

AELODAETH
MEMBERSHIP

Safonau Ansawdd Gwasanaeth Cenedlaethol
National Quality Service Standards



Cymorth i Ferched Cymru
Welsh Women's Aid

Welsh Women's Aid National Quality Services Standards for specialist domestic abuse services in Wales 2022 Edition





Acknowledgments

Welsh Women's Aid would like to thank all those who have contributed to the development of this latest edition of the National Quality Service Standards.

The National Quality Service Standards were developed in consultation with specialist services and with key stakeholders across Wales. Particular thanks are due to all those incredibly dedicated professionals working in Welsh Women's Aid specialist member services, who over many years have contributed their extensive expertise to inform these core practice standards.

Thanks to Jess Taylor for her original support to distil earlier drafts of these standards and to Chrissie Nicholls for her work to align the standards to the principles of Change That Lasts and to the Welsh Government Information and Advice Quality Framework.

Thanks, too, to colleagues in other Women's Aid Federations across the UK – in particular Janet McDermott, Nicki Norman, and Eve Blair – for working with us to inform the development of a consistent UK approach to supporting specialist VAWDASV services to evidence their quality.

Thanks to Welsh Government for their financial support to develop, pilot and manage the National Quality Service Standards and to Race Council Cymru for their detailed feedback on this edition.

Special thanks are due finally to the many thousands of survivors who have accessed local specialist services in Wales and who, despite often harrowing experiences of abuse, have provided extensive feedback on these standards and on how specialist services might be supported to continually improve, to better meet their needs. Their strength, insight and resilience continues to inspire our work to end all forms of violence against women, and we dedicate these standards to them.

Quotes from survivors since learning about the National Quality Service Standards:

“I didn’t really understand that these standards were there to protect people like me, now that I know I feel reassured”

“We aren’t expecting perfect, but when we are let down at the worst situations in our lives it would have been nice to know about these standards and accessing services with them instead of searching out for other services.”

“It’s really good to know and understand that there is a process in place, and it’s taken seriously.”

“Since having a basic understanding that standards are in place for services it has made me feel confident to approach services”

“Why isn’t this on the websites of all services?”



Introduction by Welsh Women's Aid Chief Executive

I am delighted to introduce this 2022 Edition of Welsh Women's Aid's National Quality Service Standards. The National Quality Service Standards were developed in response to our specialist domestic abuse member services need to evidence their quality and impact. The Standards are testament to how these dedicated specialist services enable lasting change in the lives of survivors of domestic abuse and reflect the vital importance of ensuring every survivor can access the 'right' specialist support for them, at the 'right' time. For the funders and commissioners of specialist services the Standards serve as a robust and independent quality assurance mechanism. They are made up of clear benchmarks for what holistic, high-quality, needs-led, strength-based and gender responsive specialist services can - and should - look like.



I am particularly pleased that this 2022 Edition of the Standards now incorporates the criteria for the Welsh Government's Information and Advice Quality Framework (IAQF Wales). By becoming an Approved Accrediting Body for IAQF Wales we have ensured that the Welsh Government's drive for high quality information and advice across all realms of support work, is firmly embedded within the quality assurance of Welsh specialist domestic abuse services.

Welsh Women's Aid member services have a wealth of knowledge and expertise in specialist service provision, informed by a gendered understanding of violence against women. The National Quality Service Standards are founded on services' collective experience, knowledge, and values. They place the needs of survivors at the heart of provision and partnership working, whilst enabling services to robustly evidence their specialism, efficacy, impact, and value for money. All of this within an ever more competitive funding environment marked by a patchwork of short-term contracts.

The need for accessible and holistic specialist services which are independent from state services and that focus on prevention, protection, and support, has never been more vital. Such services are consistently identified by women and children as those which best support their journey from crisis to recovery. Research tells us that survivors engage and benefit most from services which are needs-led, gender-responsive, and trauma-informed and which help survivors to rebuild their lives after abuse.

The importance of women-centred and intersectional responses to survivors is central to the National Quality Service Standards. Women-led and women-only services are much needed and wanted by women and girls. They are effective in terms of value for money and social impact, and they are recognised in the UK and internationally as a key mechanism to achieve women's equality, as advocated in the Istanbul Convention. Equally, at the heart of these Standards is a commitment that no survivor who has a need for support, experiences a barrier to accessing services. Specialist services recognise, are sensitive to and address the specific experiences of survivors who face multiple forms of oppression including due to race, immigration status, disability, sexuality and/or multiple disadvantage. Moreover, specialist support for Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic survivors is that which is culturally responsive, recognises and challenges the systemic structural and societal barriers they face to support and works to develop fair and equal partnerships with 'by and for' Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic organisations to meet survivors needs.

Effective responses to domestic abuse, sexual violence, and all forms of violence against women are best achieved by placing survivors and specialist services at the centre of a coordinated community approach. Specialist services deliver earlier intervention after disclosure, which has a positive impact across social policy and public services as well as on local communities. Specialist services treat children and young people as survivors in their own right. They provide effective approaches for preventing abuse and protecting families from its long-term effects whilst also ensuring all work undertaken with perpetrators prioritises the safety and well-being of survivors.

It is vital that the knowledge and expertise of specialist Welsh domestic abuse services and the National Quality Service Standards are embedded within commissioning practice in Wales, so that public money might be spent wisely on high-quality, safe, and effective interventions and that the added value of specialist provision can be recognised. The National Quality Service Standards have been specifically designed to ensure that every part of specialist services, from their governance, leadership, and management of funds to the training of every member of staff, record keeping and daily delivery of interventions, reflect and centre the needs of survivors. Having a national network of accredited specialist domestic abuse services, working in partnership with generic non-specialist providers and state services, will ensure survivors' needs are met and promote wider understanding of how long-term change for individuals, families and communities can be achieved in the fight to end all forms of violence against women and girls.



Sara Kirkpatrick, Welsh Women's Aid CEO



About Welsh Women's Aid

Welsh Women's Aid is the national umbrella body in Wales working to end domestic abuse, sexual violence, and all forms of violence against women (VAWDASV).

Welsh Women's Aid is a national federation of 19¹ independent third sector violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) specialist services in Wales and is the national umbrella body in Wales working with all specialist services and wider stakeholders to prevent VAWDASV.

Established in 1978, we support and provide national representation for the federation of independent third sector VAWDASV specialist services in Wales. These services deliver lifesaving and life-changing support for survivors of violence and abuse (women, men, children, families) and deliver preventative work as part of a network of UK provision.

Our primary purpose is to prevent domestic abuse, sexual violence, and all forms of violence against women and ensure high quality services for survivors that are needs-led, gender responsive and holistic. We collaborate nationally to integrate and improve community responses and practice in Wales; we provide advice, consultancy, support, and training to deliver policy and service improvements across government, public, private and third sector services and in communities, for the benefit of survivors. This includes advising and supporting commissioners and strategic leads in their development of VAWDASV needs assessments and strategic plans, promoting evidence for innovative new service models, and supporting research into the prevention of abuse.

¹ Our federation of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence specialist services in Wales, with whom we have national partnership agreements to ensure our work is coordinated and integrated includes: 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) North Wales, Gorwel (Grwp Cynefin), Montgomeryshire Family Crisis Centre, Thrive Women's Aid, RCT Women's Aid, Safer Merthyr Tydfil, Safer Wales (including Dyn Project), Stepping Stones, Swansea Women's Aid, Threshold, West Wales Domestic Abuse Service, and Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (RASASC) North Wales.

Some of the services we deliver include providing a national voice to inform relevant policy, legislative and strategy developments; providing advice and information on the development and delivery of promising practice in the sector; providing support with policy and practice matters, and regional and national data analysis reports to support services to inform local needs assessments, strategy, and commissioning developments. We also deliver direct services that support our membership and public services including:

- The Wales Live Fear Free Helpline for survivors and families impacted by sexual violence, domestic abuse, and all forms of violence against women.
- The Welsh Women's Aid National Training Service delivers Wales-based training, learning and development around all aspects of violence against women, domestic abuse, and sexual violence. We provide accredited and general training courses delivered by expert and specialist trainers.
- The Welsh Women's Aid National Quality Service Standards (NQSS) is a national accreditation framework for our membership of domestic abuse specialist services in Wales; as part of a UK suite of integrated accreditation systems and frameworks delivered by partner infrastructure organisations, with which we collaborate.
- Survivor Engagement programme – working to engage meaningfully with survivors to appropriately resource and reimburse experts by experience and enabling them to share their experience and speak truth to power. We do this through our Survivors' Network and a series of events and resources.

As a national federation, our policy work, campaigning, consultancy, training and advocacy is all grounded in the lived 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.

About Welsh Women's Aid National Quality Service Standards

The Welsh Women's Aid National Quality Service Standards form a set of accredited criteria, through which dedicated specialist services addressing domestic abuse can evidence their quality, and also support the delivery of key legislation and guidance in relation to responding effectively to domestic abuse.

In April 2015 the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Bill became an Act of the National Assembly for Wales. This law was the first of its kind in the UK to provide a strategic focus to improve public sector responses to gender-based violence and is the result of many years of partnership and campaigning from Welsh Women's Aid, working with Welsh Government, and the National Assembly for Wales.

The Welsh Women's Aid National Quality Service Standards supports statutory commissioning and other guidance which intends to prevent, protect, and support people affected by gender-based violence. By providing a comprehensive framework to evidence the quality and efficacy of service provision, the standards will also support the delivery of local strategies and national indicators, as highlighted in section 5 and 11-13 of the Act, respectively. The implementation of these Standards also adds value to statutory guidance, including the National Training Framework and the 'Ask and Act' train the trainer delivery.

The Welsh Women's Aid National Quality Service Standards deliver on the Home Office's commitment to ending violence against women and girls through the improvement of local provision and quality of services. As reflected in the Standards, the Home Office strategy recognises that domestic abuse is 'an issue for every community and area in England and Wales, and it can affect individuals from any background or socio-economic demographic'.²

The Welsh Women's Aid National Quality Service Standards focus on both the short and longer-term overarching outcomes of supporting people impacted by domestic abuse, as outlined in the Ministry of Justice Victims' Services Commissioning Framework, which provides a structure for 'victims' service providers... to ensure the holistic needs of victims are met. The Standards support delivery of the Wales Tackling Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Commissioning Toolkit, the Home Office 'National Statement of Expectations (NSE) for England and Wales' and align with principles endorsed in the Violence Against Women and Girls Commissioning Toolkit for England.³

² Home Office: A Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls: Action Plan 2013 London, 2013 (p.3)

³ Its scope includes domestic abuse, sexual violence and child sexual abuse, stalking, so called 'honour-based' violence – including forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM), gang related violence, and human trafficking. 'Violence against women and girls' refers to "many different types of abusive and controlling behaviour which are used together intentionally to control another person, be they adult or child, or to have power over them".

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/576238/VAWG_Commissioning_Toolkit.pdf

The Welsh Women's Aid National Quality Service Standards have been mapped against:

- Violence against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015
- Home Office: Ending Violence Against Women and Girls 2016-2021
- Wales Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2016-2021
- Ministry of Justice: Victims' Services Commissioning Framework
- Welsh Government National Training Framework
- SafeLives Leading Lights Service Standards
- Respect National Service Standards
- Imkaan Accredited Quality Standards (IAQS)
- The Survivors Trust National Service Standards
- Rape Crisis England and Wales National Service Standards
- Scottish Women's Aid's National Service Standards
- Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence
- UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
- Information and Advice Quality Framework for Wales (IAQF Wales)
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Organisations are required to complete a robust formal accreditation process to evidence they have met the standards. Embodying principles of participation, transparent and feminist governance, strength-based and needs-led service delivery, they set out the nature and standard of service provision necessary to enable survivors of domestic abuse to increase their safety, cope with and recover from their experiences of abuse.

Links with sector shared core standards

The Welsh Women's Aid National Quality Service Standards are aligned with a core set of shared standards. Women's Aid in Wales and England, Imkaan, Rape Crisis England and Wales, Respect and SafeLives each have a set of quality service standards designed to address their respective and unique specialist work and drive forward quality improvements.⁴ In order to ensure a combination of service standards can be used by commissioners in joint commissioning, a set of shared core standards have been developed and agreed which can

⁴ Imkaan work with Black and minoritised survivors of violence; Rape Crisis England and Wales work with women and girl survivors of rape and sexual violence; Respect work with male victims and work with perpetrators; Safe Lives work to end domestic abuse and make families safe; Women's Aid England work to end domestic abuse against women and children, and Welsh Women's Aid work to end domestic abuse and all forms of violence against women.

be used for joint commissioning purposes. The shared core standards are not compulsory but provide assistance and guidance for commissioners to consider, when developing more effective joint commissioning across a range of specialist services to more effectively meet survivors' needs. (Tackling Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence: A Collaborative Commissioning Toolkit for Toolkit for Services in Wales).

The shared core standards are also referenced and endorsed by the Home Office in their "Supporting Local Commissioning" guidance.⁵ This states for example, that "It is important to align the quality of services with the National Shared Core Standards"; ... "Services should be commissioned based on relevant national standards for that service. Examples of minimum practices and policy requirements in a specification should relate specifically to the National Shared Core Standards". The guidance also clarifies their status: "The shared standards support commissioners to ensure the independent standards can be used both nationally and locally for joint commissioning purposes. They are not intended to 'stand alone' but have been agreed as designated shared core standards, namely the minimum standards common to all member organisations".

⁵ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/576238/VAWG_Commissioning_Toolkit.pdf

Principles

The principles underpinning the Welsh Women's Aid National Quality Service Standards reflect the principles and approach of the Change That Lasts model of intervention, developed by Women's Aid Federation England in partnership with Welsh Women's Aid and survivors:

The key principles underpinning the development of Change That Lasts are that:

- Responses should build on and nurture the internal and external resources available to individual survivors, reducing their longer-term need for public resources.
- Every point of interaction with a survivor is an opportunity for intervention. It should not be missed and should never add to the huge barriers survivors already face.
- Supporting the non-abusing parent is the most effective way of improving the safety and wellbeing of children.
- Addressing the immediate safety needs of survivors and their children is important but should not be the sole focus of interventions.

In summary, the key elements of the Change That Lasts model are that:

- The voices of survivors are central to the development and delivery of service responses.
- Services work to a shared goal of independence for the survivor.
- There is a shift from a risk-based approach to one that starts with the individual needs of survivors, including their safety.
- Survivors are supported to draw and build upon their individual strengths and resources – needs assessment and safety planning facilitates this.
- Barriers to help are removed or reduced and opportunities to access help in the community are widened through local 'Ask Me' schemes and development of the 'Trusted Professional' role.
- Communities increase their understanding of domestic violence and abuse, and the role they can play in responding, through awareness campaigns with consistent key messages.
- Children are supported to overcome the impact of abuse and survivors to support them in this process.
- The focus of risk shifts to the perpetrator who is held to account and provided with opportunities to change their behaviour.

Commitment to ‘by and for’ service provision

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse, sexual violence, prostitution, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, ‘honour’ based violence, trafficking, stalking and sexual harassment. These are not isolated incidents but rather form a pattern of behaviour that violates the rights of women and girls, limits their participation in society, damages their health and well-being, and is rooted in vast inequality between women and men which intersects with discrimination based on ethnicity, age, class, sexuality, and disability to shape experiences of abuse and undermine routes to support.

This is why many services are and must be led by and for women, and by and for Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic women. Such approaches enable services to address gender and intersectional equality issues within a service provision framework.

- Being women-centred and women-led provides space to share gendered experiences and address the unequal distribution of power across political, social, and economic spheres, and deliver woman-centred support informed by values of empowerment, rights, and self-determination.
- The importance of services by and for Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic women is equally vital, to offer gender and culturally responsive support, and a space to identify priorities and strengthen and promote the leadership, autonomy, and self-determination of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic women.

These standards are informed by successive UK and international research and evidence:

- Of what survivors of abuse value from services, that is, women repeatedly value women/ Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic women-led and women-centred services as creating a ‘safe space’, both physically and emotionally, where women feel supported, develop confidence, achieve greater independence and self-esteem.
- That ‘women centred’ and gender-responsive approaches can help unlock solutions to complex problems and deliver multiple outcomes for women and their families, which in turn makes better use of public resources.
- That sustaining and building a strong movement of women-led services, autonomous from the state, is a vital predictor of gender and intersecting equalities being addressed more effectively.

Services by and for women offer...

“a unique position of being designed for women by women. They exist as a response to women’s need for women only spaces, where there is a subtle difference in language, assumptions, and expectations. Their responsive and individualised approach to women means that their practice is being challenged on an ongoing basis to enable it to meet the priority requirements for women at any given time. Women need approaches that recognise and are built on processes to overcome barriers to coping and moving forward in life... a women only space [is] vital as so many women have experienced gender-based violence in their lives. Even more pervasive, is the way in which women are made to feel inferior, irrelevant, or invisible within male dominated settings. Women value the safe haven ... that enable them to develop a sense of their own personal identity and self-esteem... and have enabling, empowering approaches that recognise women’s own strengths, capacities, skills, and qualities and aim to believe in women when they have lost their own self-belief.⁶

This approach is supported by the VAWDASV commissioning toolkits for Wales and England, which clearly state where provision is focused on specific groups within protected characteristics, the specification should clearly identify a ‘by and for’ approach to service delivery. The guidance states, for example:

“Commissioners need to...ensure that they are considering intersectionality, and barriers to access to services. For example, BME survivors may fall through the net of current mainstream models of provision without access to specialist BME ‘by and for’ service pathways. This is important to ensure that pathways of care are developed and able to be delivered by specialists (of whatever size), even if it is out of area, and using or buying excess capacity in another area. This helps address the current postcode lottery of services.

6 <https://www.womencentredworking.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/WCW-defining-an-approachdocument.pdf>

The National Quality Service Standards and the Information and Advice Quality Framework for Wales (IAQF Wales)

The provision of information, advice and guidance services in Wales is a key component of the Welsh Government's Tackling Poverty Action Plan 2012-2016, the Strategic Equality Plan 2012-2016, the goals of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

Gwasanaeth Cwbl Achrededig sy'n cynnwys adolygu gan gymheiriad
Fully Accredited Service with peer review



The Information and Advice Quality Framework (IAQF Wales)⁷ is a framework of standards developed by the Welsh Government to provide a consistent approach to ensuring and assuring quality information and advice for the people of Wales. Specifically, IAQF Wales requires advice services to demonstrate they are:

- Well-managed and well-planned
- Accessible, caring, and safe
- Provide effective advice in the best interests of services users
- Ensure all staff have the awareness, knowledge, and skills to meet the needs of service users
- Meet the needs of Welsh speakers
- Contribute to and promote the seven national well-being outcomes set out in the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) act 2014.

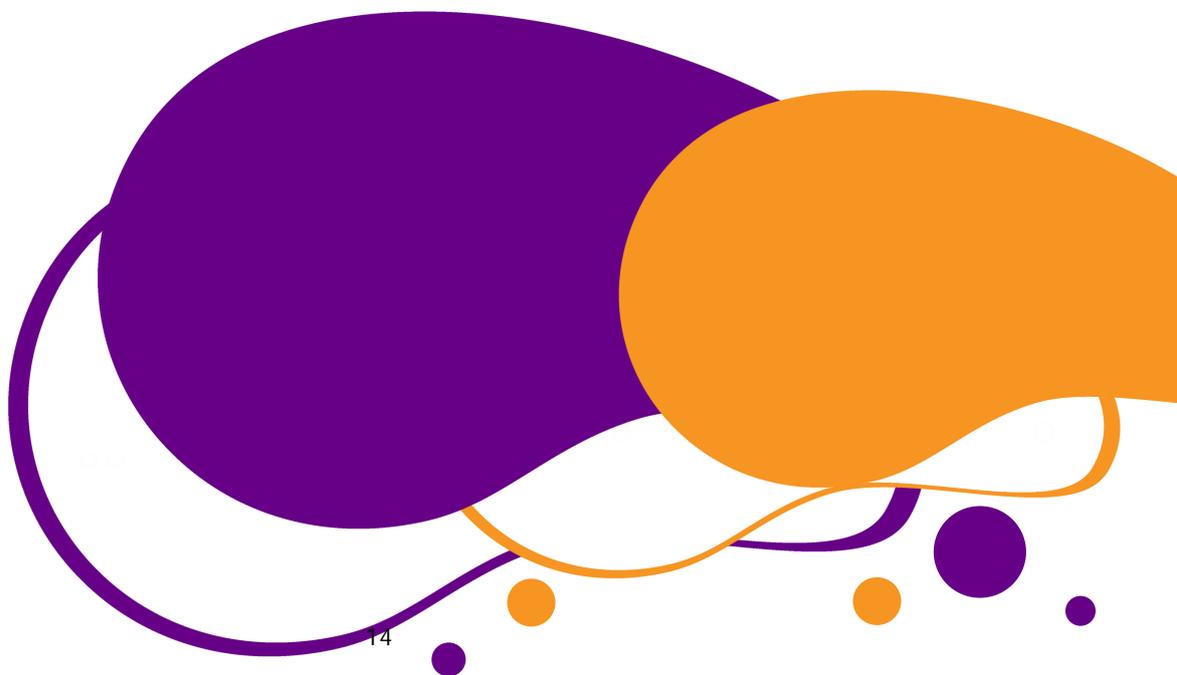
In 2022, having aligned the National Quality Service Standards and associated assessment process to become compliant with IAQF, Welsh Womens Aid was granted IAQF Wales Approved Accrediting Body status. Consequently, specialist domestic abuse services who apply for and are eventually awarded the Welsh Women's Aid National Quality Service Standards Quality Mark will have demonstrated they also meet the criteria to be simultaneously awarded the IAQF Quality Mark.

Welsh Women's Aid applied to become an IAQF Wales Approved Accrediting Body at the express request of member services. Given the ever more competitive environment which specialist domestic abuse services inhabit, enabling organisations to achieve the IAQF Wales in addition to NQSS, provides quality specialist services with an additional means through which to demonstrate to survivors, stakeholders, and their funders that they provide consistent quality services, which are continually improving. By becoming an Approved Accrediting Body for IAQF Wales moreover we have ensured that the Welsh Government's

⁷ <https://gov.wales/information-and-advice-quality-framework>

drive for high quality information and advice across all realms of support work, is firmly embedded within the quality assurance of Welsh specialist domestic abuse services.

Having joined other framework owners in Wales in becoming an IAQF accrediting body moreover Welsh Women's Aid looks forward to the opportunity to contribute to the continuous improvement of the IAQF Wales, and so to the Welsh information and advice sector at large, to ensure services are better able to identify and meet the needs of all survivors of VAWDASV in Wales.



Assessment Process

The National Quality Service Standards assessment process consists of:

- A documentary self-assessment
- A thematic case-file review
- A site visit to the service
- Interviews with the services board, CEO, management, staff and service users
- A final decision made by the NQSS panel attended by:
 - Welsh Women's Aid CEO or another Senior Manager
 - WWA trustee
 - Member of staff from an affiliate organisation such as Respect or WAFE
 - Survivor Representative

Organisations will either receive a full pass, a conditional pass or will be deferred. Organisations who receive recommendations will be asked to submit evidence demonstrating that the recommendations have been met within three months.

All accredited organisations are required to complete an interim assessment halfway through their accreditation period to confirm they are continuing to meet the Standards. Organisations are required to renew their Quality Mark every three years.

Breach of the standards

As the organisation that sets the National Quality Service Standards and manages the accreditation process alongside acting as a IAQF accrediting body, Welsh Women's Aid accepts responsibility for upholding the quality of these systems.

In accordance with the National Quality Service Standards Complaints Policy if it is alleged that any time a service has breached any of the standards, Welsh Women's Aid reserve the right to conduct an independent investigation, and the matter may be referred back to the NQSS Panel.

Organisations who hold the Welsh Women's Aid NQSS and Welsh Government IAQF quality marks are required to state the option to escalate any complaint to Welsh Women's Aid within their complaints and grievance policies.

If you would like a copy of the NQSS complaints procedure or wish to make a complaint about an organisation carrying the Welsh Women's Aid Quality Mark, please write to the NQSS Panel, Welsh Women's Aid, Pendragon House, Caxton Place, Pentwyn, Cardiff, CF23 8XE, email membership@welshewomensaid.org.uk or call 02920 541551.

STANDARD 1: Safety, security and dignity

Service users rights to life, liberty and dignity are upheld.

1.1

Service users can access crisis support at any point they need to and receive a timely appropriate response, including access to temporary crisis accommodation while a refuge space is found.

Guidance: Any service user should be able to access support at any time of the day or night, and at any point in their own personal journey. This should include out of hours provision, 365 days a year. Where necessary service users should be supported to access crisis accommodation out of hours be this refuge or local authority temporary accommodation.

1.2

Service users affected by multiple disadvantage including problematic substance use, mental ill-health, contact with the criminal justice system and sexual exploitation are assessed and offered a service on the same basis as others and every effort is made to accommodate their individual needs.

Guidance: Survivors affected by multiple disadvantage, or so-called “complex needs”, should not fall through the cracks of support and must be able to access appropriate support to meet their individual needs. The organisations services including refuge provision should be accessible to survivors affected by problematic substance use/and or mental ill-health, those who have had contact with the criminal justice system and those who have been sexually exploited. Organisations recognise the stigma and structural barriers those affected by multiple disadvantage may face and take steps to redress this throughout the service. Responses demonstrate an understanding of working with multiple disadvantage from a trauma-informed approach. Responses recognise the trauma service users experience throughout their journey and views behaviours as strategies to manage, adaptations and resilience. Survivors are supported to recognise and understand their trauma and where necessary develop alternative strategies to manage it .

1.3

No service user who has a need for support experiences a barrier to accessing the service because Welsh is their first language.

Guidance: The organisation is committed to ensuring it is accessible to service users with Welsh Language needs. Publicity is available in Welsh, the service provides interpreters and/or delivers support in Welsh.

1.4

No survivor who has a need for support is refused a service because English is not their first language, because of their immigration status or because they have no recourse to public funds.

Guidance: All parts of the service should be accessible to migrant survivors and support is provided, tailored to their needs. Partnership work should be in place to meet the specific needs of those with insecure immigration status including with local and national 'by and for' Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic specialist providers, interpreting and immigration services. Responses should demonstrate an understanding of the varied needs of migrant survivors and of the barriers to help-seeking and safety created by institutional racism and government immigration policies. Responses should demonstrate an understanding of working within a trauma-informed approach providing support that recognises the trauma the service user has experienced throughout their journey and that is sensitive to the impact of this.

1.5

The service pro-actively engages with multi-agency responses to support survivors of domestic abuse.

Guidance: All parts of the service should work within the co-ordinated community response model –working in partnership with other agencies including the police, probation, courts, health, education, legal, immigration and housing services, to meet service users needs, increase survivors safety and hold perpetrators to account. The service represents service users at MARAC and is signed up to MARAC information sharing protocols.

1.6

The organisation provides, values, and protects safe, accessible women-only spaces for women service users.

Guidance: The service should provide safe women-only residential accommodation and community spaces for women service users. The service understands the importance and need for these spaces and of women-centred services. Spaces are welcoming and accessible, creating a sense of safety and calmness for service users.

1.7

Provision for male service users is delivered through provision that is safely separated from services for women service users and perpetrators.

Guidance: The service ensures separate, appropriate, and safe locations and spaces for male service users where a service is provided for them.

1.8

Services for male survivors are tailored to their needs and are delivered safely, using a recognised assessment tool to review risk and need.

Guidance: The service understands the need for a gender responsive service, that meets the differing needs of men and women survivors. All parts of the service must be delivered through safe working practices designed to assess and meet the specific needs of male victims, and to identify perpetrators, aligned with the Safer Wales Dyn Project assessment toolkit or following Respect's nationally recognised standards for work with male victims. This should include identifying inappropriate referrals to male victim services at the earliest opportunity and enabling access to alternative appropriate support including behaviour change programmes.

1.9

All work undertaken with perpetrators prioritises the safety and wellbeing of survivors, is Respect accredited as safe and effective, delivered within established safe working practices by specially trained practitioners and is accompanied by corresponding Integrated Support Services for survivors.

Guidance: When working with perpetrators the service must operate within established safe working practices, prioritising and advocating for the safety and wellbeing of survivors and their children. Any work with perpetrators is integrated with appropriate partner safety work. Integrated Support Services for survivors and all interventions with perpetrators including whole family assessment programmes have a written model of work and clear risk management processes. Integrated Support Services, where safe, contact and offer support to all survivors at risk, provide information to them on the nature and possible impact of interventions and are available to survivors for the entirety of behaviour change programmes. Behaviour change work with perpetrators is delivered in accordance with Respect principles for safe and effective interventions, is Respect accredited or working towards it. Where ineligible for Respect accreditation interventions adhere to the Welsh Government Perpetrator Service Standards. Work with perpetrators is safely separated from work with survivors and staff have specialist training to work with perpetrators or to deliver the ISS.

1.10

The organisation protects the safety and security of service users through the use of confidential addresses, rigorous security measures and safe virtual provision.

Guidance: The service takes appropriate measures to protect service users safety including by protecting them from attempts by perpetrators to contact or locate them in refuge, in the community and online.

1.11

The organisation supports service users to keep themselves safe and minimise the emotional pressure and control they are subjected to from their perpetrators.

Guidance: The service delivers individual and/or group work with service users to address their physical, emotional, and psychological security. Bespoke safety plans, which include increasing survivors online safety, are co-produced and reviewed regularly with every service user. This work is trauma informed and strengths based, led by the needs, strengths, and capacity of each service user.

1.12

Service users are supported to report to the police and participate in the criminal and civil justice systems.

Guidance: Organisations should support survivors to access qualified legal advice for criminal and civil law matters, including civil injunctions, child contact, divorce, and immigration. Organisations understand the barriers different groups of survivors face to reporting to the police and support service users to navigate reporting where they wish to. Organisations advocate on behalf of survivors both individually and institutionally, to improve access to survivors rights and entitlements.

STANDARD 2: Rights and access

Equal access to their rights and entitlements is ensured for all and barriers to equality are addressed.

2.1 Service users are believed and listened to with respect and sensitivity

Guidance: Service users must feel heard and respected by the service at all points of contact, wherever they are on their journey. Empathy and non-judgmental practice should be demonstrated by staff at all times.

2.2 Service users are informed of their legal and human rights and the services they are entitled to receive.

Guidance: Information is provided to all service users on their legal and human rights and the services within the organisation they are entitled to access, in an accessible format with clarity of how this can be accessed.

2.3 Service interventions and practice are respectful of service users' rights to confidentiality and service users are informed of situations where that confidentiality may be limited.

Guidance: The service must maintain secure storage of records and information-sharing protocols operating in the interests of the service users, including children, rather than the interests or convenience of agencies. Service users are clearly advised about their rights to confidentiality.

2.4

Service users have time to make informed decisions. No action is taken on their behalf without their consent or prior knowledge, unless there is an overriding need to safeguard a child or vulnerable adult.

Guidance: The organisation empowers services to make informed decisions and ensures informed consent is obtained before any action is taken on behalf of a service user. The services has effective policies and procedures in place to safeguard vulnerable adults.

2.5

The organisation monitors service user profiles in order to identify and address the under representation of groups with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

Guidance: The service should use equality monitoring forms to record the protected characteristics of service users under the Equality Act 2010. Data on service user profiles should be reviewed against the local population and strategies developed to address under-representation in any category.

2.6

The organisation monitors management and staff profiles to ensure they are reflective of the diversity of service users in terms of their protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

Guidance: The service should use equality monitoring forms to record the protected characteristics of trustees, staff, and volunteers under the Equality Act 2010. Data on staff profiles should be reviewed against service user profiles and strategies developed to address under-representation in any category.

2.7

The particular and individual needs of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic service users are addressed, and measures are in place to address barriers to access.

Guidance: Support for Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic survivors, including Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, demonstrates cultural sensitivity and understanding, including of how survivors diverse relationships with culture and communities may shape their experiences of abuse, affect their access to services and support networks. Measures are taken to address service user's experiences of racism. Effective partnerships and referral pathways are in place with specialist 'by and for' Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic women's organisations to reduce isolation and address barriers to their attaining safety and independence.

2.8

The organisation removes or reduces barriers to physical access, support and communication for disabled service users and employs a social rather than a medical model of disability to meet disabled service users needs.

Guidance: Organisational policy and practice demonstrates the view that people with disabilities are disempowered by society rather than their impairment, and that practice is proactive in reducing barriers for service users with any form of disability.

2.9

The organisation ensures it is accessible to and meets the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender service users.

Guidance: Internal measures address service users' experiences of homophobia and transphobia. Partnership working and referral pathways in place with service user-led services for LGBT people to reduce isolation and address barriers to their attaining safety and independence.

STANDARD 3: Physical and emotional health



Service users rights to the highest attainable standards of physical, sexual, reproductive, and mental health are upheld, promoting long term recovery and well-being.

3.1

The organisation ensures that service users have access to physical health care services appropriate to their needs.

Guidance: Needs assessments and support planning must address service user's physical health needs; via referral pathways to local health services, as appropriate to each service user's needs.

3.2

Service users are supported to access sexual health and pregnancy advice services and to explore their options in pregnancy, including their right to choose a termination.

Guidance: Needs assessments and support planning must address service user's sexual health and pregnancy needs. The service should nurture excellent working relationships with sexual health and pregnancy advice services including abortion advice. Service users are supported to make informed decisions and all opportunities are taken to explore the possibility of sexual abuse when providing support around sexual health and pregnancy.

3.3

Service users are supported to disclose all forms of sexual violence and to access specialist services to address this.

Guidance: The service should take internal measures to support the disclosure of all forms of sexual violence, including sexual exploitation, trafficking, female genital mutilation, childhood sexual abuse (CSA) and childhood sexual exploitation (CSE). The service should support survivors to access therapeutic support and advocacy delivered from a feminist perspective, by specialist sexual violence services.

3.4

Service users are supported to access specialist support to manage mental ill-health.

Guidance: The service should support survivors to access specialist support to manage mental ill-health in refuge and in the community, through referral pathways and partnership work.

3.5

Service users are supported to access specialist support to manage problematic substance use.

Guidance: The service should support survivors to access specialist support to manage problematic substance use in refuge and in the community, through referral pathways and partnership work.

3.6

Service users have access to individual counselling or group work to recognise their strengths and resources and increase their capacity to identify coercive control.

Guidance: The service enables access to individual counselling and/or group work that is underpinned by a feminist approach and addresses gender inequality. Tools are provided for developing confidence and assertiveness, to identify the signs of coercive control, and to support survivors journey to recovery and change that lasts.

STANDARD 4: Stability resilience and autonomy



Service users are supported to achieve long-term stability, independence, and freedom from abuse.

4.1

Service users' needs are assessed on entry to the service and reviewed throughout support, including their physical safety, health needs, their children's needs, legal needs, social and economic welfare, to identify and address barriers to safety and independence.

Guidance: Support and access to services should be based on the individual needs of each survivor. Holistic needs assessments should be completed with every survivor and be reviewed regularly throughout support. Assessments should be strength-based, trauma-informed, and co-produced, giving voice to each service user and their specific circumstances. Assessments are not formulaic but are determined by each survivor's individual strengths, resources, resilience, and capacity.

4.2

The organisation supports service users to articulate their needs, access their rights and entitlements and take charge of decision-making about their own lives.

Guidance: The service delivers needs-led support which is led by the survivor themselves. There should be regular planned support sessions during the initial phases of support, followed by flexible and tailored support sessions to meet the service users' longer term needs.

4.3

Service users are encouraged to identify goals for the future and access or maintain education, training and employment to maximise their financial independence.

Guidance: The service should enable service users to access education, training and employment, inclusive of life skills support, via women's centres or other appropriate services, particularly during the leaving and resettlement processes.

4.4

Service users are supported to participate in community life and to develop strong support networks.

Guidance: Service users should be enabled to be part of inclusive communities of survivors and to rebuild safe support networks in the community to achieve full independence.

4.5

Service users are supported to achieve financial stability and independence.

Guidance: Service users are able to access support to apply for benefits, specialist financial and debt advice services including to address economic abuse and support with money management skills.

4.6

Service users are supported to be safe in their own home or access alternative safe permanent accommodation and are equipped to sustain independent tenancies.

Guidance: Service users are supported to be safe in their own homes or access alternative safe permanent accommodation, as per survivors' wishes. Service users are supported to increase the safety of their homes and or access housing and homeless advice/support. The organisation advocates on behalf of survivors to support them to maintain or access safe accommodation, where necessary.

4.7

Service users have access to resettlement and follow-up services and exit strategies tailored to individual need, sufficient to sustain their move to independence without promoting dependence.

Guidance: Resettlement support is provided to maximise service users chances of sustaining new tenancies and their move to independence. Longer term support is available to those who need it. Tailored and planned exit strategies are developed with each service user which include a review of risk and safety planning.

STANDARD 5: Children and young people



The rights of children and young people to safety, education and family life are upheld. Children are treated and supported as survivors in their own right.

5.1

The safety and wellbeing of children and young people is addressed through the needs assessment and support planning process.

Guidance: The service regards children and young people as survivors in their own right and provides them with age-appropriate and culturally sensitive support based on their individual needs. CYP have their own needs assessment and support plans which give voice to them and address their safety and well-being. Appropriate actions are identified and taken to protect children, where necessary. Support provided is not formulaic but determined by individual CYP's strengths, resources, resilience, and capacity. Support meets the varying needs of CYP including those of disabled, LGBT, and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic CYP.

5.2

The organisation supports service users to access appropriate childcare for during appointments.

Guidance: The organisation supports service users to access appropriate childcare for during appointments including those with other agencies and therapeutic group work.

5.3

The organisation is responsive to the views of children and young people.

Guidance: The service should engage children and young people in regular consultation to ensure their involvement in decision-making around their services, activities, play and study spaces and referral to external services.

5.4

The organisation provides young female service users with tailored support to build their confidence and assertiveness in relationships and their understanding of violence against women.

Guidance: The organisation recognises the particular needs of girls and young women who have experienced abuse and provides tailored support to raise their awareness of gender inequality and to explore issues of consent, assertiveness in relationships and self-esteem.

5.5

Children and young people are supported to attend nursery, school and college and access social and recreational activities with their peers.

Guidance: The organisation should ensure the prompt enrolment of children and young people in nurseries, schools and colleges and enable access to social and recreational activities with CYPs peers.

5.6

Children and young people are supported to access physical, mental, and sexual health services appropriate to their needs.

Guidance: Services undertake age-appropriate needs assessments and support planning with children and young people to identify and address their physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health needs. Services support CYP to access appropriate health services.

5.7

Children are supported to understand their experiences of domestic abuse, to build their resilience and confidence.

Guidance: Organisations should deliver specialist children's work or offer referral to appropriate therapeutic and/or support services for children and young people, to address the effects of domestic abuse.

5.8

Support is provided to service users to develop their parenting resources, to maintain and strengthen their relationships with children.

Guidance: Organisations should deliver parenting support work that affirms personal strengths and draws on individual and community skills and resources.

5.9

The organisation advocates for appropriate support for the non-abusing parent to improve the safety and well-being of children in family court and child protection procedures.

Guidance: The organisation provides support and advocacy for survivors involved in family court, child contact and child protection proceedings, and whose children have been removed from their care.

5.10

The organisation has effective policies and procedures for safeguarding children.

Guidance: Appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures are in place, alongside on-going staff training, and information for service users on the approach taken by the organisation to safeguarding children, as well as the role and responsibilities of Children's Services. Training is inclusive of the risks harmful practices pose including FGM/forced marriage/so called honour-based violence.

STANDARD 6: Leadership and prevention



Women and girls' voices lead the development of strategic responses to violence against women and girls.

6.1

The organisation engages with the local Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy and supports survivors to engage individually or through survivor forums.

Guidance: The organisation advocates the need to engage survivors in external strategic consultation and discussion, and for them to be recognised as 'expert' partners in the planning and improvement of services. The service provides support to a diverse range of survivor groups, autonomous survivor forums and individual survivors who have moved to independence, to engage in external strategic consultations and discussion as equal partners.

6.2

The organisation contributes to initiatives to educate children and young people around consent, healthy relationships, gender inequality and violence against women and girls.

Guidance: The organisation participates in partnerships to carry out educational work with young people on healthy relationships, gender inequality and violence against women and girls.

6.3

The organisation contributes to training and presentations to raise awareness of violence against women and girls and the needs of survivors, in communities and within other agencies.

Guidance: The organisation participates in initiatives to deliver multi- agency training and awareness-raising on domestic abuse as a gendered form of violence. Sessions promote awareness of the specific needs and experiences of survivors who face multiple forms of oppression including due to race, immigration status, disability, sexuality and/or multiple disadvantage.

6.4

The organisation undertakes both individual and institutional advocacy to improve other agencies responses to survivors and their children.

Guidance: The organisation works to increase other agencies understanding of and responsiveness to survivors' needs. Advocacy work challenges myths around gender-based violence, poor, unsafe and discriminatory policies and practices, oppressive behaviour and incidences of unconscious bias.

6.5

The organisation works with and forms partnerships with other specialist violence against women and girls service providers to provide a collective women's sector voice in defining strategic goals, to protect and improve dedicated provision and unique specialisms. The organisation is committed to collaboration with specialist services, rather than competition.

Guidance: The organisation actively contributes to and participates in local VAWDASV networks and partnerships with other dedicated specialist providers in order to jointly advocate for survivors, to protect and improve dedicated provision and develop integrated offers of complementary provision to commissioners. Organisations are committed to fair and equal partnerships with 'by and for' Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic organisations.

STANDARD 7: Governance and accountability



The organisation demonstrates women's leadership of services and is accountable to service users and communities.

7.1

The organisation demonstrates the principles of feminist leadership. Where the service or organisation's core business is to support women and children, the organisation evidences a commitment to being woman-centred and led and recognises the importance of being led 'by women, for women'.

Guidance: Organisations will practice this commitment by demonstrating that the chair and/or vice chair of the board, a majority of the trustees, and the chief executive are women. Policy and procedures guarantee these positions will be held by women. Where the specialist service is part of a larger organisation, the service is overseen by a separate board and/or the service management is women-centred and led. Where the organisation or service is a 'by and for' Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic specialist provider, the women referred to above should be Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic women. A commitment to be women-led should be articulated across the organisation including within its publicity and promotional activity. Where the organisation supports male victims of abuse and/or provides services to perpetrators this should be reflected in the organisations governance documents.

7.2

The service is well managed with a clear remit and robust governance arrangements. Business plans are based on need and are monitored and reviewed.

Guidance: The organisation should have a clear and robust governance structure in place with clearly identified roles, responsibilities, and accountability for all areas of the organisation. Business plans for service delivery must take into account community needs assessments and be reflective of the organisations remit. The plans must be reviewed against need and outcome, and feedback from stakeholders and partners.

7.3

The organisation promotes a gendered understanding of domestic abuse as a cause and consequence of women's inequality. This is underpinned by feminist values and principles and demonstrated in all its publicity and promotional material.

Guidance: Violence against women and girls, or domestic abuse as a gendered form of violence, must be recognised and articulated as the organisation's primary purpose on its website and in promotional material. This must be inclusive of and underpinned by feminist values and principles in all of its work and be recognised and understood by all those involved including the board, CEO, senior management team, staff and volunteers.

7.4

The organisation is financially sustainable and well-managed. It is committed to raising funds from a diverse range of sources and manages funds wholly for the benefit of service users.

Guidance: The organisation should have a robust system of financial management. A fundraising strategy should be in place with board involvement to increase the diversity of funding streams. Fundraising should be in line with the aims of the organisation and be focused on projects to benefit survivors of VAWDASV including children. Restricted and unrestricted funds should be committed to delivering and improving services. Activities should support the sustainability of the organisation, not over-stretch or grow the service too fast.

7.5

An outcomes-focused approach is taken to service provision and the organisation contributes to local and national evidence-gathering and data collection on VAWDASV.

Guidance: The organisation must have effective recording, monitoring and data collection mechanisms that evidences the outcomes of work with service users. Outcomes should be used to inform service planning and design. The organisation must be responsive to national calls for anonymised data and evidence.

7.6

Trustees understand the dynamics of violence against women and girls and the principles of anti-oppressive practice, in the context of intersectional oppression.

Guidance: The organisation provides training to all trustees in understanding VAWDASV, feminist leadership, the role of specialist services, safeguarding, anti-oppressive practice including anti-racist practice and their duties to promote equality under the Equality Act 2010. This is underpinned by an intersectional understanding of oppression and reflected within trustee recruitment and selection, and within governance policies.

7.7

Staff and volunteers have specialist training to work with survivors of VAWDASV. Staff are trained in line with relevant Welsh Government National Training Framework and Information and Advice Quality Framework levels.

Guidance: Organisations must give all staff and volunteers initial training which includes understanding the gendered dynamics of VAWDASV, awareness of the different forms of violence against women, the role of specialist services, feminist practice, anti-oppressive practice including anti-racism, equality and diversity, legal and welfare rights. Staff are trained to appropriate levels of the Welsh Government National Training Framework and Information and Advice Quality Framework. Staff skills, knowledge and competence are regularly maintained and improved.

7.8

Measures are in place to ensure safe working practise and to protect the physical safety and mental wellbeing of staff and volunteers.

Guidance: The organisation must ensure all volunteers, sessional workers and staff are supported to safely and effectively do their work, whilst also ensuring their duty of care is met to staff wellbeing. This should be done through the provision and implementation of induction, probation and supervision, conducted by supervisors in a way that works to understand staff needs, provides a supportive environment, and introduces and enables the use of reflective practice. Case management systems and reviews are in place, and clinical supervision and CPD. This will complement the comprehensive provision of staff policies which are underpinned by feminist values ensuring enhanced maternity rights, annual leave, working hours and absence policies that are family friendly. All staff have contracts and job descriptions. Staff receive the same pay for equivalent work and pay scales are appropriate to roles, that are to at least the living wage.

7.9

Service users are involved in the planning and evaluation of services and there is a mechanism for the board to consult with current service users to inform its decision-making.

Guidance: The organisation places service users at the centre of its services, ensuring the survivors voice is heard throughout its work. Service user involvement and engagement is inclusive and formalised, regular consultations are undertaken and a formal process for board members and service users to meet on a regular basis is in place.

7.10

Opportunities are provided for staff to meet with trustees and be represented throughout the organisations work to inform the boards decision-making.

Guidance: The organisation provides mechanisms for staff representation on a regular basis throughout its structures and procedures. Staff voices are represented and heard within its board and senior management teams to inform its decision making.

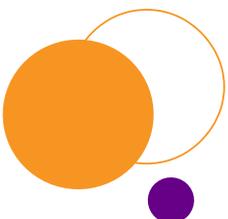
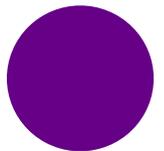


7.11

The organisation has accessible complaints and grievance processes and informs all service users, staff, and volunteers of these processes.



Guidance: The organisation has robust complaints procedure in place for service users and external stakeholders as well as grievance procedures for staff and volunteers, including whistleblowing, anti-racism, and anti-bullying policies. Effort has been taken to embed policies throughout the organisation, to ensure processes are accessible, easy to use and follow.



Welsh Women's Aid

Pendragon House, Caxton Place,
Pentwyn, Cardiff, CF23 8XE

02920 541 551

membership@welshwomensaid.org.uk

www.welshwomensaid.org.uk

Follow us:

@welshwomensaid



Welsh Women's Aid is a registered charity in England and Wales, No. 1140962 and a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales, No. 07483469.



Ariennir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Funded by
Welsh Government



Cymorth i Ferched Cymru
Welsh Women's Aid

Rhoi Merched a Phlant yn Gyntaf
Putting Women & Children First