

ANNUAL PLAN

National Adviser for tackling Violence against Women, other forms of Gender based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence

April 1st 2016 – March 31st 2017

NATIONAL ADVISER RHIAN BOWEN-DAVIES

INTRODUCTION

My name is Rhian Bowen-Davies and this is my first Annual Plan as National Adviser for Violence against Women, other forms of Gender based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.

This plan sets out my objectives and priorities for 2016/17 and outlines the key principles by which I shall undertake the duties and responsibilities of the role.

The appointment of the National Adviser, the first role of its kind in the UK, is required by the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 (The Act).

This ground breaking legislation provides the strategic framework to improve arrangements for the prevention, protection and support of those affected by all forms of Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.

The Act applies to **all individuals**, recognising that anybody can experience gender based violence irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or religion. We cannot however, ignore the disproportionate impact and effect of gender based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence on women and girls.

Violence against Women and other forms of gender based violence are violations of human rights and persist in our society as a cause and consequence of continued gendered inequalities. Achieving gender equality within a wider human rights framework is integral to improving the arrangements for the protection, prevention and support for all individuals experiencing any form of gender based violence.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Over the course of my term as Adviser my challenge, ultimately, is to contribute to long lasting change in the prevention, protection and support for all individuals experiencing any form of gender based violence.

The current national context in relation to inequalities and gender based violence affords a unique opportunity to pursue the elements set out in this Plan. Alongside the Act, the following national developments are integral to achieving my vision:

- The Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2015 provide a unique opportunity for me to integrate the purpose and requirements of the Act within the wider legislative context; embedding Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence as a key strategic priority in determining the well-being of our Nation.
- The recently published Equality and Human Rights Commission's Report "Is Wales Fairer? – The state of equality and human rights 2015" identifies the elimination of violence, abuse and harassment in the community as a key equality and human rights challenge for Wales. The report aims to inform the priorities of the Welsh Government and devolved public authorities when setting Equality Objectives for 2016-20 in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

UK legislative developments strengthen further the purpose of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act in particular those contained within the Serious Crime Act 2015

- Sections 70 – 75 introducing new offences relating to Female Genital Mutilation, protection orders and a mandatory duty to report to the police
- Section 76 which came into force on December 29th 2015 introduces an offence of “Controlling or Coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship”. This offence recognises the reality of domestic abuse for victims; a continuous and repeated pattern of controlling behaviours which have a cumulative impact on an individual’s day to day life causing fear, isolation and distress.

I will endeavour to inform and influence the implementation of these national developments that I believe, alongside the Act, provide a framework that can truly strengthen and improve policy and practice.

This annual plan covers a year in which Assembly Elections will take place. Regardless of the political landscape post May 2016, the Act provides a world leading and long term commitment to improving arrangements for the prevention, protection and support of individuals experiencing any form of gender based violence and I will work alongside the Ministers of the next Assembly term to ensure that the momentum and focus of the legislation is continued.

To deliver real change it is crucial for me to work alongside organisations whose functions are both devolved and non-devolved.

I am acutely aware that my vision and commitment to deliver real improvements for individuals and families who are experiencing any form of gender based violence aligns with significant challenges for our Public and Voluntary sectors. Within my term of office the face of public services in Wales could look very different and I will work alongside leaders of Public Services to ensure that Violence against Women and other forms of Gender Based Violence continue as a strategic priority. With further pressures on public sector budgets forecast I will evidence the cost benefit of effective early intervention and support services and encourage appropriate statutory investment to deliver long term societal cost savings. The cost of getting it wrong in just one instance significantly outweighs investment and resourcing of effective early intervention and prevention.

The Act and subsequent provisions of statutory guidance will increase the early identification of individuals and families and subsequently increase demand on services Wales-wide. It is imperative that individuals, wherever they are in Wales, can access high quality service provision responsive to their needs. It is unacceptable for individuals to face a postcode lottery for quality, needs-led, evidence based service provision that can support positive, lasting outcomes.

The challenge: to use my role to promote awareness of key issues at a strategic level and to work alongside commissioners, service providers and survivors to enable new and innovative thinking about service delivery, collaboration and approaches to early intervention and prevention in order to uphold and enforce peoples’ right to be safe.

My vision and overall aim: through joint endeavour to ensure that any individual (covered by the Act) who is abused, injured, violated, under threat or unsafe can expect and be confident that they will receive a timely, appropriate, consistent, quality and sustained response when this right has been compromised or is under threat.

THE ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE NATIONAL ADVISER

The National Adviser provides an independent, expert perspective to the work being taken forward in Wales; advising, shaping and informing legislative, strategy and policy developments and driving forward improvements in the prevention, protection and support for all individuals affected by violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence in Wales.

The functions of the Adviser are detailed in Section 21 of the Act;

The National Adviser is to exercise the following functions, subject to the direction of the Welsh Ministers

- a) To advise the Welsh Ministers about pursuing the purpose of this Act or tackling related matters*
- b) To give other assistance to the Welsh Ministers in their pursuit of the purpose of this Act or tackling related matters*
- c) To undertake research relating to the purpose of this Act*
- d) To advise and give other assistance, with the agreement of the Ministers, to any persons on matters relating to pursuing the purpose of this Act or tackling related matters*
- e) Produce reports on any matter relating to the purpose of this Act or tackling related matters*

The legislation enables me to request information from relevant authorities for the purpose of exercising my role and review actions being taken by individuals and organisations to implement the Act and subsequent statutory guidance. I will report my findings of any such reviews to Welsh Ministers.

I will not shy away from challenging relevant authorities and others if the requirements of the legislation or statutory guidance are not being implemented however, my aim would be to work alongside any such authority or organisation to support improvements.

Requirements for the National Adviser to draft an Annual Plan are contained within the Act. The Annual Plan must set out how I propose to exercise the functions of the role during the following financial year. Section 22 (2) states that an Annual Plan must

- a) State the Ministerial Adviser's objectives and priorities for the financial year covered by the report*
- b) State any matters on which the Ministerial Adviser proposes to report during that year*
- c) State any other activities the National Adviser proposes to undertake during that year in the exercise of the National Adviser's functions.*

The legislation allows the National Adviser to consult with any persons in preparing the annual plan and for this, my first annual plan; I invited individuals, organisations and services to share their thoughts and priorities for inclusion. This invitation was extended via social media, written communications, attendance at events and through the numerous and diverse discussions that I have undertaken during these initial months.

In preparing my annual plan I have considered contributions from the Police and Police and Crime Commissioners, Fire and Rescue Services, Public Health Wales, Health Boards and NHS Trusts, Local Authorities, The Older People’s Commissioner, The Independent Police Complaints Commissioner, National and Local Voluntary Sector organisations, specialist Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence service providers and individual practitioners and Survivors. I have listened to what is important to them in shaping my objectives and priorities for 2016/17.

PRINCIPLES

Alongside the Nolan Principles for Public Life, 7 core principles will inform how I will carry out my duties and underpin the priorities and objectives I have set for this year:

Safety & Safeguarding	For me, the key principle that underpins the purpose of the legislation and my role is that of safeguarding; any child, young person or adult, at risk, or experiencing any form of violence against women, gender based violence, domestic abuse or sexual violence.
Leadership	I will provide visible, active leadership and a consistent, strategic focus for all forms of Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.
Enabling & Encouraging	I will work with and alongside Public Services and the Voluntary Sector to inform and influence change; making workable recommendations to improve the impact and effectiveness of services for individuals and families.
Early Intervention & Prevention	I will work alongside stakeholders to develop and promote an evidence base that demonstrates the impact and effectiveness of early intervention in reducing long term societal risks and financial costs
Collaboration & Integration	I will identify and support opportunities nationally, regionally and locally to mainstream Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence as “core business” and facilitate innovative, creative ways of working together.
Consultation & engagement	I will ensure there are opportunities for stakeholders and survivors to inform and shape policy and service delivery. I will continuously seek to listen, comprehend and respond to their experiences, needs, challenges and aspirations.
Promoting learning & excellence	I will provide a strategic platform to ensure that good practice and learning is disseminated and used to support improvements that enable service providers and commissioners to achieve the highest possible standards.

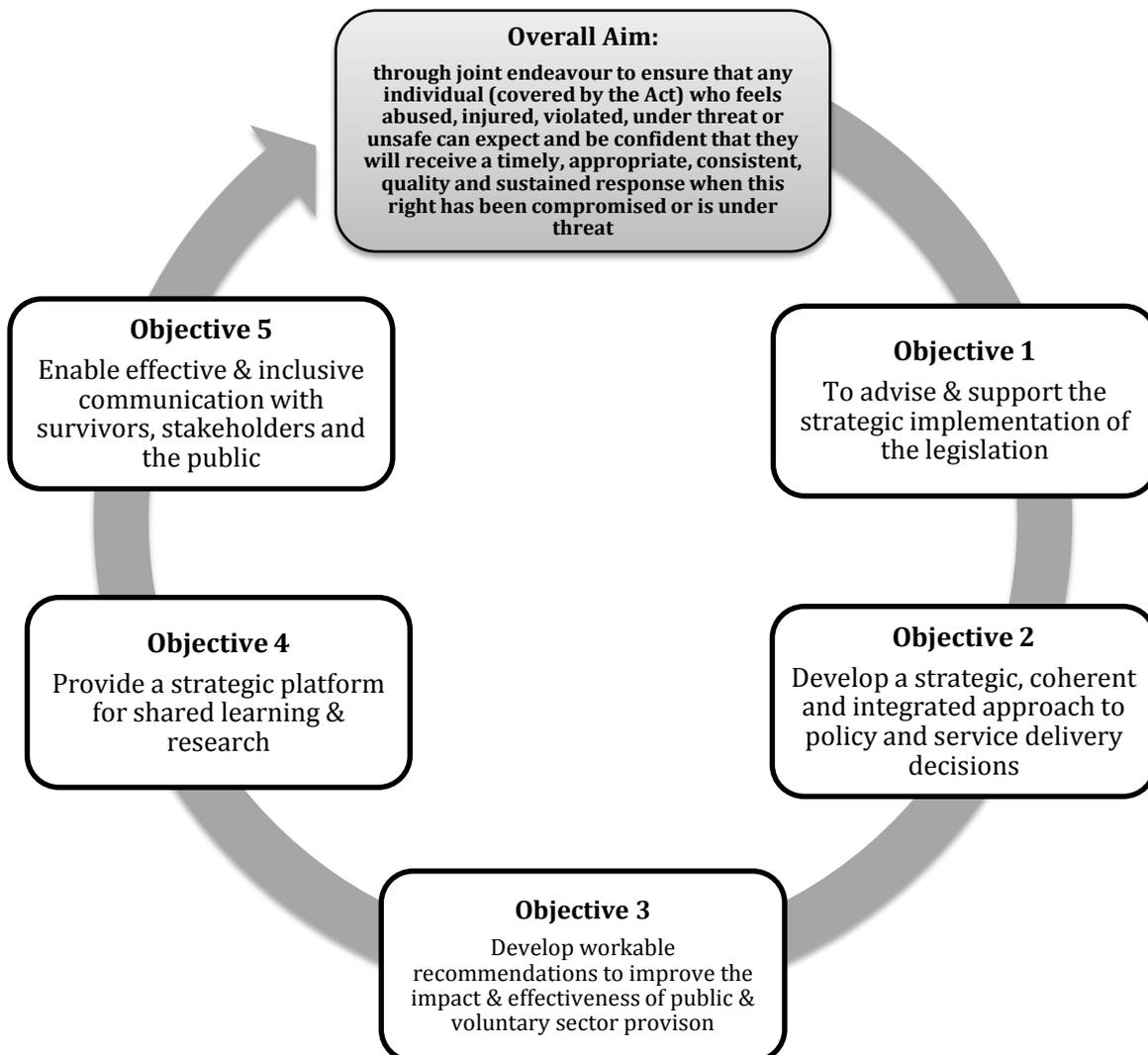
Objectives and priorities 2016/2017

As National Adviser, my work will be driven by the objectives and priorities contained within this plan.

The priorities state the focus for this financial year whilst the objectives provide a longer term framework for my work. The objectives that underpin my priorities are inter-related and should be viewed as a whole. The diagram illustrates this connectivity which is further explored in this section.

The requirement to produce an annual plan provides an opportunity for on-going reflection, enabling my in-year priorities to be influenced and informed by progress, developments and learning. My plan needs to be dynamic and an action research approach enables me to remain flexible and responsive to change whilst retaining the focus and clarity to work towards my overall aim.

Overall Aim and Objectives



The Objectives and Priorities

OBJECTIVE 1

- To advise and support the strategic implementation of the legislation

Reference framework →

The Act aims to ensure a consistent consideration of Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence as a strategic priority.

The development of a National Strategy will be progressed in 2016 along with the development of National Indicators which should clearly articulate progress and contribute to wider indicators and outcomes.

Although providing a focus on Violence against Women, the Act ensures that provisions for the prevention, protection and support extends to all victims of gender based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation or religion.

To ensure greater understanding of the scope of the legislation there is a need to raise awareness of all forms of violence against women and gender based violence as defined by the legislation; sexual violence including rape, sexual harassment and exploitation, forced marriage, so called Honour Based Violence, Female Genital Mutilation and Domestic Abuse.

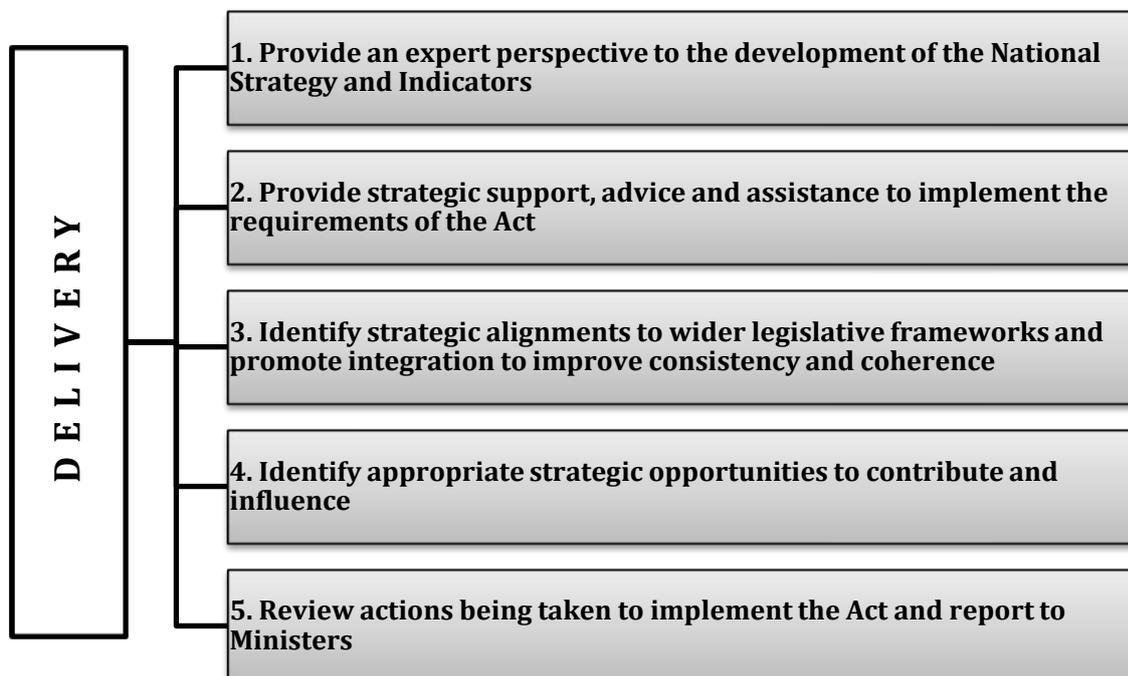
The legislation requires relevant authorities to prepare, publish and implement joint local strategies for Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence. Such strategies should be informed by local / regional needs assessments which demonstrate an understanding of demand and analysis of gaps in service provision for all forms of Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.

Relevant authorities are also required to comply with statutory guidance issued in line with Section 15 of the Act. Statutory guidance will be issued in relation to the National Training Framework, Effective Multi Agency Collaboration, Ask and Act, the commissioning of services and work related to perpetrators.

“Successful Futures”, Professor Donaldson’s report provides the foundation for a twenty-first century curriculum and “Qualified for Life; A curriculum for Wales – A curriculum for life” sets out the steps that will be taken to achieve the first “made in Wales” curriculum.

I will monitor the progress of education provisions; both the requirements contained within the Act and wider actions. I will influence, inform and advise on such matters to ensure that the commitments articulated during the progress of the Act are implemented and that further opportunities to influence and integrate gender based violence and healthy relationships into the new curriculum framework are identified and explored; ensuring that all children and young people are healthy, confident individuals who form positive relationships based upon trust and mutual respect.

To deliver this objective I will focus on the following priorities:



OBJECTIVE 2

•Develop a strategic, coherent and integrated approach to policy and service delivery decisions

Reference framework →

To enable Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence to be consistently considered as a strategic priority its governance and accountability, at all levels, must be robust and integrated within strategic frameworks.

Consistent strategic information to inform decisions is required. It is a complex task to ensure that all disciplines (education, health, criminal justice, housing and social care) link together on a strategic and practice level and collaborate effectively where necessary. It is crucial that this area is tackled and progressed at a policy making, strategic level in order that services can be integrated and seamless at the point of delivery and from the point of view of service users.

Operating in isolation is not an option particularly given the current opportunities for real alignment and integration across sectors afforded by the legislation referred to earlier.

Across Wales, commissioning and funding of interventions and support services are inconsistent and preventative responses tend to be under resourced and variable across localities. Different principles and approaches to commissioning are being applied depending on the commissioning party with different outcomes being sought. This has inevitably resulted in an over-reliance by service providers on specific funding programmes which due to funding eligibility criterion end up restricting opportunities for innovation and service development. Many services continue to be funded on a year by year basis impacting on forward planning, the

ability of service providers to be innovative and creative and ultimately the sustainability of support providers.

There is an overwhelming need to review existing funding arrangements nationally, regionally and locally for all forms of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence and to advise on the feasibility of a sustainable funding model and opportunities to pool statutory resources and jointly commission services to improve outcomes for individuals and families.

Where commissioning of services is chosen as the preferred option to distribute resources the process should be compliant with all legislative and regulatory requirements including the most recent changes to EU procurement regulations and the EU Victims Directive, in force since November 2015. In addition such processes need to be effectively executed, skilfully administered as well as being fair, transparent and accountable.

Commissioning for any violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence service should be informed by survivors and specialist knowledge and be underpinned by a needs assessment demonstrating the current and potential demand for services and an analysis of gaps in provision whilst fully considering the duties imposed by the gender equality duty.

To deliver this objective I will focus on the following priorities



OBJECTIVE 3

- Develop workable recommendations to improve the impact and effectiveness of public and voluntary service provision

Reference framework →

Services to need be inclusive, accessible, high quality and value for money. In order to achieve this:

- Service providers need not to be hidebound and limited by short term funding arrangements and variable commissioning systems
- Service providers need to be encouraged to be innovative and creative within the context of accurate, well researched information in respect of local assessments of need and service gaps without being constrained by different types of funding regimes
- Wales has a wealth of expertise in terms of support provision and commissioning practices. We need to develop a culture where learning and good practice is shared and extended so that excellence can become the norm
- Taking risks is key to innovation and developing new models of provision and this aspect needs to be fostered and encouraged within patterns of commissioning.
- If prevention is to become embedded within core practice commissioners and policy makers will need to develop new ways of measuring the short and long term value of such approaches beyond annual outcome reporting systems and short term funding regimes
- In terms of achieving long term change it will also be necessary to consider approaches to perpetrators and to source models of good practice that are capable of altering patterns of behaviour and where safety and safeguarding are prioritised
- The geographical landscape of Wales, the rich cultural diversity along with the range and size of settlements and communities requires a flexible, locality sensitive response. A variety of service models and approaches are essential to respond fully to Welsh citizens regardless of where they live. It is clear that a one-size fits all approach will not be sufficient.

It is clear that a pluralist response is required to meet diverse demand. No group covered in the legislation (Violence against Women, other forms of Gender based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence) constitutes a homogenous group and therefore responses will need to be complex, sophisticated, diverse and locality sensitive to respond to the challenge and vision set out in the Statement of Intent.

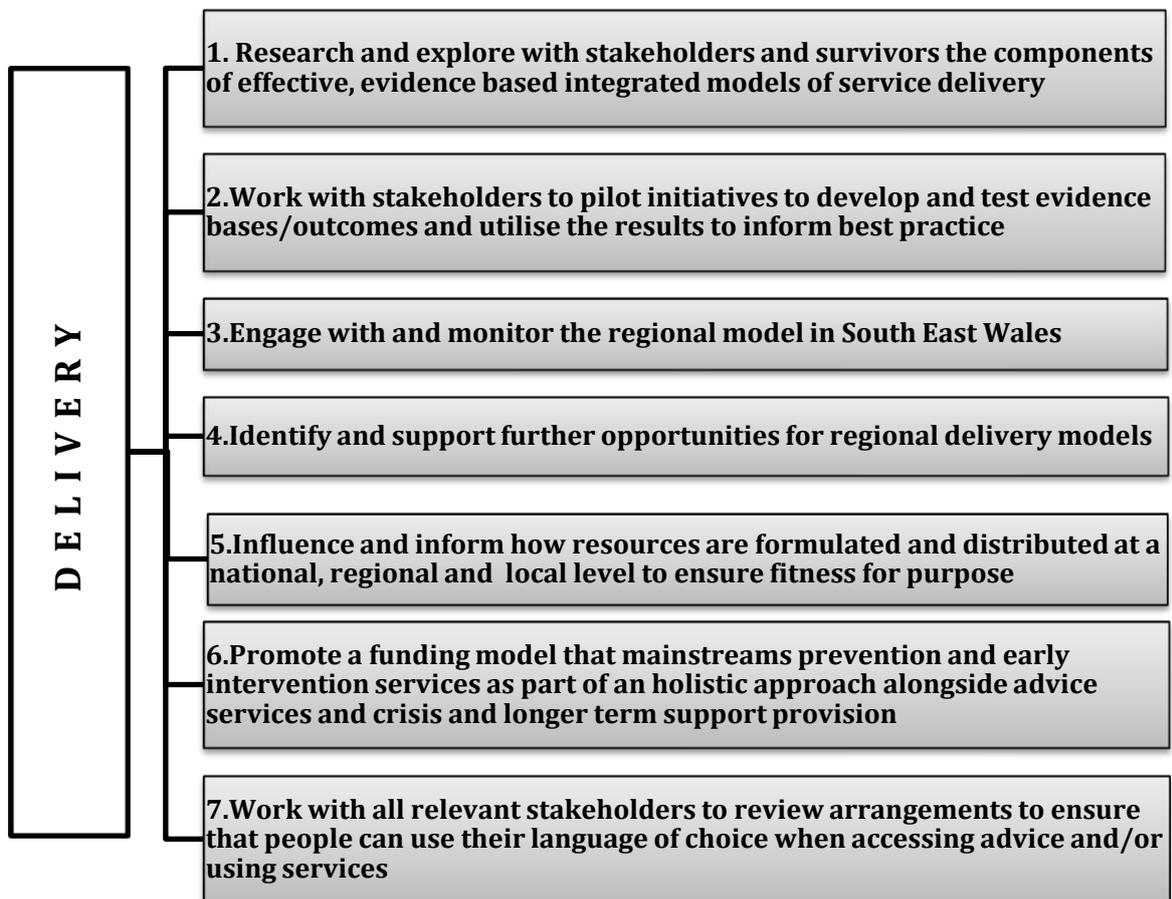
I am aware that intrinsic to the above is the question of resources and that this Annual Plan sits within a period of swinging cuts to public services. The reality is that funding for this area of work has to compete with other service priorities. Therefore it is imperative that the need for new services and the value of existing services is well argued and evidenced.

In such times and to embed gender based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence across all sectors it will also be necessary to scrutinise existing patterns of funding, commissioning and providing services. It will be essential to ask whether services could be funded and/or provided more effectively and to be prepared to change and adapt. In saying this I am well aware that voluntary sector providers and the public sector have a track record of responding and adapting to changing political and economic circumstances.

The regional model adopted in South East Wales during 2015/16 is an example of such a response and provides a platform for shared learning and supporting further regional models. The evolution of this model has required a significant shift from historic arrangements and the transition will continue to present challenges to existing thinking and approaches. If we are truly committed to improving arrangements for the prevention, protection and support of all individuals we must be radical and brave in our approach .

In many respects I think this objective is the most challenging and complex and also the most pressing because it is about front line services and the responses that are made to people at the time they are in need.

To deliver this objective I will focus on the following priorities



OBJECTIVE 4

- Provide a strategic platform for shared learning and research

Reference framework →

The preceding objectives and priorities outline the challenges and opportunities for change in order to deliver real improvements in the prevention, protection and support for individuals and families.

To enable service providers and commissioners to achieve the highest possible standards a culture of learning, challenge and change must be created whereby stakeholders support and encourage each other to explore and identify good practice.

A strategic platform to promote innovative practices, evidence based interventions and evaluations would encourage sharing of knowledge and continuous improvement across devolved and non- devolved services.

There are numerous innovative practices and interventions currently underway in Wales and the strategic platform would enable greater sharing of knowledge and learning to inform practice and service improvements from these Wales based practices and beyond.

Where reviews have been undertaken there is an absence of a platform where recommendations and learning can be shared.

There continue to be gaps in our knowledge and understanding relating to diverse needs of individuals experiencing gender based violence and as a result, appropriate responses and interventions to inform an evidence base. A strategic platform would provide an arena for research to be shared and for interventions to be tested.

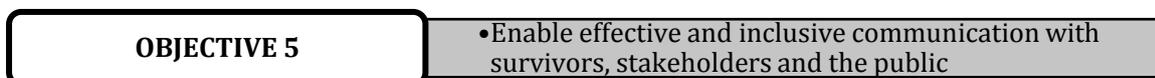
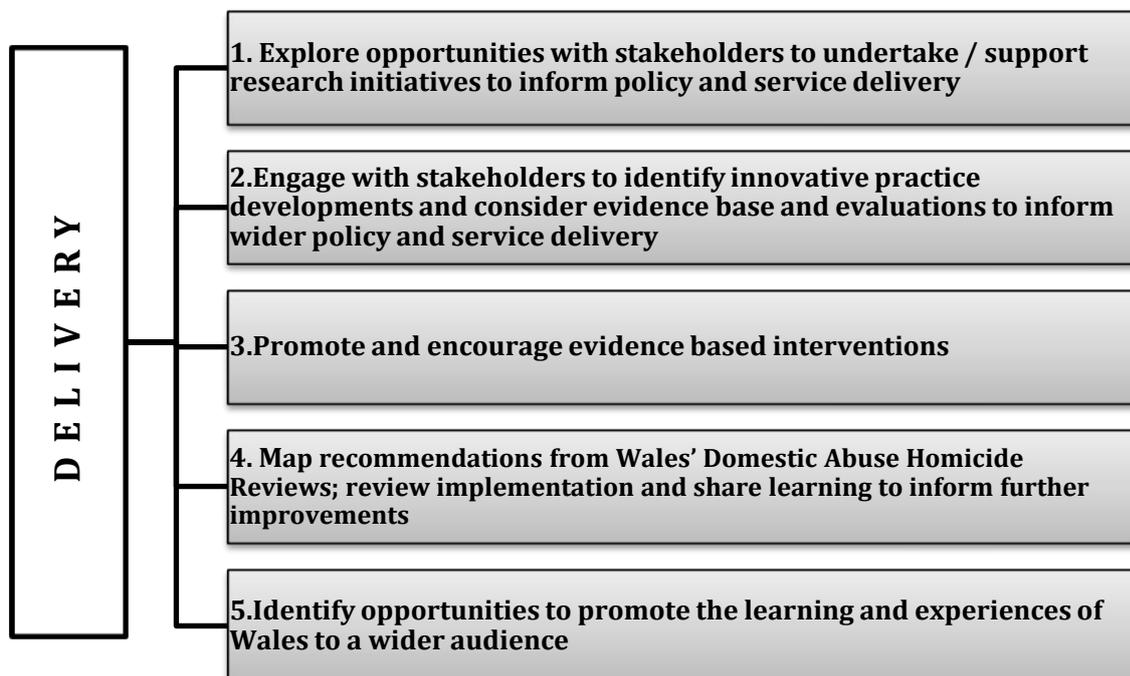
The following areas for further research were highlighted by respondents

- What are the components of an effective **integrated community model**?
- What is the evidence base for effective **recovery programmes**?

A greater understanding of the needs and the evidence based for effective interventions and models of support for the following groups;

- **Older people**
- **Children and young people as individuals - as victims and those demonstrating abusive behaviours**
- **Adolescent to parent violence**
- **Bi-directional violence**
- **Individuals who 'choose', feel they have no other options but to stay in an abusive relationship**
- **Stalking and Harassment**

To deliver this objective I will focus on the following priorities



Reference framework →

Survivors' experiences of protection and support arrangements are key to me understanding their needs, challenges and aspirations and should be integral to informing the development of the National Strategy and my work as Adviser.

There is currently no sustainable structure for engaging with survivors about what is important to them. Current survivor engagement is ad-hoc and tends to be responsive to an organisation or establishment's request for feedback or formal consultation. I wish to seek survivors' views on the development of a sustainable national framework for survivor engagement, where survivors are supported to shape the agenda, voice issues that are important to them and influence and inform practice improvements. Survivors from marginalised and under-represented groups including LGBT survivors, Black and Minority survivors, refugees, disabled individuals, women involved in the Criminal Justice System and adult survivors of child sexual abuse will be encouraged and supported to contribute their voices.

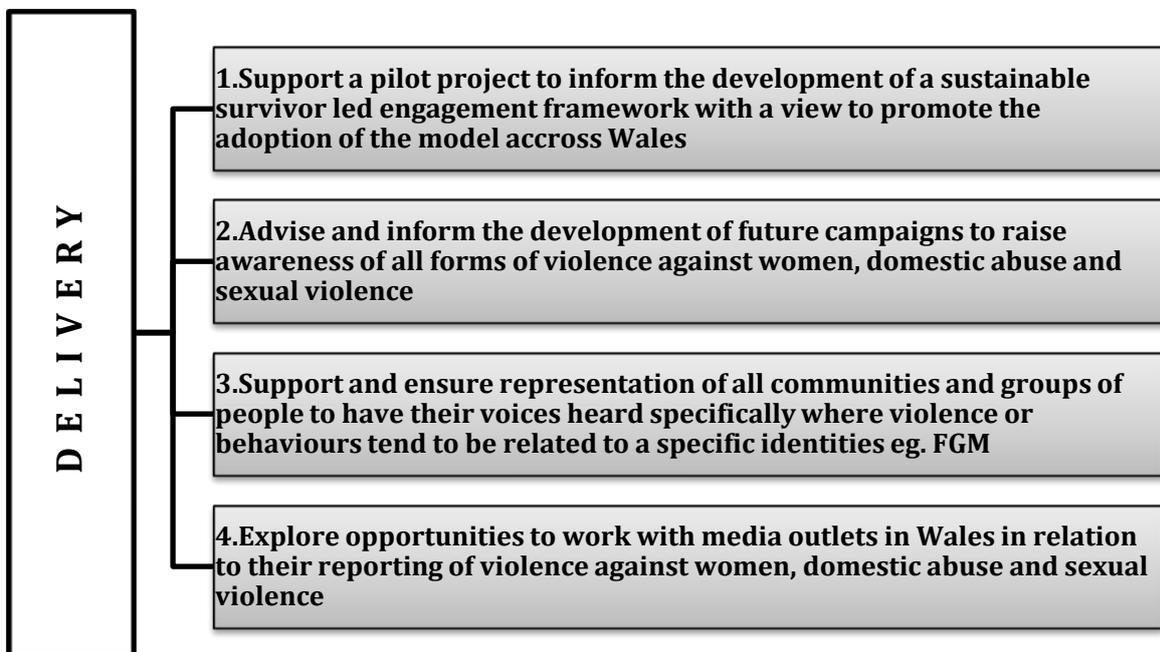
I will advise and inform the development of media campaigns relating to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. The use of targeted campaigns to raise awareness and influence attitudes and behaviours should be informed by survivors and stakeholders to ensure that experiences are accurately reflected and the language, imagery and messaging understood by the wider public.

I am keen to explore the role of the media in Wales in raising awareness and reporting of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. I will seek opportunities to work alongside partners in the media to promote good practice reporting.

I will continue to engage with stakeholders, survivors and the public by means of formal and informal communications identifying the most appropriate format in each case. I will instigate and respond appropriately to media opportunities in order to maximise the reach of messages and contribute to events and conferences which provide an opportunity to meet and engage with diverse groups.

To reduce barriers to effective communication I will continue to communicate bilingually and encourage individuals and organisations to communicate with me in the language of their choice.

To deliver this objective I will focus on the following priorities



Delivery of my Annual Plan

I will develop an Implementation Plan detailing how I will deliver the objectives and priorities outlined in this document and for 2016/17 I intend to the report on the following;

- The development and publication of the National Strategy and National Indicators
- The development of a national sustainable, survivor led engagement framework providing inclusive and supported opportunities for individuals to have their voices heard
- Progress towards a holistic, sustainable funding model that maximises resources, avoids duplication and delivers outcomes for individuals and families through high quality, co-ordinated service provision

- Mapping of recommendations from Wales Domestic Abuse Homicide Reviews and identification of shared learning platforms

Monitoring and reporting

Each year I am required to report to the Welsh Ministers about the exercise of my functions during the previous financial year. My annual report must include

- a) An assessment of the extent to which the National Adviser's objectives and priorities for the financial year covered have been met;*
- b) A statement of the matters on which the National Adviser has reported during that year;*
- c) A statement of the other activities the National Adviser has undertaken during that year in the exercise of the National Adviser's functions.*

During the year I will report progress against the Implementation Plan on a quarterly basis to the National Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Advisory Group, Chaired by the Minister for Public Services, Leighton Andrews AM.

The Act requires Welsh Ministers to publish both my annual plan and report.

Closing Remarks

There can be no denying the commitment and progress that has been made in Wales to date in providing a national vision to drive improvements and deliver change.

My annual plan sets out my statement of intent as Wales' first National Adviser and how I feel my role can contribute to this vision.

I have shared the principles and objectives that will underpin my work for the duration of my term and I have also outlined the priorities which I believe are necessary to build on the momentum of the national context and make the Act and its purpose a reality for individuals and families.

Some of the priorities stated within this plan require a long term commitment and, where appropriate, will continue through to future plans. This is due to the scale and complexity of the work required to achieve the strategic co-ordination and coherence that is necessary to deliver lasting change.

If Wales is to realise the potential of its ground breaking legislation we must all work together to embed a responsibility to provide the best possible arrangements for prevention, protection and support for all individuals. As the Adviser I am reliant on your commitment and co-operation to drive forward the priorities contained within this plan and I look forward to working with you.

Contact details

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