



Live Fear
Free Helpline

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

0808 80 10 800

Llinell Gymorth
Byw Heb Ofn

Darparu gwybodaeth a chelwogaeth
gofreidiol ynghylch traws-ddorwg,
trais rhywiol a thras yn erbyn merched
yng Nghymru



New measures to tackle stalking consultation
5th Floor Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

26rd February 2016

Dear Sir or Madam,

Re: Home Office Consultation on Introducing a Stalking Protection Order

Welsh Women’s Aid is the national charity in Wales working to prevent domestic abuse and all forms of violence against women¹ and ensure high-quality services for survivors that are needs-led, gender-responsive and holistic.

Established in 1978, we are an umbrella organisation that represents and supports a national federation of 23 local independent charities delivering specialist domestic abuse and violence against women prevention services in Wales, as part of a UK network of provision. These specialist services constitute our core membership, and they provide lifesaving refuges, outreach, and community advocacy and support to survivors of violence and abuse - women, men, children, families - and deliver innovative preventative work in local communities. We also deliver direct services including the Welsh Government funded *Live Fear Free Helpline*; a National Training Service; refuge and advocacy services in Colwyn Bay and Wrexham; and the national *Children Matter* project which supports local services to help children and young people affected by abuse and to deliver preventative STAR group-work in every local authority in Wales.

We have been at the forefront of shaping coordinated community responses and practice in Wales, by campaigning for change and providing advice, consultancy, support and training to deliver policy and service improvements for survivors, families and communities. As a national federation, our policy work, consultancy, training and advocacy is all grounded in the experience of local specialist services and service users. Our success is founded on making sure the experiences and needs of survivors are central to all we do.

We are writing to you today with regard to the open consultation on introducing a stalking protection order. Welsh Women’s aid support the points raised in the Suzy

¹ Domestic abuse is the exercise of control by one person, over another, within an intimate or close family relationship; the abuse can be sexual, physical, financial, emotional or psychological. Violence against women is violence directed at women because they are women or that affects women disproportionately, and includes domestic abuse, rape and sexual violence, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, sexual exploitation including through trafficking and the sex-industry, so-called ‘honour-based violence’ and sexual harassment .





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Lamplugh Trust's (SLT) response to this consultation. In particular we support the following areas:

- Welsh Women's Aid support the introduction of a new Stalking Protection Order, which can be applied to all, regardless of relationship status. The current orders are only available to those who are in or have previously been in an intimate relationship, 50% of those who experience stalking are therefore unable to gain any legal protection. If a new Stalking Protection Order was to be adopted, it is vital for it to be accessible to all those who are victims of stalking, regardless of their relationship (or lack of) to the perpetrator.
- A breach of a Stalking Order should be treated as a criminal offence which can be traced via a perpetrator's criminal record. Criminal records should reflect stalking related activity. At the moment, stalking is not adequately documented; this ultimately means that those who have a history of stalking are not being identified and no measures are taken to address the stalking behaviour or monitor the perpetrator.
- The changes to Legal Aid have been a large barrier to accessing justice for women who experience any form of violence against women, and stalking is no exception. It is vital that if a new stalking protection order was to be adopted, that everyone who needs protection can utilise it, regardless of their level of income.
- Welsh Women's Aid agree that specialist accredited prevention programmes which are specific to tackling the behaviour of perpetrators of stalking and delivered on a one-to-one basis should be invested in. We would agree with SLT's response that more programmes should be available which are specific to stalking. These should be funded in both England and Wales, and separately from specialist services who support survivors. It is of high importance that these programmes are not confused with other programmes, such as anger management courses, as these would not be appropriate.
- More training for professionals in the criminal justice system should be delivered. A new Stalking Order will only be of benefit if those who are enforcing justice and protection have adequate understanding of what stalking is and how fast seemingly insignificant acts can escalate. We agree that police officers, for example, should 'think stalking' when responding to an event which seems to be harassment, until proved otherwise. In addition, Welsh Women's Aid would also support National Surviving Stalking's point that education for the public is needed to help understating and identification of stalking to be increased.





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Welsh Women's Aid would further add that coercive controlling behaviour and domestic abuse can often be present in cases of stalking. As such, this should also be highlighted to professionals in order for responses to stalking to be effective and appropriate.

Welsh Women's Aid would like to thank the Home Office for the opportunity to comment on this consultation, and we look forward to working together to support this issue in the future.

Yours Faithfully,

Karan Sanghera
Policy Officer

