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## Welsh Government Race Equality Action Plan: Welsh Women's Aid Response

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<b>These are the views of:</b>	<i>Welsh Women's Aid (Third Sector) - the national charity in Wales working to end domestic abuse and all forms of violence against women.</i>

### About Welsh Women's Aid

Welsh Women's Aid is the umbrella organisation in Wales that supports and provides national representation for independent third sector violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) specialist services in Wales (comprising our membership of specialist services and members of the regional VAWDASV Specialist Services Providers Forums). These services deliver life-saving and life-changing support and preventative work in response to violence against women, including domestic abuse and sexual violence, as part of a network of UK provision.

As an umbrella organisation, 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.

We also deliver the Wales National Quality Service Standards (NQSS), a national accreditation framework for domestic abuse specialist services in Wales (supported by the Welsh Government) as part of a UK suite of integrated accreditation systems and frameworks. (More information on the NQSS can be found here: <http://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/our-members/standards/>)

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## Introduction

We are pleased to have the chance to contribute to the development of this crucial action plan. Below we have outlined key things we welcome as well as areas we feel should be included or expanded upon. This response then goes on to address specific consultation questions. As the umbrella organisation for Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence in Wales our response will be focused on these areas of the plan.

## Key points

It was vital for our response to be shaped directly by survivors and our member specialist services. The key points below are informed via engagement with the Welsh Women's Aid Survivor Network and regular consultation with member services via email and member meetings.

*We welcome:*

- The consultation and partnership in which the draft plan has been produced.
- The acknowledgement in the plan that the Welsh Government is responsible for services which intersect with the causes and consequences of the perpetration and the experience of crime; these include mental health services, some policy funding, violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, community cohesion and addressing hate crime. Education will also be integral to furthering prevention work and addressing causes of VAWDASV through the new curriculum. Fully utilising these powers will be crucial for driving forward meaningful social change.
- A commitment in the plan to ensure specialist support for Black Asian and Minority Ethnic people affected by Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence is available across Wales.
- A commitment in the plan for training delivered to 400 local authority housing and social services officers to ensure they understand rights of migrants, including those with No Recourse to Public Funds.
- A commitment in the plan for guidance published for local authorities to ensure they understand legal routes to support for those with No Recourse to Public Funds.
- Key consideration given to intersectionality and especially the needs of Black Asian and Minority Ethnic women and children included in the plan. **VAWDASV is a cause and consequence of inequality between women and men**, which intersects with



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factors such as ethnicity, age, class, sexuality and disability to impact on experiences of abuse and routes to recovery.<sup>1</sup>

- A commitment in the plan for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, especially women and children to have increased confidence in reporting hate crimes.

*We suggest the following is included/ expanded upon:*

- Broader inclusion of the barriers facing Black, Asian and those from minoritised communities, especially women and children, to accessing VAWDASV support services.
- Specific actions addressing systematic issues and anti-racist practice relating to VAWDASV disclosure and support. In developing the plan, core recognition must be given to the ways in which race and structural racism impacts the way people access services and ensure there are accessible options for all survivors.
- Ensure that the plan recognises the continuum of VAWDASV that Black and minoritised women and girls experience, including sexual harassment, sexual violence, sexual exploitation and domestic abuse as well as so called honour based abuse, forced marriage and FGM. Systemic, institutional and structural racism shapes how Black and minoritised women experience all forms of VAWDASV, and their access to safety, support and justice. Welsh Governments planned responses to all forms of VAWDASV in its new strategy need to take into account the intersecting experiences of racism and VAWDASV and ensure it centres this within its prioritisation of prevention, support and protection.
- Recommendations to embed 'by and for' provision within a sustainable funding model and ensure commissioners across Wales are well informed on duties under the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015, and held accountable in line with statutory guidance to fund adequate provision across all areas of Wales.
- A focus on the prevention of VAWDASV experienced by Black and minoritised women and girls, including ensuring the development and delivery of the new mandatory relationship and sexuality education is informed by funded 'by and for' VAWDASV specialist services and is embedded in a whole education approach that includes meaningful community engagement informed by organisations already embedded in communities.
- A recognition of the specific barriers for migrant women with no recourse to public funds in accessing support, acknowledging the impact of hostile environment

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Annual-Membership-Report-2018-19-FINAL.pdf>





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immigration policies and taking proactive approaches to mitigate and disrupt this, under the promotion of a Nation for Sanctuary.

- Greater clarity surrounding implementation of the plan and accountability for fulfilling specific actions.

## Consultation questions

**Question 1** - Does the vision, purpose, values and the imagined future to 2030 reflect what you would like to see achieved by 2030? What may get in the way to realise the vision and values? What may help to realise the vision and values?

Welsh Women's Aid supports the aspirations outlined in the vision, purpose and values to achieve by 2030 as proposed by participants at stakeholder events. We appreciate how ambitious the plans are and welcome the focus on action.

In order to achieve these ambitious vision and values Welsh Government must dedicate substantial resource and ensure that fulfilling the plan remains a key priority cross-government.

We recommend the final plan cover monitoring and accountability. A key theme from stakeholder events was the desire to see evidenced follow through on the commitments set out in the plan. Having dedicated evaluation periods, monitorable actions and specific actions with named responsible people/ organisations to complete them, will help realise the vision and values.

**Question 2** - We would like your views on the goals and actions. To comment on some or all of the goals, actions and outcomes please reflect on the below:

- Does the explanation (narrative / background) make clear why we have chosen the goals and actions in this policy area?
- Is it missing any priorities, background or other information?
- Do you agree with the selected goals and actions? What would you add or take away in relation the actions?
- Will each goal and associated actions create the desired outcomes we have stated? If not, what would you want to change so that we achieve changes that are truly anti-racist in the time scales stated?
- How could the positive or negative effect be increased, or mitigated?



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Our answers to this question are expanded upon in detail throughout this response. We welcome the goals and actions in the action plan and are greatly appreciative of the members of the stakeholder groups who gave their time and expertise to develop them.

We have outlined additional priorities to include/ expand upon in our introduction and key points at the beginning of the response. Including these priorities will be essential to offering effective VAWDASV protection, prevention and support to Black and minoritised women and girls in Wales.

In our responses to questions 4 and 5, we cover challenges, opportunities and necessary resources to fully achieve the aims and actions of the plan. The overarching theme being cross government partnership, commitment and resourcing, and survivor and specialist 'by and for' services led work and monitoring with the necessary recourses to enable this.

**Question 3** - Are there any goals and actions that you can think of that are missing? Who should deliver on them and what actions would help to deliver them?

We would call for violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) to be more explicitly woven through the plan and for the inclusion of medium and longer term goals, particularly focusing on a preventative approach to VAWDASV experienced by Black and minoritized women and girls. As highlighted in our key points, **VAWDASV is a cause and consequence of inequality between women and men**, which intersects with factors such as ethnicity, age, class, sexuality and disability to impact on experiences of abuse and routes to recovery.<sup>2</sup> We welcome the action plan's strong acknowledgement of the importance of intersectional approaches, however we would appreciate greater reference to the specific barriers and experiences these intersecting factors contribute to.

VAWDASV is not inevitable, and Welsh Government has committed to a preventative approach to VAWDASV in the development of the new strategy. Addressing the root causes of VAWDASV, with the aim of preventing it, cannot be separated from addressing other forms of structural inequalities and discrimination. Intersecting inequalities within structures, practices and social norms can lead to additional layers of legitimising, condoning or concealing of violence and abuse which, in turn, sustains and reproduces these inequalities.<sup>3</sup> The Race Equality Action Plan needs to cross reference with the new VAWDASV strategy under development, to ensure the centring of long term prevention of VAWDASV for Black

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

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/A-Blueprint-for-the-Prevention-of-VAWDASV27918.pdf>



and minoritized women and girls. As highlighted in our key points, part of this action would be to ensure that the development and delivery of the new mandatory relationship and sexuality education is informed by funded 'by and for' VAWDASV specialist services and is embedded in a whole education approach that includes meaningful community engagement informed by organisations already embedded in communities.

There must also be targeted, preventative initiatives across communities led by 'by and for' specialist services with the expertise in community engagement and VAWDASV. Interventions must be aware of and able to respond appropriately and effectively to the intersecting forms of discrimination and inequality experienced by women in Wales, including through 'by and for' services, such as Black and minoritised women services.<sup>4</sup>

The plan would also benefit from a section relating specifically around access to VAWDASV services. In developing the plan, core recognition must be given to the ways in which race and structural racism impacts the way people access services and ensure there are accessible options for all survivors.

Specialist services led 'by and for' Black and minoritised women are a vital part of the VAWDASV sector. Specialist 'by and for' services have the expertise to lead on creating safe and inclusive spaces, widen access to support for Black and minoritised women, dismantle the barriers they face to support, and deliver expert support with an understanding of the dynamics of gender, racism and discrimination that shape their experiences.<sup>5</sup> The Action Plan should acknowledge that 'by and for' services in Wales face unequal access to competitive commissioning process; this is acknowledged in the Welsh Government statutory guidance for commissioning VAWDASV services, the Race Equality Action Plan is an opportunity to set out how Welsh Government will ensure public funding process, such as commissioning cycles, do not adversely impact the services that tackle the barriers to support for Black and minoritized women.

We welcome the plan's inclusion of the barriers facing people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) and commitments to offering support. We would additionally call for the plan to give specific recognition to the barriers of people with NRPF fleeing abuse and securing safety. Women with insecure immigration status, or whose immigration status is dependent on a spouse or employer are often at a heightened risk of violence and exploitation. This cohort of

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/A-Blueprint-for-the-Prevention-of-VAWDASV27918.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Thiara, R. and Roy, S. (2012) Vital Statistics 2: Key Findings Report on Black, Minority Ethnic and Refugee Women's and Children's Experiences of Gender-Based Violence, London: Imkaan

women also face barriers to accessing protection, support and specialist services, because of a lack of funding within the sector, or through isolation, language and cultural barriers.<sup>6</sup>

**Question 4** - What are the key challenges that could stop the goals and actions achieving anti-racism by 2025?

We welcome acknowledgement in the plan that the Welsh Government is responsible for services which intersect with the causes and consequences of the perpetration and the experience of crime, including mental health services, some policy funding, violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, community cohesion and addressing hate crime. Fully utilising these powers will be crucial for driving forward meaningful social change. One of the main challenges that could potentially stop the goals and actions achieving anti-racism by 2025 would be missing key opportunities to utilise these powers to their full potential and truly permeate culture change.

As well as this some of this change will need to be delivered through agencies, namely local authorities, education and health services. It will be vital that Welsh Government is aware of exactly what remit it has to hold these agencies to account and monitor what is being delivered and what additional resources agencies require to fulfil these duties and responsibilities.

There is also a need to fund smaller, community based groups and organisations that will be critical in informing and monitoring this. These groups and organisations are often already underfunded and there must be a commitment to resourcing them to be able to undertake this work. It will be vitally important in doing this to consider power relations and ensure they can be effective in critiquing and challenging work around the plan without there being the possibility that this will affect funding.

**Question 5** - What resources (this could include funding, staff time, training, access to support or advocacy services among other things) do you think will be necessary in achieving the goals and actions outlined?

This ambitious plan will first and foremost require time and commitment from all key stakeholders and commitment that achieving anti-racism will remain a Welsh Government priority over the next five years. Change at this level will require consistent action, forward momentum and evaluation of progress to realise all goals. Achieving the goals and actions of

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/NRPF-and-VAWDASV-Briefing-for-MSS-Final-ENG.pdf>



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the plan by 2025 will require investment from across government streams. A cross government approach will be needed to effectively make budgetary decisions, funders and commissioners to all take an anti-racism framing to resourcing and decision-making.

A commitment to relevant and consistent training across all sectors will also be crucial for pushing forward change. We welcome commitment in the plan for training delivered to 400 local authority housing and social services officers to ensure they understand rights of migrants, including those with NRPf and would urge for this to be rolled out to other sectors with duties and opportunities to provide support.

To have the expertise required to support all women, increase access to services and embed anti-racist practice across Wales we also call for the continued and increased commissioning of by and for services. We published our annual state of the sector report<sup>7</sup> last November which outlined the need for and a roadmap to developing and embedding a sustainable funding model for the specialist VAWDASV sector. The report outlined the need for a sustainable funding model to fully incorporate the commissioning of specialist by and for services stating:

*Organisations at a regional/national level led by and for Black and minoritised communities are supported to meet the needs of Black and minoritised survivors across Wales. 'By and for' specialist services are skilled in identifying needs and experiences of specific forms of VAWDASV that may be missed by services not led by and for women within these communities. They offer a range of services and are able to reach women who may not even recognise their experiences as abusive and create flexible and diverse support systems, sensitive to the fact that for many women, refuge, counselling or other support services may be unfamiliar and/or stigmatised.*

The continued and increased engagement with Black and minoritised survivors should also be resourced as a priority. The voice of survivors must be central to any and all work to end violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, and even more so when looking to develop and commission ant-racist services. Survivors are experts in their own experience and this expertise must be key in shaping policy and improving practice. Survivor engagement and survivor led work must be intersectional and reflect the diversity of women and girls in Wales and their differing experiences of violence and abuse. As a large amount of survivor engagement is facilitated by specialist services this is another key factor in commissioning by

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/State-of-the-sector-2020-PDFdesign.pdf>

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and for services and ensuring all specialist services are trained and resourced to support survivors from all backgrounds and embed anti-racist practice.

**Question 6** - Do you feel the Race Equality Action Plan adequately covers the intersection of race with other protected characteristics, such as religion or belief, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, sex, and marriage and civil partnership? If not, how can we improve this?

In tandem with the development of this plan, Welsh Government is also in the process of developing both an LGBTQ+ action plan and the new VAWDASV strategy for Wales. Alignment between these plans and strategies will be vital for capturing intersecting characteristics, the barriers these create, help in identifying cross working support and solutions.

This would also be an opportune time for work on Welsh Government's Gender Equality Review, which began in April 2018, to continue, and heavily embed actions and recommendations from the Race Equality Action Plan.

We would also like to take this opportunity to note again that the plan should not assume only some forms of VAWDASV are experienced by black and minoritized women. All forms of VAWDASV can be experienced by any race, as well as this racism itself often intersects with other forms of abuse, increasing the harm experienced. We would like to see the plan draw out specific examples of race intersecting with all forms of VAWDASV, the harms and additional barriers imposed and a commitment to ending racialised abuse. Specific examples of this include racialised experiences of street harassment by young black women<sup>8</sup> and sexual exploitation of women in the sex industry and the issues around criminalisation. In March 2020 Imkaan published a report<sup>9</sup> which highlights women's accounts which reveal the impact of multiple intersecting harms where racialised violence intersects with sexual violence.

**Question 7** - Please see the section on Governance. What suggestions can you provide for measuring success in creating an anti-racist Wales and for strengthening the accountability for implementation?

Much like our calls for the new VAWDSV Wales Strategy, effective strategic governance and accountability at national and regional levels will be essential for the success of this plan in

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/powerful-new-film-black-women-speak-out-about-racist-sexual-harassment/>

<sup>9</sup> [https://829ef90d-0745-49b2-b404-cbea85f15fda.filesusr.com/ugd/f98049\\_a0f11db6395a48fbac0e40da899dcb8.pdf](https://829ef90d-0745-49b2-b404-cbea85f15fda.filesusr.com/ugd/f98049_a0f11db6395a48fbac0e40da899dcb8.pdf)



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achieving its goals and realising its vision and values. In our responses to Welsh Government on the VAWDASV strategy we made the following recommendations, and we think similar alignment on implementing the Race and Equality Action Plan will be an effective method on ensuring cross cutting action and anti-racist practice:

- *Create a national strategy and delivery plan which includes cross-government action, developed, implemented, and monitored in partnership with survivors and the sector.*
- *The new strategy must be ambitious, and include measurable actions cross-government, and set out how it will work with devolved public body duties of local authorities and health boards.*
- *We fully support the plans commitment to 'social partnership' through plans to place a 'Social Partnership Duty' on all public bodies, and establish a ministerial led social partnership council. we strongly recommend VAWDASV sector and survivor representation on this group.*
- *Implement the requirement for regional strategic VAWDASV boards to build collaborative governance of strategies at local levels in line with Welsh Government Local Strategies Guidance.<sup>10</sup> This with the goal of embedding 'by and for' provision within a sustainable funding model and having national oversight of the varied needs withing all communities.*

**Question 8** - We would like to know your views on the effects that these proposals would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English. What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

**Question 9** - Please also explain how you believe the proposed policy approach could be formulated or changed so as to have positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, and no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Survivor engagement work should be undertaken in Welsh and English, and commissioning of services should ensure that service delivery is in Welsh where the need is evidenced for this. Access to information in other languages must be available for women with English and Welsh as a second language, especially for migrant women. Whilst Welsh should be available and treated equally to English, a wide range of language provision should be funded, ensuring language is not a barrier to support.

## Question 10

<sup>10</sup> <https://gov.wales/violence-against-women-domestic-abuse-and-sexual-violence-guidance-local-strategies>





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This plan has been developed in co-construction, and discussions around language and identity have shown that many people do not consider the term 'BAME' to be appropriate. As a result we refer to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people or particular ethnic minority people in the Plan. However, we recognise that this term is also problematic and, where possible, being more specific to the particular race or ethnicity an individual or community identifies with is generally preferred. However, there are times where it is necessary to make reference to all those people who share the experience of being subject to racism.

We have used the term Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people for this purpose. What are your views on this term and is there an alternative you would prefer? Welsh speakers may wish to consider suitable terminology in both languages.

Conversation on language and identity are ever evolving, we would make a commitment to following the lead of communities and specialist by and for services, in what language is most appropriate as culture and work to embed ant-racism across all of Wales continues to develop.

We welcome the acknowledgement of the discussions around terminology and language however the Welsh Government could be more explicit in its recognition of how the language used racialises and minoritises identities. It is important to be transparent about the historic and current systems, structures, institutions and cultures that racialise and marginalise certain people and communities, and counter to that privilege the majority of white people and communities, who are not racialised or marginalised. This is reflected through language so it is important to be explicit and transformative in the use of terminology.<sup>11</sup>

### **Question 11**

We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

We have made reference to specific comments, developed and checked with the Welsh Women's Aid Survivor Network, and our specialist VAWDASV member services, in the opening of our response.

Welsh Women's Aid are committed to playing its part in building an anti-racist Wales, and will continue to be involved in challenging and shaping practice within our own sector. We are

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<sup>11</sup> [https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/2f475d\\_91a5eb3394374f24892ca1e1ebf6ea2e.pdf](https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/2f475d_91a5eb3394374f24892ca1e1ebf6ea2e.pdf)



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fully in support of this action plan, and offer our own time and resources in ensuring visions and goals are fully realised.

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