



## Experience of Ask Me training

The Ask Me training was a beneficial and exciting experience. The training provided further insight into understanding the extent of domestic abuse happening within all communities across the world. I was surprised with the amount of specialist support services available for anyone within all different types of relationships and from different social and cultural backgrounds.

I have worked for Cardiff Women's Aid (CWA), since August 2020, however before working for CWA, my knowledge about domestic abuse was minimal. I used to think that domestic abuse was just physical abuse, however the Ask Me training helped me to understand all the different types of abuse and how these abuses interlink with each other, including: emotional, physical, sexual, and even financial abuse.

The training was highly supportive and helped me to clarify my confusion around what VAWDASV means? What is domestic abuse? And what are the effective ways to support survivors within your community, including a friend or family member?

VAWDASV awareness stands for 'Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.' I initially thought this only included women being abused by male perpetrators, however VAWDASV stands for any violence directed at women, anyone experiencing domestic abuse and sexual violence (regardless of sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, culture, religion, socio-economic background, and disability).

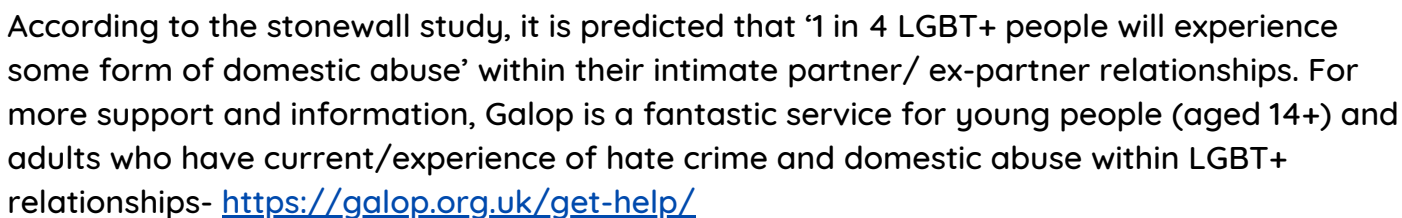
Therefore, this uncovered the number of male survivors of domestic abuse; perpetrated by female and male partners, and highlighted the disproportionate amount of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT+) people experiencing domestic abuse within their relationships.



Llinell Gymorth Live Fear  
Byw Heb Ofn Free Helpline  
**0808 80 10 800**  
ffôn • tecst • sgwrsio byw • ebost  
call • text • live chat • email



Cymorth i Ferched Cymru  
Welsh Women's Aid



Ask Me training provided an easy and clear structure, which further increased my knowledge and awareness of the effects of domestic abuse, inclusive of supportive strategies in responding to disclosures and being mindful of any unconscious biases around supporting survivors. The training was split up into three main modules with a final closing module to recap all our knowledge and understanding of VAWDASV awareness.

The further two modules focused on understanding the effects and impact of domestic abuse and VAWDASV on people's well-being and mental-health and being aware of the statistical evidence and prevalence of domestic abuse happening world-wide, across the UK and Wales. We also discovered more about victim blaming and how to prevent victim blaming when supporting a survivor.

newid sy'n para  
change that lasts

  
Cymorth i Ferched Cymru  
Welsh Women's Aid



## Supporting survivor: VAWDASV awareness

We learnt the importance of providing a safe, supportive, and non-judgemental space, where the person feels listened to, heard, believed, and validated, and that the survivor can make their own decision and choices in reaching out for support. We were encouraged to use scenario-based role-plays and stories to be mindful of how our behaviours and reactions to a survivor's story can change their response and likelihood of reaching out for support.

It was important to be reminded that survivors want to be asked questions related to their personal experiences, as this can help someone to feel less alone, and know the different support available. The Ask Me Ambassador training provided a proactive approach to supporting someone who disclosed/ showed signs that they have recent or past experiences of VAWDASV.

I felt very connected and excited to be part of a group of like-minded and passionate women, who cared for and were motivated to raise awareness within their communities and support and empower survivors. The training highlighted the following: 'Breaking the silence about VAWDASV awareness', 'Raise awareness within communities' and provide continuous support to survivors by 'listening and believe with compassion without judgment' to every survivor's experience of abuse.

It was helpful to understand effective ways to support someone affected by VAWDASV. This includes attentively listening, asking open ended questions, reassuring the survivor you are there for them, checking in with the person through use of general conversation, memes via text; without investigating the abuse. It is important to reassure someone that the abusive partner is 100% responsible for their behaviour and actions, and the survivor is NEVER to blame for the abuse.



Llinell Gymorth Live Fear  
Byw Heb Ofn Free Helpline

**0808 80 10 800**

ffôn • tecst • sgwrsio byw • ebost  
call • text • live chat • email



**Cymorth i Ferched Cymru**  
Welsh Women's Aid



Supporting someone is never about giving straight advice, encouraging them to leave the abusive partner or putting any kind of worry or pressure on them to reach out for support as leaving the abusive partner is the most dangerous time for the survivor.

You can be the gateway to help the person realise they are not alone, and support is available, when that person is ready to make that initial contact. You can also be the person they can check in with and go to if they are struggling or wish to disclose more about the abuse.

Anyone can be a survivor and everyone at some point in their life needs support, for further information about being an 'active bystander' to a survivor- please see Welsh Women's Aid toolkit: <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/campaigning/covid-19-bystander-toolkit/>

It was supportive to know that some of the participants within the training were survivors themselves and had an empathetic and personal understanding about domestic abuse. Through-out the training and after each module, there were chances and safe spaces for anyone who wished to, to discuss personal experiences and be signposted to support services.

However, there was no pressure to share any personal information you did not want to, as self-care was a huge part of the training. I found this hugely supportive, as for the first time was able to share about my experience of being in a controlling relationship as an older teenager.

It helped me to separate the self-blame that felt about the emotional abuse and realised that the abusive partner is always 100% responsible for their behaviour. This encouraged me to reach out for support and to further help any other family members and friends who disclosed about any current or past abuse.



Llinell Gymorth Live Fear  
Byw Heb Ofn Free Helpline  
**0808 80 10 800**  
ffôn • tecst • sgwrsio byw • ebost  
call • text • live chat • email

  
**newid sy'n para**  
**change that lasts**



**Cymorth i Ferched Cymru**  
**Welsh Women's Aid**



## Taking care of ourselves: Ask Me Ambassador

This includes prioritising your mental-health and wellbeing when supporting a survivor, to separate your own personal experiences when the survivor is telling their story. This also means ensuring you receive adequate support, through friends, family members or other support networks and specialist services, including: BAWSO, Cardiff Women's Aid, the Live Fear Free helpline and much more.

There was never any pressure throughout the training to get involved with anything you felt uncomfortable talking about or taking part in. It was important to know how to look after yourself when up against people within your community that might disagree with raising awareness or dismiss a survivor's experience of VAWDASV.

The trainers helped us to recognise that some people are not ready to change their mindset, attitude, or beliefs, all you can do is plant that ‘seed of change’; ‘Keep planting new seeds until your mind becomes the earth that gives birth to new worlds’ (quoted by Curtis Tyrone Jones).

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

**0808 80 10 800**

ffôn • tecst • sgwrsio byw • ebost  
call • text • live chat • email

  
Cymorth i Ferched Cymru  
Welsh Women's Aid



<https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/change-that-lasts/ask-me-project/>

