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Name:	<i>Aliya Iftikhar, Policy Officer</i>
Organisation:	<i>Welsh Women's Aid</i>
Email address:	<i>Aliyaiftikhar@welshwomensaid.org.uk</i>
Telephone number:	<i>02920 541 551</i>
Address:	<i>Pendragon House, Caxton Place, Pentwyn, Cardiff CF23 8XE</i>
These are the views of:	<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. Our membership comprises of 20 specialist support services. These services deliver lifesaving and life-changing support and preventative work in response to violence against women, including domestic abuse and sexual violence against children and young people, men and boys, trans and non-binary people, 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 also award 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](#)).

Welsh Women's Aid believe that whilst there is some merit to trying to predict the escalation of offences into violent offences in order to prevent further harm to survivors, there must also be a significant focus on the societal beliefs and norms that are rooted in all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls. In March 2023, it was estimated that over 109 women were killed in the previous 12 months where the perpetrator was a man¹. All forms of violence against women,

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/mar/09/jess-phillips-reads-list-of-women-killed-over-past-year-in-commons>

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

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domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) do not happen in isolation, they are rooted in culture, narratives and in attitudes of gender inequality and discrimination. These run throughout our society and institutions, with increasing concerns of misogyny, sexual harassment and discrimination from the organisations founded to protect women and girls. Violence against women and girls is not inevitable and we believe that everyone must be able to live a life without fear, with it being everybody's responsibility to challenge the structures, practises and norms which harbour gender inequality, in order to eradicate VAWDASV.

Whilst we welcome The Women and Equalities Committees' focus on the type of offences a perpetrator has and whether this would lead to a more serious act of violence against women and girls, we believe that there must be a focus on the prevention of the harm happening in the first place. We are aware that the inquiry focuses on patterns of behaviour and escalating behaviour following several high-profile cases. We are concerned that focusing on risk escalation and offences will undermine that escalation of risk is not always clear, linear, or violent and therefore will create a hierarchy of harms. Focusing on criminal behaviours is limiting as most cases of VAWDASV are not reported to the police, charges are not pursued by the CPS² or the sentence does not reflect the harm perpetrated³. Breaking down and preventing misogynistic and sexist attitudes must underpin any form of preventive work in eradicating VAWDASV.

To what extent is there evidence that men who exhibit certain non-criminal behaviours, including online, go on to commit criminal offences against women and girls?

To what extent is there evidence that men who commit certain crimes (such as non-contact sexual offences) go on to commit serious violent offences against women and girls?

We have grouped these two questions together as our thoughts are closely aligned.

Unacceptably, when women are killed by men, there is often a large focus on the behaviour of the victim in failing to prevent their own homicide and not the choices of the perpetrator to conduct such harm⁴. Focusing on the behaviour and characteristics of potential perpetrators/ perpetrators does not recognise or challenge the harmful gender norms, misogyny and beliefs that shape those who choose to perpetrate abuse against women and girls. Research conducted by Women's Aid Federation England found that 34% of people believe that those who carry out domestic violence are

² <https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/alarmed-drop-domestic-abuse-charging-mirrors-rape/>.

³ <https://victimscommissioner.org.uk/document/joint-letter-from-victims-commissioner-and-domestic-abuse-commissioner-on-domestic-homicide/>.

⁴ The Killing of Women in 'Sex Games Gone Wrong': An analysis of femicides in Great Britain 2000 – 2018, Professor Elizabeth Yardley. <https://www.open-access.bcu.ac.uk/9178/1/SGGW%20Accepted%20version.pdf>, page 4.

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just 'bad people' and that it not a reflection of society⁵. Sexist narratives and attitudes towards gender roles play a key role in victim blaming⁶, and there must be a focus on primary prevention and disrupting the narratives that exist in society as an integral part of eradicating VAWDASV.

The first question touches upon the online world and behaviours such as the perpetration of online abuse which has grown due to technological advances. Refuge reported in 2019 that 72% of women accessing its services had been subject to technology-facilitated abuse⁷. Technology is being used in a range of ways to monitor, stalk, harass and impersonate survivors, whilst also facilitating sexual abuse such as the sharing of intimate sexual images⁸. Women are significantly more likely to be victims of repeat and severe forms of online abuse, with young girls being vulnerable to sexual exploitation and bullying and those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups being more likely to receive abuse⁹. Digital spaces operate as a magnifying glass for harmful stereotypes, misogyny, and gender inequality¹⁰. As highlighted in Welsh Women's Aid report on Online Abuse, pornography makes up a high number of internet traffic, with a significant amount of visited sites containing aggressive acts towards women and girls¹¹. Digital spaces harbour anti-feminist and misogynist groups, with research suggesting that on average a post about rape is published to a forum every 29 minutes¹². Online and technology-facilitated abuse does not exist in isolation, it is an extension of and part of other forms of violence against women and girls, which are rooted in gender inequality, harmful stereotypes, and discrimination. There must be a commitment by the UK Government to ensure that these online spaces are regulated to prevent and stop environments that fuel misogynist or discriminative narratives against women and girls.

We strongly believe that the escalation of offences or violent offences cannot solely be viewed or prevented by focusing on risk or offence escalation. There must be consideration of the root cause of beliefs, norms, and views, which facilitate an environment for abuse and violence to be perpetrated in. This can be done by focusing on early intervention and prevention, such as the implementation of Relationship and Sexuality Education, implementing a whole-system approach and stopping perpetrators in their tracks and to hold them to account. As highlighted above, whilst we recognise the Committees' focus on escalation of non-criminal behaviours to criminal offences or more serious violent criminal offences, we are concerned that this focuses on risk framing and violence creates a

⁵ <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Final-Come-Together-to-End-Domestic-Abuse-a-survey-of-UK-attitudes-to-domestic-abuse-2022-1.pdf>, page 17.

⁶ *ibid*, page 31.

⁷ <https://refuge.org.uk/news/72-of-refuge-service-users-identify-experiencing-tech-abuse>.

⁸ <https://post.parliament.uk/technology-and-domestic-abuse/>.

⁹ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/no-space-for-violence-against-women-and-girls-in-the-digital-world>

¹⁰ <https://welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Online-Abuse-The-use-of-the-digital-world-to-perpetrate-violence-against-women-and-girls.pdf>, page 2.

¹¹ *ibid*, page 3.

¹² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-62908601>.

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hierarchy of harms. Those who have been convicted of 'more serious offences' may take focus away from those individuals convicted of 'less serious offences' or those who have not been convicted at all but are still perpetrating gender-based violence. Some research has been conducted into whether low-level offenders are more likely to commit more serious crimes, and analysis shows that majority of serious domestic abusers were known to be repeat offenders of domestic abuse and other crimes¹³. However, research in this area is problematic as data is often missing, there are inconsistencies between police forces and the sample size was small¹⁴.

Instead of focusing on whether certain criminal offences then lead to serious violent offences, there should be a focus on the perpetrator's behaviour reducing a survivor's space for action and the subsequent impact this has on a survivor and their rights. This is where their thinking and actions are narrowed, and it becomes almost impossible to imagine life outside of control¹⁵. Coercive control does not necessarily escalate in terms of abuse or violence, however, overtime the ability of a survivor to meet their friends, family, or act in a certain way changes. Women may not always be explicitly told not to do something, but this is often learned in a different way, through the power and control exerted over them¹⁶. High levels of coercive control would indicate that a woman's space for action is likely to be more limited due to micromanagement and control, with the expectation for their space for action to be larger when the relationship ended¹⁷. However, a significant number of women reported experiencing post-separation abuse whether this is through weaponizing the family court or incidents of stalking¹⁸. The 8 stages of Homicide coined by Jane Monkton-Smith highlights the progression of behaviour by the perpetrator and this is crucial in understanding how control is exerted at different parts of the relationship¹⁹. Research highlights how pregnancy is a high-risk time for women with current or former abusive partners, with it being a time where domestic abuse can begin or escalate²⁰. Leaving a relationship has also been defined as a risk factor for being a victim of femicide by the World Health Organisation.²¹ Learning about these specific stages, alongside findings from Domestic Homicide Reviews, are crucial in developing a wider understanding of domestic abuse,

¹³ https://www.cape.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Dated-POST_-RREAL-VAWG-review.pdf, page 3.

¹⁴ Ibid, page 20.

¹⁵ <https://www.nottinghamshire.pcc.police.uk/Document-Library/News-and-Events/Chance-for-Change/Professor-Liz-Kelly-Chance-for-Change-Presentation.pdf/>

¹⁶ Long Journeys Toward Freedom: The Relationship Between Coercive Control and Space for Action – Measurement and Emerging Evidence, Nicola Sharp-Jeffs, Liz Kelly and Renate Klein. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1077801216686199>, page 167.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Post-separation abuse: A concept analysis, Kathryn J. Spearman, Jennifer L Hardesty and Jacquelyn Campbell. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jan.15310>

¹⁹ Intimate Partner Femicide: using Foucauldian analysis to track an eight stage relationship progression to Homicide, Jane Monkton-Smith. <https://eprints.glos.ac.uk/6896/1/6896%20Monckton-Smith%20%282019%29%20Intimate%20Partner%20Femicide%20using%20Foucauldian.....pdf>.

²⁰ <https://www.femicidecensus.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Femicide-Census-10-year-report.pdf>, page 63.

²¹ [https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO_RHR_12.38_eng.pdf;jsessionid=4DD39FB77FD32FE6CC03FE9%208F3A27D79?sequence=1%20\(accessed%2015%20November%202020\)](https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO_RHR_12.38_eng.pdf;jsessionid=4DD39FB77FD32FE6CC03FE9%208F3A27D79?sequence=1%20(accessed%2015%20November%202020)).

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whilst recognising that many instances of domestic abuse remain unreported and there cannot be a reliance on monitoring escalation based on the commitment of certain criminal offences.

How effective is (a) the police service and (b) the criminal justice system at responding to these behaviours and offences and how might those responses be improved?

We do not believe that the police service and the criminal justice system is currently effective at responding to the needs of survivors and that there must be a multi-pronged approach in order to address and tackle VAWDASV. Perpetrators must be stopped in their tracks, held to account and survivors must be sent a message that their disclosures are taken seriously. Trust in the police and the criminal justice system is at an all-time low following the death of Sarah Everard by a serving police officer, police treatment of murdered sisters Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman and the scale of police perpetrated abuse²². The Crown Court backlog has hit a record high of 8,741 sexual offence cases, with 2,210 of these being adult rape cases²³. These delays have a detrimental impact on victims and survivors' mental health and their recovery of the trauma they have experienced.

In Baroness Casey's review of the Metropolitan Police Service, she highlighted that although domestic abuse is a high risk and high-volume crime which makes it particularly challenging, those who join the Community Safety Units of the police are not prepared to deal with this crime²⁴. There are also discrepancies between the amount of domestic abuse incidents that were classified as domestic abuse crimes between forces, which raises significant concerns that domestic abuse incidents were not treated with the same seriousness in all forces²⁵. Protective measures such as bail conditions, arrest for breach of non-molestation orders, Domestic Violence Protection Measures and Clare's Law are not being used properly to protect women and girls²⁶. There is a significant lack of understanding of violence against women and girls and the impact this has on the survivor. We believe that there must be specific training provided to police and those who work within the criminal justice system to ensure that survivors are supported and are not further traumatised, by adopting a needs-led, strengths based and trauma informed way of working.

²² <https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/almost-half-of-women-have-less-trust-in-police-following-sarah-everard-murder/>.

²³ <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/breaking-point/>

²⁴ <https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/met/about-us/baroness-casey-review/update-march-2023/baroness-casey-review-march-2023a.pdf>, page 151.

²⁵ *ibid*.

²⁶ *ibid* and <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5aa98420f2e6b1ba0c874e42/t/5c91f55c9b747a252efe260c/1553069406371/Super-complaint+report.FINAL.pdf>.

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Survivors from marginalised communities are less likely to confide in the police even though they experience higher rates of gender-based violence²⁷. This is due to the fear of discrimination, or the service not being equipped to work with their different needs, meaning that survivors are more likely to stay with the perpetrator and will be at risk of increased harm whilst being unable to seek justice²⁸. The fear of institutions information sharing with immigration service is a significant barrier for survivors with no recourse to public funds to seeking support, safety, and justice, and we believe that a firewall must be implemented to ensure survivors do not feel at risk of further harm when disclosing abuse to the police²⁹. There must be adequate facilities for translation so that family members do not have to translate on behalf of survivors, that the survivors fully understands what is happening and that there is a greater understanding of violence against women and girls from an intersectional lens³⁰. We strongly believe that there must be training on the different experiences of those from minoritised groups such as those who are migrants, refugees, disabled, deaf and/or have no recourse to public funds, and this must be alongside training on addressing different forms of discrimination. As highlighted by a report conducted by the Women and Equalities Committee on so-called honour-based abuse, there are inconsistencies in the data recording of this form of abuse, from incorrectly flagging or a failure to recognise an offence as honour-based³¹. There must be refreshed guidance to ensure that all forces are able to record these incidents accurately and consistently and that there is a greater understanding of what this type of abuse looks like³². We strongly believe that there must be a statutory definition of so-called honour-based abuse to ensure consistency of understanding, and we are disappointed by the UK Governments decision to reject the Committee's recommendation³³.

What interventions are currently in place for perpetrators with different offending histories and how effective are they for different offender pathways?

The Change That Lasts model, which is a whole system approach to ending violence against women, focuses on prevention, intervention, perpetrator accountability and long-term recovery, which goes beyond short-term crisis intervention. It is underpinned by having a needs-led, strength-based and trauma informed approach. Survivors, as well as perpetrators, are likely to be in contact with many

²⁷ <https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Listen-to-us.pdf>, page 6.

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ <https://www.jcwi.org.uk/safety-for-migrant-workers-the-case-for-safe-reporting-mechanisms>.

³⁰ <https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Listen-to-us.pdf>, page 6.

³¹ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmwomeq/831/report.html#heading-0>, section 23.

³² *ibid.*

³³ <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/328/women-and-equalities-committee/news/197412/government-rejects-mps-calls-to-legally-define-honourbased-abuse/#:~:text=The%20Government%20has%20rejected%20calls,agencies%20and%20better%20victim%20support.>

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different organisations and services throughout their lifetime, as many may not be able to always identify the signs of abuse/violence, opportunities for early intervention and signposting are missed. The Change That Lasts model comprises of Ask Me, Trusted Professional training, and Specialist Support Services³⁴. Within Specialist Support Services, specialist perpetrator services hold perpetrators to account and Change that Lasts Early Awareness Raising (CLEAR) is a complementary strand that has been developed by Respect in partnership with Welsh Women's Aid. CLEAR focuses on there being an early response for men who are concerned about their behaviour towards women, and they can either self-refer or be referred by professionals. Their survivor is then supported via an Integrated Survivor Specialist Service. CLEAR is one part of a range of interventions that are available, such as Domestic Violence/Domestic Abuse Perpetrator programmes which are offered in a community setting or by the Probation Service. The aim specifically of CLEAR is to intervene as early as possible to prevent further harm from being inflicted. A review of the Change That Lasts model in 2020 found that staff reported that men who were on CLEAR were motivated to change, and those who had completed the course reported that both they and their partner saw improvement³⁵. When there were individuals who were deemed very high harm, they would also be referred to other processes such as a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). The Change That Lasts model represents a cultural shift for specialist services regarding the relationship between survivor and perpetrator work, as connecting the two allows perpetrators to take responsibility for and address their behaviour, without putting the responsibility on survivors³⁶.

We welcome the UK Governments plan to have tougher management of the most dangerous abusers and investment in perpetrator intervention³⁷, and believe that changes in behaviour can improve the safety, health and wellbeing of women and children who have been affected by abuse and violence. However, as it stands less than 1% of perpetrators are receiving specialist intervention that may help prevent future abusive behaviour and those deemed lower risk are even less likely to be offered an intervention³⁸. Whilst the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 legislates a commitment to improve prevention, protection and support for those affected by gender-based violence³⁹, and a specific tackling perpetration workstream⁴⁰, there still needs to be increased data collection to enable findings of best practice, perpetrator programmes that are

³⁴ See here for more information on these 3 areas: <https://welshwomensaid.org.uk/change-that-lasts/>

³⁵ <https://welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Change-That-Lasts-Evaluation-Final.pdf>, page 2.

³⁶ *ibid*, page 46.

³⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/domestic-abusers-face-crackdown-in-raft-of-new-measures>.

³⁸ <http://driveproject.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Call-to-Action-Final.pdf>, page 1.

³⁹ Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015, Section 1.

⁴⁰ <https://www.gov.wales/violence-against-women-domestic-abuse-and-sexual-violence-blueprint-high-level-action-plan-html#119915>.

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responsive to the cultural context that they are delivered in, and clearer pathways into perpetrator interventions⁴¹.

We strongly believe that there must also be a strong focus on early intervention and prevention and the recognition that VAWDASV is not inevitable and does not have to happen. Whilst we believe that adequate sustainable funding of perpetrator work is essential, this must coincide with increased funding and focus on preventing abuse and violence, at the same time as stopping violent men from continuing to abuse⁴². Ensuring that both survivors and perpetrators get the interventions they need at the earliest opportunity reduces the enormous cost, in human and financial terms, of not listening to survivors and not responding to their needs⁴³.

To what extent is there evidence that escalating behaviours is a particular problem within the emergency services and other public sector organisations?

Within the last few years there has been a storm of institutions and organisations that have had significant concerns raised about internal misogyny, sexual harassment, and discrimination. Alongside this there has been increased reports of police perpetrated abuse with high profile cases such as Sarah Everard and David Carrick coming to light. A super-complaint by the Centre for Women's Justice highlighted the failures such as intimidation to deter women from reporting abuse, failure to obtain evidence, dishonest manipulation by the perpetrator and incorrect approaches to misconduct investigations and decisions⁴⁴. Significant concerns were also raised regarding officers who were believed to be perpetrators of abuse continuing to work in public protection roles, which would involve them working closely with vulnerable victims of abuse and violence⁴⁵.

The timeline of David Carrick's offending history⁴⁶ highlights that he had been able to join the Metropolitan Police despite being a suspect in malicious crimes against a former partner, had been accused of harassment and assault against a former partner, had been part of a domestic incident where the police responded and was accused of assaulting a woman. If further measures were in place, as suggested by the Centre for Women's Justice in their super-complaint⁴⁷, it is likely that he

⁴¹ <http://driveproject.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Call-to-Action-Final.pdf>.

⁴² <https://welshwomensaid.org.uk/news/working-with-perpetrators-of-domestic-abuse-and-the-drive-project/>.

⁴³ <https://welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CTL-Sarahs-Journey.pdf>.

⁴⁴ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5aa98420f2e6b1ba0c874e42/t/5e65fd0ba29cd069c4f3ca3c/1583742221663/super-complaint2+report.FINAL.pdf>.

⁴⁵ *ibid*, page 3.

⁴⁶ <https://www.centreforwomensjustice.org.uk/news/2023/1/27/police-perpetrated-domestic-abuse-super-complaint-how-the-police-will-improve-their-response-to-ppda-allegations/>

⁴⁷ Such as allegations taken into account at recruitment stage, investigation by an external police force with IOPC oversight and re-vetting in job role change.

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would have been stopped from causing more harm sooner. We strongly urge the UK Government to implement the recommendations highlighted in this report and to learn from the findings of the upcoming Angiolini Inquiry⁴⁸.

A freedom of information data analysis by Refuge highlighted that police forces are failing women and girls over the handling of police misconduct cases. Within a 1-year period there were 1,124 cases⁴⁹ of VAWG related misconduct or gross conduct and only 24% police officers and staff accused were suspended pending the outcome of an investigation⁵⁰. Current guidance states that officers would not be suspended from duty unless it is in the interest of an effective investigation or public interest; officers could also be moved roles⁵¹. We strongly believe that any officer accused of violence against women and girls must be automatically suspended and not considered for an alternative role. This is crucial in order to protect women and girls from harm and those who could perpetrate against them. There must be a national policy to ensure consistency, and without this the discretion of each police force allows for there to be a post-code lottery of officers under investigation who are able to continue with their duty. Alongside suspension from duty, officers must have all access to police resources, equipment, uniform, and systems removed⁵².

There have also been significant concerns raised within Gwent Police⁵³, of a culture of misogyny, racism and bullying and allegations of abusive behaviour within South Wales Fire and Rescue Service⁵⁴. The prevalence of VAWG is not just within the police and emergency services but is also a widespread issue across public sector organisations. Welsh Rugby Union, the governing body of rugby union in Wales, has also been facing allegations of sexism and discrimination⁵⁵. All 3 of these organisations will be having an independent review and it is fundamental that a complete culture change is initiated which places respect for women as a top priority, as everyone has the right to feel safe in their workplace. Organisations must have robust policies in place and there must be institutional reform to ensure that abuse is not trivialised. Information shared on Wayne Couzens highlighted that he was nicknamed the 'rapist' and instead of raising concerns about his demeanour, his colleagues minimised the meaning of 'rapist' and did not see or report the seriousness of this.

⁴⁸ <https://www.angiolini.independent-inquiry.uk/>.

⁴⁹ Of 26 police forces in England and Wales who provided data in response to the FOI request.

⁵⁰ https://refuge.org.uk/news/rremove-the-rot-refuge-investigation-uncovers-magnitude-of-police-forces-failure-to-tackle-violent-misogyny-by-police-officers-and-staff/?utm_source=Social+Media&utm_medium=Twitter&utm_campaign=Policing.

⁵¹ The Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020, Part 1, 11.

⁵² https://refuge.org.uk/news/rremove-the-rot-refuge-investigation-uncovers-magnitude-of-police-forces-failure-to-tackle-violent-misogyny-by-police-officers-and-staff/?utm_source=Social+Media&utm_medium=Twitter&utm_campaign=Policing.

⁵³ <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/how-a-dead-officers-iphone-exposes-misogyny-corruption-and-racism-in-a-police-force-snx6qhrzm>.

⁵⁴ <https://www.itv.com/news/2022-12-12/south-wales-fire-service-faces-independent-review-into-abusive-behaviour>.

⁵⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2023/jan/23/welsh-rugby-union-wru-facing-allegations-sexism-discrimination-bbc-investigation>.

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

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There are huge concerns that there is a lack of recognition that behaviour of an abusive, violent and sexual nature is inappropriate and that it not seen as misconduct. We believe that there must be explicit organisational policies which clearly do not accept misogyny at all levels, and that highlight the connection between "low level misogyny" and not recognising inappropriate behaviour as raising concerns on the integrity of an individual.

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