

Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb, Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau
Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee
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Thank you for the opportunity to provide a follow up submission to the newly published National Strategy.

We regret that the submissions that we made to this committee previously and to Welsh Government in relation to the National Strategy have proven hopelessly insufficient to raise attention of the way in which male victims are being systematically ignored and marginalised in a carefully constructed strategy.

We wish to draw to the attention of the Committee that the Equality Impact Assessment for the National Strategy indicates that the Welsh Government have assessed that it will have a positive impact on men in section 4.3 on page 20 of the Assessment. We believe that this analysis has no grounding in fact whatsoever. We believe that the Strategy may therefore be capable of being overturned at Judicial Review.

In relation to the specific issues we raised with the Committee we can see that nothing in the final strategy has been considered either by the Committee or by the Welsh Government.

In relation to the Delivery Plan we are confident that it will continue to deliberately marginalise and devalue the experience of male victims. Services for men, designed with their interests at heart, will not be commissioned and they will continue to experience the unlawful discrimination currently perpetrated against them by many domestic violence services that 'screen' only male callers and determine them to be perpetrators masquerading as victims.

It is very noticeable that the National Strategy contains specific sections on various groups who it believes are worthy of special note and attention. These groups include for example 'Children and Young People (p12 & 13). In the strategy it states:

'Violence against women and children, including domestic abuse or sexual violence in any family unit is a child protection issue and should be dealt with using the relevant safeguarding procedures.'

There is no recognition of the reality that women abuse children at roughly the same levels as do men.

'Perpetrators were most likely to be a parent for those that had suffered psychological abuse (father, 35% and mother, 40%) or physical abuse (father, 39% and mother, 29%).'

The section on Children and Young People then continues with

‘Many women who are the victims of violence have children, and ensuring the well-being of those children must be a priority for both public services and the victim.’

It is clear that the Welsh Government has no concern whatsoever for the reality that men who are victims may also have children as well. We know that this is an honest assessment as we see the same demonstrated every day when services funded by Welsh Government routinely act to marginalise and discriminate against male victims.

We have previously drawn the attention of Welsh Government and the National Adviser to academic research produced by Dr Jessica McCarrick at Teeside University about the experience of male victims who seek help and support and are treated as perpetrators.ⁱⁱ

Finally in this section on Children and Young People the National Strategy states

‘We already know that women and children are at increased risk when they are involved in family court proceedings.’

Presumably this analysis by Welsh Government must have been taken from the research they commissioned from Welsh Women’s Aid *‘Are you listening and am I being heard’* This important research that is fundamental to the Strategy comprises the testimony of 66 survivors of abuse across Wales. One male survivor was included. It is hardly surprising that there is a complete absence of the experience of male victims of abuse in the Strategy. What we know however is that the overwhelmingly majority of applicants to the Family Court are male (70%) and that they represent 94% of those seeking contact with children.ⁱⁱⁱ Many of these men are victims of coercive control at the hands of female perpetrators who are withholding contact. These female perpetrators are also breaching the rights of the child under Articles 3, 9.3 and 18.1 of the UNCRC.

Other groups identified in the strategy for special mention included Black and Minority Communities, Older People, LGBT+, Migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women and even Female survivors who commit offences. This last group are statistically unlikely to be a significant number in Wales. Women represent just 4.7% of the UK prison population at around 3,700. 46% of women in prison report having suffered domestic abuse.^{iv} Assuming that Welsh women are no more likely to be sentenced to custody than their English, Scottish or Northern Irish sisters it appears that 95.5 Welsh women will be in prison and have reported suffered domestic abuse. In comparison around 39,000 men in Wales will have suffered domestic abuse.^v However male victims do not merit a separate mention in this section.

We remain prepared to assist the Committee in a proper and fair analysis of the Welsh Government’s National Strategy which we believe is so deeply flawed as to be unworkable and unlawful.

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ⁱ Abuse during childhood: Findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales, year ending March 2016
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/abuseduringchildhood/findingsfromtheyearendingmarch2016crimesurveyforenglandandwales>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/12061547/How-male-victims-of-domestic-abuse-often-end-up-getting-arrested-themselves.html>

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<http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/sites/default/files/files/Executive%20Summary%20with%20full%20disclaimer.pdf>

^{iv} <http://www.womeninprison.org.uk/research/key-facts.php>

^v on a proportionate basis for Wales of the number of men in the Crime Survey for England and Wales (ie 1 Welshman for every 18 Englishmen).