of lockdown. Children and young people in refuge need more support time and activities while they are not in school. There is an expectation that the need for support will increase once lockdown is lifted and more survivors can come forward. It is critical that the government and others ensure that the services can keep their doors open to be there when and where survivors need it.

END

Notes to Editors:

1. For more information, please contact Sophie Weeks, Media and External Relations Officer on SophieWeeks@WelshWomensAid.org.uk or Gwendolyn Sterk, Head of Public Affairs and Communications for Welsh Women's aid on 073 7555 9518 and GwendolynSterk@welshwomensaid.org.uk
2. This letter is supported by Welsh Women's Aid Membership (made up of 20 third sector VAWDASV specialist services in Wales: *Aberconwy DAS, Atal y Fro, Clwyd Alyn Housing Association (CAHA) Women's Aid, Carmarthen Domestic Abuse Service, Calan DVS, Cardiff Women's Aid, Cyfannol Women's Aid, Domestic Abuse Safety Unit (DASU), Gorwel (Grwp Cynefin), Montgomeryshire Family Crisis Centre, North Denbighshire Domestic Abuse Service, RCT Women's Aid, Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (North Wales), Safer Merthyr Tydfil, Safer Wales (including Dyn Project), Stepping Stones, Swansea Women's Aid, Threshold (formerly Llanelli Women's Aid), Thrive Women's Aid (formally Port Talbot & Afan WA), West Wales Domestic Abuse Service.*) and the specialist services New Pathways and BAWSO.
3. We have produced the following information that may be of interest:
 - What we are calling on government and others to do:
<https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/2020/03/responding-to-violence-against-women-domestic-abuse-and-sexual-violence-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>
 - All COVID-19 related comms is going out here:
<https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/news/>

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- Our Bystander toolkit for community members including journalists, employers and volunteers:

<https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/campaigning/covid-19-bystander-toolkit/>

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