



Cymorth i Ferched Cymru
Welsh Women's Aid

Achieving Lasting Change

Welsh Women's Aid
5 Year Strategy
2024 - 2029



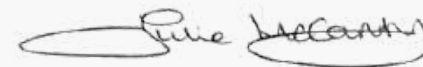
Foreword

We are delighted to be able to share with you the new strategy for Welsh Women's Aid. Finding new ways to address our core mission of ending Violence Against Women and Girls in Wales once and for all is no easy task, and we have been impressed by the collaboration and commitment from WWA staff, members and stakeholders in getting us to this stage. At a time of pressure on public sector funding, it is more important than ever that the specialist sector in Wales has a strong voice both in the Senedd and in Westminster, and this latest strategy reaffirms our commitment to that representation and support for our frontline experts.

While the specific words in our strategy may change, our fundamental ambitions remain constant, rooted in our feminist values and belief that every Survivor should be able to access excellent services which respond to their needs and circumstances, and work with them in a strengths-based, needs led, trauma-informed way. One day, perhaps, such services will be redundant, but until then, WWA will continue to make the case for a comprehensive cohesive whole system response to VAWDASV to achieve Change That Lasts.



Kirsty Palmer, Outgoing Chair



Julie McCarthy, Incoming Chair





Who we are

Welsh Women's Aid is the national charity in Wales working to end violence against women and girls in all its forms. We are the umbrella body for independent third sector violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence specialist services. We support 21 specialist organisations in Wales that provide life-saving services.

We support the evidence-based view that violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence is a cause and consequence of the unequal position of women and girls in society. It is a violation of human rights and is entirely preventable.

We work in partnership with Women's Aid England, Women's Aid Northern Ireland and Scottish Women's Aid to drive collective action and take a strong four federation approach to our mission.

Our achievements

We recognise that there is still a long way to go to achieve a world in which women and children live free from violence and abuse, but we have made progress. Our impact across the 45 years since Welsh Women's Aid was founded, can be seen in legislation provision and commitment across our nation. We will continue to publish annual impact reports, and measure our progress towards the goal of achieving independence and freedom for all, ensuring all are safe to pursue their human rights, and can actively participate in society and flourish.

We are a feminist organisation, our values are founded on commitments to human rights, anti-discrimination and freedom from oppression.

Strategy context and outlook

Violence against women, particularly domestic abuse and sexual violence is described by the World Health Organisation as major global public health concern of epidemic proportions.¹

In 2023 - 2024 our member services supported 739 survivors in Wales within refuge accommodation, however there were 712 survivors who were unable to access refuge-based support.³ Referrals into community-based services peaked and have levelled but are still 17.8% higher than pre-pandemic levels.³ In a recent membership poll 70% stated that they had experienced increased demand for services based on the previous financial year. In addition, the Live Fear Free Helpline, which is Welsh Government funded and operated by Welsh Women's Aid, has seen year-on-year increase in demand. In 2023 - 2024 there was a 33% increase in the number of emails to the Helpline and a 43% increase in texts. Recent quarterly data from the helpline highlights that the average length of call increased by 62% which suggests that the level of complexity of support is also increasing.³

In 2020 we set out a blueprint for the prevention VAWDASV.⁴ It requires the implementation of three types of prevention interventions: primary, secondary, and tertiary in a consistent and coordinated way. Addressing violence against women includes not only supporting survivors but also challenging and dismantling the structural inequalities that perpetuate it. This evidence-based approach underpins our strategic ambitions.

It is estimated that around 3 million women across the UK experience rape, domestic violence, forced marriage, stalking, sexual exploitation, trafficking and other forms of violence every year.²

This is the equivalent to the population of Wales.

1 [Violence against women: a 'global health problem of epidemic proportions' \(who.int\)](#)

2 [Ending violence against women. From words to action. Study of the Secretary-General. 2006](#)

3 [State of the Sector 2023-24 - ENG \(welshwomensaid.org.uk\)](#)

4 [A-Blueprint-for-the-Prevention-of-VAWDASV.pdf \(welshwomensaid.org.uk\)](#)

Primary Prevention

Aims to stop violence before it occurs.

Changing attitudes and behaviour and/or building the knowledge and skills of individuals.
Challenging and reforming structures, practices, and social norms present within relationships, communities, organisations / institutions and society more broadly.

Secondary Prevention

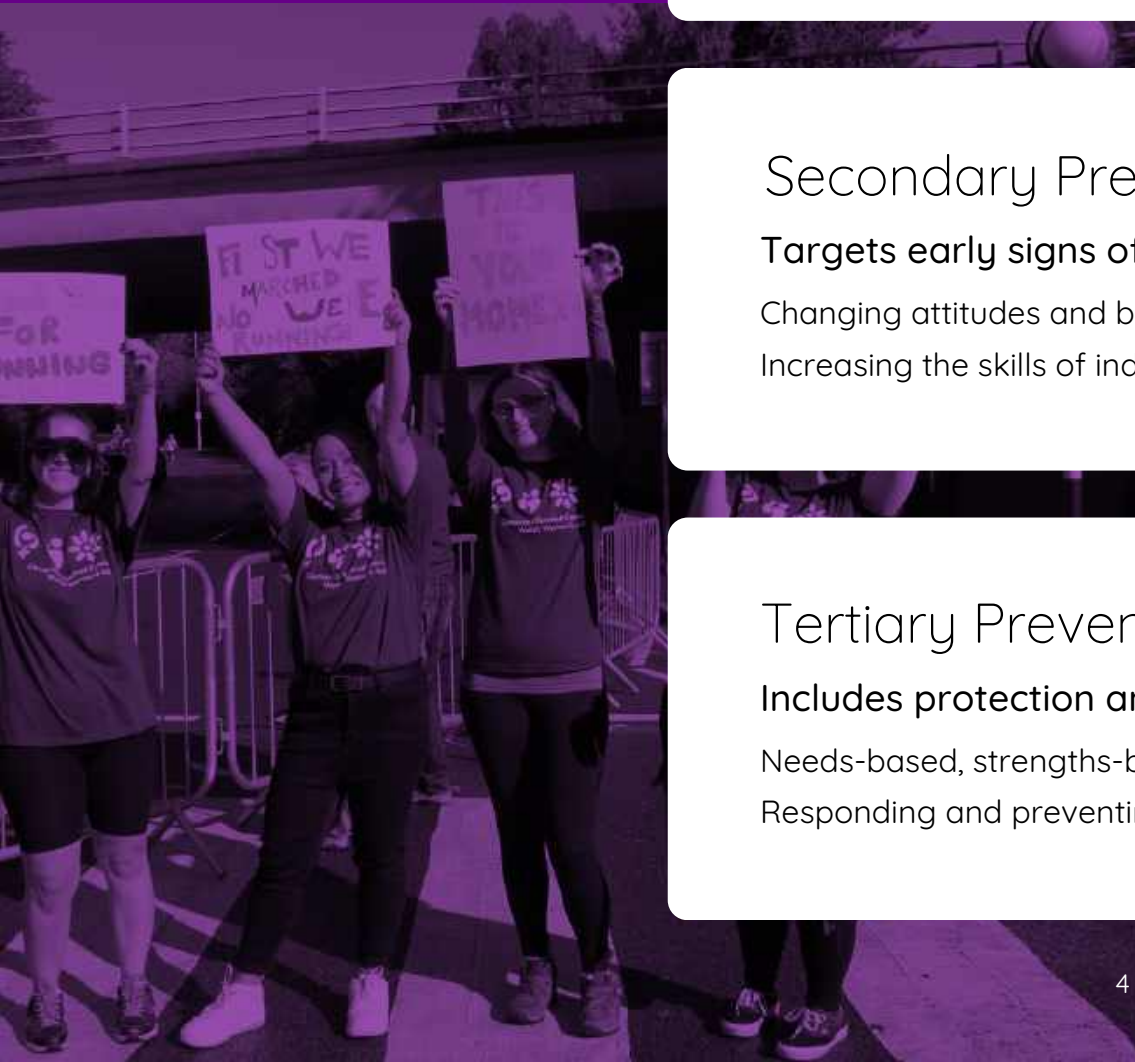
Targets early signs of perpetration or experiencing VAWDASV.

Changing attitudes and behaviours of individuals.
Increasing the skills of individuals and groups.

Tertiary Prevention

Includes protection and support following the occurrence of VAWDASV.

Needs-based, strengths-based trauma informed support.
Responding and preventing reoccurrence, escalation and harmful consequences.





Who informed our strategy?

This strategy has been developed through interaction, listening and reflection.

We tested our ambitions with our staff, our members and survivors of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence before they were finalised. They are as much their ambitions as they are ours. It was important to us that these ambitions resonated and are supported because together we will create change.

How we informed our strategy?

In order to achieve the change that we want to see for survivors across Wales, we established a Theory of Change which looks at how we can live in a world in which women and children live free from violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Our theory of change

Understanding the problem



All forms of VAWDASV are rooted in and are expressions of unequal gender relations in society.

Attitudes and beliefs which condone and/or normalise VAWDASV are shaped by structures, practices and social norms which perpetuate gender and intersecting inequalities.

Solution



Primary prevention strategies aimed at stopping violence before it occurs.

Secondary prevention targets early signs of perpetration and experiences of VAWDASV.

Tertiary prevention includes the support, treatment and protection provided to people who have experienced VAWDASV after it has occurred.

Outcome



A world in which women and children live free from domestic abuse and other forms of violence and abuse.

With these steps in mind, Welsh Women's Aid believe that we can achieve a world that is safe for everyone.

Action



Preventing VAWDASV from happening in the first place.

Influencing change to end all forms of VAWDASV.

Enabling our membership to deliver a sustainable, effective and intersectional response to VAWDASV.

Leading collaboration and partnership that benefits the sector and survivors of VAWDASV.

Our ambitions

“As in health, so in crime - prevention is better than cure” - Ash Sarkar

Tackling the root causes of VAWDASV requires working with individuals, families, communities, and organisations to foster a culture of equality and respect.

Through the development of this strategy people and organisations have told us that there is not enough focus on prevention, we want to change that.

- We will build a movement which shares our vision to create a society free from violence against women and girls, where women and children can reach their full potential.
- We will ensure that the best models of prevention are not only well understood but are implemented through targeted investment that complements funding for vital service provision.
- We will challenge the cultural, social and structural norms and attitudes that enable violence against women and girls.
- We will inform and guide public bodies, commissioners and others on an effective whole societal approach to create Change That Lasts.

1

Preventing VAWDASV from happening in the first place.



2

Influencing change.



Our ambitions

“The secret of change is to focus all of your energy not on fighting the old, but on building the new.” - Socrates

Driving innovation and influencing systems change to end all forms of Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

- We will set the agenda for change in Wales and hold ourselves and others to account for delivering action.
- We will create an outstanding research and innovation system that transforms thinking, services and lives.
- We will build effective relationships to influence the right people, at the right time, in the right place to create change.
- Through our members' expertise and our survivor network's lived experience, we will ensure that decision-making is informed by evidence.
- We will advocate for sustainable predictable funding which recognises the needs of all service users, including children and young people.

Our ambitions

“Alone we can do so little yet together we can do so much.” - Helen Keller

Our members are at the heart of our work.

They deliver incredible and life-saving support to survivors of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence every day. To support our members we will focus our attention on being a trusted, enabling and go-to organisation.

- We will build a membership offer that creates value for all. We will develop mission-based working across the membership in Wales through the development of a membership strategy.
- We will build on our activities to strengthen the workforce of our membership through training, development and capacity building.
- We will link our member services to research enabling them to ensure access to cutting edge tools, theories and practices to enhance service provision.
- We will support our members in developing sustainable recruitment and retention models.
- We will work alongside our membership to ensure that services are designed to respond to intersecting oppressions.
- We will support members to achieve the National Quality Service Standard and other VAWDASV specific accreditations to evidence the quality of their services.

3

Enabling our membership to deliver a sustainable, effective and intersectional response to VAWDASV.



4

Leading collaboration.

Our ambitions

“the best partnerships aren’t dependent on a mere common goal but on a shared path of equality, desire, and no small amount of passion” - Sarah Maclean

Using our national position to proactively lead collaboration and partnership that benefits the sector and all survivors of VAWDASV.

Preventing VAWDASV and ensuring that victims and survivors of abuse receive timely and appropriate services to aid recovery requires significant coordination and collaboration. No one can do this alone. We will use our national position to better align existing action, drive new partnerships and create a clear call to action where there are gaps to ensure the fight to end VAWDASV is achieved.

- We will champion a shared understanding of a whole-systems approach, ensuring that resource and investment is maximised.
- We will increase education and understanding of the critical need for collective and coordinated partnerships to eradicate all forms of VAWDASV.
- We will use data to identify and aim to address critical gaps in services and knowledge across Wales.
- We will connect organisations and groups to share evidence-based best practice, to promote effective evaluated practice and help to nurture a learning culture across Wales.
- We will nurture partnerships with organisations and statutory bodies outside of Wales to ensure that the Welsh context is understood and considered in planning and decision making that affects the safety of women and children in Wales.



Strategic enablers

To maintain a strong foundation to support the execution of our ambitions we want to invest time in the following strategic enablers. They are not strategic goals themselves, but we recognise them as fundamental to the success of this strategy. We will monitor and track our performance in these areas, as well as progress against our ambitions.



- **Financial sustainability** which doesn't compete or disenfranchise our membership.



- **Digital innovation** that enhances our outputs and relationships.



- An **intersectional approach** that is truly embedded across our organisation and in all that we do.



- **People and culture** – ensuring that we attract, retain and develop the best talent and expertise.



- Driving and coordinating **collective action** recognising that we are stronger together.



- Supporting and **involving** our member services to highlight their expertise and increase their influence and impact.



- **Grow** our survivor network to ensure that the voices of those with lived experience of all forms VAWDASV, including those who are often marginalised, are at the heart of public-sector and government decision-making in order to achieve an intersectional, anti-racist and inclusive approach.



The difference we will make

By 2029 we will know if we've achieved our ambitions if...

1 Preventing VAWDASV

We have a built a movement of members and supporters who share our vision.

All areas in Wales are using a Whole Societal Approach.

90% of individuals undertaking training have increased understanding of VAWDASV and know how to respond effectively.

2 Influencing change

National policy is in place that reflects our campaigns, influence, and agenda to eradicate VAWDASV.

90% of women within the Survivor Network believe their voices are heard and they are influencing change.

We have delivered 10 new pieces of research.

3 Enabling our membership

80% of our membership believe that we are exceeding expectations.

There is sustainable and predicable funding for all specialist independent VAWDASV services.

We have implemented a digital tool that delivers value to our membership.

4 Leading collaboration

We are recognised as the 'go-to' organisation in Wales for advice and support on VAWDASV statutory agencies routinely ask us to work alongside them.

We can evidence coordinated community responses to tackling VAWDASV.

The context in Wales is understood and considered in planning and decision-making affecting women and children's safety.



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Putting Women & Children First