



Date/Dyddiad:

31st October 2016

Please ask for/Gofynnwch am:

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Mr John Griffiths AM
Chair, Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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Dear John,

Supplementary Information to Evidence Session

The information provided below is in response to a number of queries that emanated from the evidence session involving the WLGA held on 13th October as part of the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee Inquiry in to the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act. The responses below are based on the feedback received from local authorities who responded to our request for information. While feedback was not received from all 22 authorities, the information below is believed to be a fair representation of the work being undertaken across local government to respond to the requirements of the Act.

- Details of whether all local authorities in Wales are currently developing draft local strategies for their own area

Local authorities are developing local strategies, or action plans to support regional strategies to tackle violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence to meet the requirements of the Act. Gwent are developing a region wide strategy and in West Wales there is a regional Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership Strategy already in place. While some authorities may develop their own specific strategy to underpin a regional one, at the minimum authorities will produce an action plan on how the regional strategy will be taken forward and implemented locally.

- *Views on how local authorities will report on how they are addressing the requirements of the Act and, subsequently, who will collate data on local authority performance*

Under the Act, local authorities and local health boards are required to publish an annual report of the progress they have made in achieving the objectives specified in their local strategies. Similarly, Welsh Ministers must publish an annual report of the progress they have made towards achieving

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the objectives in the national strategy. Additionally, Section 11 of the Act requires Welsh Ministers to 'publish national indicators that may be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the purpose of the Act.'

- *Details and evidence of whether good practice guidance around Healthy Relationships is reaching individual schools across Wales*

Based on the feedback received, there is a range of work on-going to raise awareness of Healthy Relationships and in some areas, individual schools are being supported through training and the circulation of resources to support their implementation of Health Relationships education. The training provides information from policy to best practice, e.g. the 'Growing Up' resource that has been endorsed by Welsh Government.

As an example of good practice, in Blaenau Gwent a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team and a member of the Governing Body from each school attends the training for the school and this is followed up by information being circulated to all staff members and the Governing Body. A session for parents has also been held to enable the most consultative approach possible. In Rhondda Cynon Taff, education is working with their Health Board to map their kite-mark to UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools Award which has a focus on equality and equality of opportunity amongst pupils.

In Pembrokeshire, 18 schools have achieved the Relationships aspect of the Healthy Schools National Quality Award, demonstrating the existence of a written policy on sex and relationships education; involvement of pupils in policy and curriculum development; evidence of pupil evaluations in relationships education to demonstrate the needs of learners are being met; and a written, graduated age appropriate sex and relationships programme.

- Details of how the WLGA have worked with local authorities in developing local strategies

The WLGA's represents the interests of local government and promotes local democracy. We primarily have a policy development and representative role however we can also support and lead on improvement and development. In some areas the WLGA is funded by the Welsh Government to undertake such a role, for example, WG currently fund the Social Services Improvement Agency which is based in the WLGA.

The WLGA has supported the development of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act in a number of ways: through feedback and providing evidence as part of the scrutiny process of the Bill; as a member of the National Training Framework Development Group; and raising awareness of the legislative requirements with local authorities. The WLGA is also a member of the Ministerial Advisory Group advising the Cabinet Secretary on implementation of the Act and tackling violence against women. However, the WLGA does not have the capacity nor the role to undertake targeted work with local authorities in developing their local strategies and neither have we been asked or funded to do so by Welsh Government or local authorities. Should authorities contact the WLGA for information or help we would respond in a positive manner and we always aim to maintain an overview of progress being made by authorities so we can highlight and share good practice as appropriate.

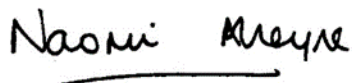
- Details of how local authorities are seeking the views of survivors of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence

There are various ways in which local authorities already engage with survivors of domestic abuse or learn about their experiences however this is also an area where some local authorities will seek to improve their performance and engagement with survivors and ensure the information and feedback provided informs their actions and priorities moving forward.

Examples shared by authorities on the way in which they engage with survivors include the use of specialist providers who use coffee morning and questionnaires to gain feedback; working closely with the third sector; focus groups and workshops to hear the voices and experiences of survivors; and exit questionnaires that the local authority employed IDVA (independent Domestic Violence Advocate) collates. In Ceredigion, there has been an arrangement whereby survivors of domestic abuse meet with the Chief Executive and lead Domestic Abuse Champion to discuss both positive responses and issues survivors face and this has assisted the authority in understanding where change is needed in response to disclosures of abuse.

I hope the above information is helpful to you and the Committee.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Naomi Alleyne". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Naomi Alleyne
Director, Social Services and Housing