



Cynulliad National
Cenedlaethol Assembly for
Cymru Wales

Communities and Culture Committee



Domestic Abuse in Wales

December 2008

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Chair's Foreword

Since April our inquiry into domestic abuse, and the support services available in Wales, has received evidence from a cross-section of people and organisations and also from the Welsh Assembly Government. I wish to thank all those witnesses who have taken the time to give evidence to the Committee. I am particularly grateful to the survivors of domestic abuse, including residents of refuges, who allowed Committee Members access for visits and gave us their views.

It is estimated that domestic violence will affect 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men in their lifetime, and that some 85% of victims of domestic violence are women. We must be cautious with statistics however, as the nature of domestic abuse means it is widely believed to be an under-reported crime. We are very mindful that behind the figures lie stories of people whose lives are torn apart by abuse, and those who work to help them escape and recover. Domestic abuse embraces not only physical violence but also emotional, psychological and/or financial abuse, and isolation from friends, family or other potential sources of support. It is a hidden blight on our society that can affect *anyone*.

The Committee heard disturbing evidence about general attitudes to violence and abuse within our society, including what children and young people consider to be a safe, healthy relationship. We all need to play our part in 'breaking the secret' of domestic abuse and changing attitudes. A strong theme emerging from the inquiry is the need to do much more early intervention and awareness-raising. Crisis intervention must always be swift, responsive and appropriate to the needs of victims, but we must do all we can to prevent today's children from becoming tomorrow's adult victims, and to break any cycle of abuse.


The Welsh Assembly Government published a domestic violence strategy in 2005 which is intended to provide the structural 'backbone' to direct domestic abuse intervention across Wales. The wide scope of the Committee's inquiry has allowed us to explore the strengths and weaknesses of that strategy and to make some robust recommendations about what more needs to be done.

We have covered many aspects of domestic abuse during this inquiry, including the impact of isolation exacerbated by geographical, cultural and individual factors. We have also discovered gaps in the availability and accessibility of support for different groups. As a result, at some times and in some areas, particular groups such as men, women, children, people from black and ethnic minority communities, older people, disabled people and carers do not get the support they need. The Committee has seen some excellent examples of joint working to tackle domestic abuse in Wales. It is vital that *all* multi-agency arrangements work efficiently and important information is shared to ensure the best response in *every* case. In all parts of Wales we need clear strategic direction. We must avoid at all costs the perception of some voluntary sector providers that they are spending precious time and resources on 'talking shops', rather than on the victims they work with.

Core-funding is paramount to the success of domestic abuse strategies. There are innovative and effective interventions across Wales, but these cannot be sustainable if they are reliant on charity and multiple funding applications for pots of money. These are the same problems raised in the Committee's previous report - 'The Funding of Voluntary Sector Organisations in Wales'. Funding issues must be addressed, particularly when people's lives are in danger.

On behalf of the Committee, I am grateful to all those individuals and organisations who gave us the benefit of their experience and advice; in formal committee meetings, during visits, or by responding to our call for evidence. I would also like to thank Members of the Communities and Culture Committee for their strong commitment to this inquiry.

I anticipate that our report will be widely read and hope that our recommendations will be accepted by the Welsh Assembly Government. I look forward to receiving its response in due course.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janice Gregory". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chair, Communities and Culture Committee

1. Introduction

The Committee's inquiry into domestic abuse in Wales began taking evidence in April 2008 and has gathered a wide range of views on activities to tackle domestic abuse and support those affected. The terms of reference and background to the inquiry are set out below. The Committee has made 28 strategic recommendations and set out timescales for implementation. This reflects the importance Members attach to prompt action in this policy area. Any failure in service provision for those affected by domestic abuse could have severe consequences for their ability to escape an abusive situation and move on positively in their lives. The Committee wishes to see every effort made to ensure that we help victims as much as possible, and change the attitudes in Wales that allow such abuse to take place.

2. Terms of reference

The Committee agreed the following wide-ranging terms of reference for an inquiry into domestic abuse in March 2008:

It is proposed that the Committee should review:

- Delivery of the Welsh Assembly Government's Strategy for tackling domestic abuse;
- Provision of support to victims of domestic abuse, including support provided to witnesses in the criminal justice system;
- Resources allocated by relevant bodies such as, the Welsh Assembly Government, Home Office, health and social services and criminal justice agencies to implement domestic abuse policies;
- Provision of compulsory and voluntary interventions aimed at perpetrators of domestic abuse, including the allocation of resources to support such interventions;
- Initiatives aimed at preventing domestic abuse; for example, school programmes and awareness raising initiatives.

The Committee will also:

- Make recommendations on actions that could be taken to tackle the problem of domestic abuse in Wales.

3. Background to the inquiry

Domestic abuse

3.1 Given the often hidden nature of domestic abuse, statistical estimates of its prevalence based on criminal justice agency records do not provide a true reflection of the

problem. Research indicates that domestic abuse is chronically under-reported to the police and that only a small proportion of incidents reported to the police result in the conviction of a perpetrator. There is also evidence to suggest that victims are unlikely to report their experiences in face to face general crime surveys like the British Crime Survey (BCS). Prevalence rates for domestic violence derived from the 2005/06 BCS self-completion module were around five times higher for adults than those obtained from the usual face-to-face interviews. According to analysis of the British Crime Survey Self-Completion Module 2005/06¹:

- Since the age of 16, 22 per cent of men and 33 per cent of women had experienced at least one instance of domestic abuse. This included non-physical abuse (emotional or financial), threats, sexual assault or stalking by a partner, former partner or family member.
- Incidence of partner and family abuse was highest in people under the age of 24, with the incidence decreasing with age.
- Women in bad health experienced a higher incidence of partner abuse than women in good health.
- Women with children have a higher incidence of partner and family abuse than women without children and men with or without children.
- Owner occupiers were less likely to experience partner abuse. Levels of partner and family abuse were higher than average for both men and women in the social renting sector.
- People who visited the pub three times or more a week were more likely to experience partner abuse. Women who visited the pub three times or more a week were more likely to experience family abuse, but in this case the same was not true for men.

Findings from the Home Office publication *Crime in England and Wales 2007-08*², which incorporates both BCS findings and police reported crime, suggest that:

- Repeat victimisation accounts for 73 per cent of all incidents of domestic violence as measured by the BCS. Over one in four (27%) victims of domestic violence were victimised three or more times. (Findings from the 2004/05 BCS modules show that within the previous year, 22 per cent of victims of partner abuse had been abused 6 times or more, with 7 per cent being abused more than 50 times).
- 33 per cent of violent incidents against women were domestic violence, compared with 4 per cent of incidents against men.
- In the majority of incidents of domestic violence the victims were women (85%)

¹ Home Office, [Homicides, Fire Arm Offences and Intimate Violence 2006/07](#), January 2008

² Home Office Statistical Bulletin, *Crime in England and Wales 2007-08*: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/index.html>

These statistics, despite being limited in the extent to which they can provide a true picture of the prevalence of domestic abuse, do demonstrate the serious and widespread nature of the problem.

The response of the Welsh Assembly Government

3.2 The circumstances in which domestic abuse takes place, and the actions which can be taken to support the people affected or prevent it from happening, are complex and broad ranging. The legislative framework, outlined in chapter 4, incorporates laws made in Europe and by the UK parliament and National Assembly for Wales. Important aspects of legislation are not devolved, including much of the criminal justice system and civil court system. However, the Welsh Assembly Government is able to take, and direct, action in a number of areas, not only through legislative powers but also through funding decisions and the issuing of advice and guidance.

3.3 *Tackling Domestic Abuse: The All Wales National Strategy*³ was produced by the Welsh Assembly Government in 2005. The Strategy's focus on domestic abuse, rather than domestic violence, goes beyond actual physical violence. It also includes emotional abuse, the destruction of property, isolation from friends, family or other potential sources of support, threats to others including children, control over access to money, personal items, food, transportation and the telephone, and stalking. The strategy's primary objective is to provide a structural 'backbone' to direct domestic abuse intervention across Wales. It aims to facilitate the development and implementation of a 'joined-up' problem-solving approach which addresses domestic abuse holistically. The Strategy was produced in liaison with Members of the Working Group on Domestic Violence and Violence against Women.

3.4 The overall aims of the strategy are:

- To facilitate the development and implementation of a quality co-ordinated joint-agency response
- To improve the current service provision for all victims and to particularly increase the safe choices for women and children/young people who experience domestic abuse
- To hold abusers accountable for their behaviour
- To increase public awareness as to the issues surrounding domestic abuse
- To challenge the notion that domestic abuse is acceptable
- To protect children and young people in Wales from the negative impact of domestic abuse
- To educate and inform children and young people to enable them to make informed choices

³ Welsh Assembly Government *Tackling Domestic Abuse: The All Wales National Strategy*, 2005:
<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/safety/publications/domesticabusestrategy?lang=en>

3.5 The Strategy recommends that domestic abuse and its causes should be tackled by a number of individual agencies and partnership bodies, including Community Safety Partnerships, Domestic Abuse Fora and Area Child Protection Committees.

Decision of the Committee to undertake this inquiry

3.6 In March 2007, the Second Assembly's Social Justice and Regeneration Committee scrutinised Edwina Hart, the relevant Assembly Minister at that time, on progress in delivering the strategy. The Minister provided an update of progress with the delivery of the Strategy⁴ which highlighted a significant development in terms of the provision of funding to enable every Community Safety Partnership in Wales to appoint a domestic abuse co-ordinator.

3.7 Given the crucial need for effective work to tackle domestic abuse in Wales and the initial scrutiny work undertaken by the Social Justice and Regeneration Committee during the last Assembly, which focused on the Assembly Government's domestic abuse Strategy, the Communities and Culture Committee decided at their meeting on 22 February 2008 to undertake a wide-ranging inquiry into domestic abuse in Wales.

4. Domestic abuse in Wales – the legislative framework

Overview

4.1 The legislative framework which supports action to tackle domestic abuse is broad ranging and complex, incorporating laws made in Europe and by the UK parliament and National Assembly for Wales.

Criminal law

4.1.1 There is no specific offence of 'domestic abuse' under criminal law. Perpetrators of domestic abuse might be convicted of offences such as assault, harassment, attempted murder or murder. Additionally, specific legislation makes it an offence to take a female abroad for the purposes of female genital mutilation⁵ and enables courts to make orders to protect victims or potential victims of forced marriage⁶.

4.1.2 The criminal justice system also seeks to tackle domestic abuse by providing for the support and protection of victims of domestic abuse who are witnesses in criminal cases. For example, the *Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999*, which provides for the protection of witnesses against cross-examination by an unrepresented defendant in certain circumstances and the *Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004)* has a

⁴ Social Justice and Regeneration Committee SJR(2)-05-07(p.2) 22 March 2007 *Domestic Abuse Strategy - Progress on Delivery*: <http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-second/bus-committees-second-sjr-home/bus-committees-second-sjr-agendas/1d0234307c3f671ec364188bfd84a98f.pdf?langoption=3&ttl=SJR%282%29-05-07%20Paper%202%203A%20Domestic%20Abuse%20Strategy>

⁵ *Female Genital Mutilation Act (2003)*

⁶ *Under the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007*

range of measures including a “stay away” order for convicted perpetrators of domestic violence.

Civil law

4.1.3 In addition to the criminal justice system, a civil system offers protection to victims by, for example, enabling them to seek an injunction from either the Family Proceedings Court or a County Court; and a criminal system which aims to punish the perpetrator through either the Magistrate’s or the Crown Court.

Limitations of the criminal and civil legal systems

4.1.4 The effectiveness of these criminal and civil legal systems in tackling domestic abuse is a much debated area and several contributors to the Committee’s Inquiry expressed concerns about the difficulties faced by victims in ‘accessing justice’. For example, Welsh Women’s Aid estimate that only 23% of women report incidents of domestic abuse to the police⁷. Concerns were also raised about the continuing low level of successful convictions and about the capacity of the criminal justice system to meet the needs of certain groups of people, such as older people with dementia and women from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME)_communities or backgrounds.

Duties placed on public authorities

4.1.5 Another important component of the domestic abuse legislation framework relates to duties placed on public authorities. A multitude of factors impact on attempts to support people affected by domestic abuse and to prevent it. Therefore, a raft of legislation requiring public services to identify and meet the needs of children, young people and adults is involved, in terms of both general service provision in the areas of health, social care, housing and education, and in terms of laws which apply specifically, for example, the [Homeless Persons \(Priority Need\) \(Wales\) Order 2001](#)⁸ includes “a person fleeing domestic violence or threatened domestic violence” as a category of those to be treated as in priority need for accommodation.

4.1.6 In addition to determining the types of services that must be provided, legislation also requires public authorities to tackle various problems in certain ways. For example, the *Crime and Disorder Act 1998*, as amended, places a responsibility on partnerships of local authorities, police, fire authorities, local health boards to work with others to formulate and implement local strategies for the reduction of crime and disorder and substance misuse. Public authorities also have duties to promote equality and tackle discrimination for certain groups of people. The *Equalities Act 2006*, for example, places a ‘Gender Equality Duty’ on all public authorities to eliminate unlawful sex discrimination and

⁷ Welsh Women’s Aid written response:

⁸ Section 5

harassment, and promote equality of opportunity between men and women. This means public authorities have to take actions to address the most significant gender inequalities within their remit. Specific duties contained in the *Government of Wales Act 2006* require the Assembly and Welsh Ministers to make appropriate arrangements with a view to securing that their functions are exercised with due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people.

Human Rights

4.1.7 The *Human Rights Act 1998* introduced 16 basic rights – all taken from the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) – into domestic law. They include the right to life, the right not to be tortured, the right to liberty and security and the right to respect for their private and family life, home and correspondence. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), an international human rights treaty that grants all children and young people (aged 17 and under) a comprehensive set of rights, has not been incorporated in full into domestic legislation in the way that the UN Convention on Human Rights has through the Human Rights Act.

Powers of the National Assembly for Wales

4.1.8 The criminal and civil legal systems referred to above are essentially non-devolved. Welsh Ministers do have secondary law-making powers in a number of relevant areas, including health, social care, education and housing. For example, section 6(2) of the *Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Act* would enable Welsh Ministers and the Secretary of State to make regulations specifying objectives and targets to be set and reports to be prepared by Community Safety Partnerships. The *Homeless Persons (Priority Need) (Wales) Order 2001*, referred to above, is an example of regulations made under the *Housing Act 1996*.

4.1.9 Under the *Government of Wales Act 2006*, the National Assembly for Wales can gain legislative competence through Acts of Parliament or Legislative Competence Orders (LCOs), which enables it to make a primary law in the form of an 'Assembly Measure'. Measures can only be made in a specific policy area (or 'Matter') added to one of the 20 'Fields' (or broad subject areas) which are contained in Schedule 5 of the Act.

4.1.10 There is no "Domestic Abuse" field under Schedule 5 of the Government of Wales Act 2006. However, Schedule 5 does include a number of fields under which related measure making powers could be sought, e.g.; field 9 – health and health services; field 12 – local government; and field 15 - social welfare. A number of LCOs which are currently progressing through the system seek powers which, if granted, could be used to tackle domestic abuse. The *Draft National Assembly for Wales (Legislative Competence) (Social Welfare and Other Fields) Order 2008*, for example, will give powers to the Assembly to make laws in a number of areas relating to child welfare.

5. Evidence

5.1 A written consultation exercise was undertaken between March and May 2008. In response, the Committee received over 60 written submissions reflecting a wide range of perspectives and experiences. A list of the organisations who submitted written evidence is attached as Annex 3.

The Committee has subsequently gathered further detailed evidence as follows:

- The Committee took oral evidence from representatives of organisations and multi-agency bodies during Committee meetings in Cardiff, Merthyr and Wrexham.
- Oral and written evidence was also taken from the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government, and the Deputy Ministers for Housing and Social Services.
- Members undertook 3 visits to organisations engaged in the delivery of services to victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence.
- One Committee Member undertook a further 4 rapporteur visits to organisations engaged in the delivery of services for victims of domestic and sexual abuse.

5.2 To enable the Committee to consider a broad range of perspectives and experience, evidence was taken from witnesses representing a wide range of organisations including the statutory, voluntary and private sector organisations. This has provided the Committee with a unique insight into areas including:

- delivery of services to victims of domestic abuse in a range of settings;
- planning, commissioning and funding;
- the role of criminal justice agencies;
- education and awareness;
- perpetrator programmes;
- and the experiences of particular groups of people for example, women and men, children and young people, older people and carers and people from BME communities or backgrounds.

A list of the witnesses that have provided oral evidence is attached as Annex 1.

5.3 Representatives from organisations who gave oral evidence to the Committee were asked to suggest one key recommendation which in their view would have the greatest impact for people affected by domestic abuse in Wales. Those recommendations have been considered by the Committee and taken into account in formulating the final recommendations contained in this report.

6. Key Issues

Given the inquiry's broad terms of reference and the efforts of the Committee to take evidence from a wide range of stakeholders, a great deal of relevant information and suggestions were gathered. This section presents the Committee's main findings and conclusions within eight thematic areas.

6.1 The Welsh Assembly Government Domestic Abuse Strategy

6.1.1 The Assembly Government published *Tackling Domestic Abuse: The All Wales National Strategy*⁹ in 2005. The purpose of the strategy was to provide a structural 'backbone' to direct domestic abuse intervention across Wales. The strategy aims to meet the needs of all domestic abuse victims by providing support and protection for victims, holding perpetrators accountable, and preventing domestic abuse from happening in the first place.

6.1.2 The definition adopted by the Assembly Government refers to domestic abuse as "the use of physical and/or emotional abuse or violence, including undermining self-confidence, sexual violence or the threat of violence, by a person who is or has been in a close relationship"¹⁰. The Strategy takes an inclusive approach accepting that "men can also be victims of domestic abuse, the great majority of domestic abuse is perpetrated by men against women and their children."

6.1.3 A number of contributors praised the breadth of the Strategy and the guidance contained in it, but expressed concerns that it is not being implemented 'fully on the ground'.

6.1.4 Supporting victims of domestic abuse is a truly 'life or death' issue, and the Committee therefore believes it is reasonable to seek implementation of the recommendations of its inquiry within a six-month period, i.e. by May 2009. The Committee also notes that the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy was first published in 2005, and that there is no formal mechanism for annual reporting of progress. It is therefore proposed that an annual report is produced.

Recommendation 1

The Welsh Assembly Government to report on progress with implementing the Communities and Culture Committee's domestic abuse inquiry report by May 2009, and thereafter to publish and lay before the Assembly an annual report on: the effectiveness of its strategy; how its action plan for implementation is progressing; and how the responsible Welsh Ministers are working with their UK Government counterparts on funding the

⁹ Welsh Assembly Government *Tackling Domestic Abuse: The All Wales National Strategy*, 2005: <http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/safety/domesticabuse/publications/?lang=en>

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.6

delivery of domestic abuse services in Wales.

Reporting should include detail on the specific areas indicated in the Communities and Culture Committee's report recommendations.

6.1.5 There was some disagreement among contributors relating to the definition of domestic abuse adopted by the Welsh Assembly Government, including different views on the relative benefits of employing a gender-specific (women focused) or a non-gender specific definition of domestic abuse. For example, Welsh Women's Aid recommends that the focus of the Strategy should be violence against women. This, they argue, would more accurately reflect the essentially gender-specific nature of domestic abuse as violence against women and ensure services are focused on women and children. Amnesty International agreed with this view, arguing that the Strategy does not adequately cover the different forms of violence against women or recognise the links between different kinds of violence.

6.1.6 In contrast, representatives of the Cardiff Women's Safety Unit and Dyn Project, whilst acknowledging that the majority of victims are women, argue that a gender-inclusive definition is important to ensure that the needs of male victims are met.

6.1.7 It was felt by some that the Strategy was not inclusive of all groups of people. For example, concern was expressed by representatives of organisations which focus on older people that the Strategy does not adequately reflect the circumstances of older victims of domestic abuse. Age Concern Cymru recommended that a strategic action plan for older people should be developed with the involvement of older people to ensure the Welsh Assembly Government's domestic abuse strategy is implemented effectively. The Older Person's Commissioner for Wales recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government's definition of domestic abuse should be extended to include elder abuse, which is not explicitly currently included.

6.1.8 Other contributors felt that the Strategy did not address the housing needs of victims of domestic abuse in an adequate way and others expressed concerns that the Strategy does not take account of the needs of women with no resource to public funds¹¹.

6.1.9 The Committee acknowledges that domestic abuse is a gender issue in that women are more likely than men to be the victims of domestic abuse and the effects of domestic abuse are often different for men and women, for example, because women are more likely than men to have childcare or other caring responsibilities. The Committee appreciates the concerns expressed by some women's groups that the lack of a gender-specific definition is leading to increased pressure to divert the limited resources currently allocated to supporting women-only services towards mixed or male-oriented support services. The Committee agrees that service provision should reflect levels and types of

¹¹ The Amnesty International written submission to Committee explains that "most immigrants entering the UK have restrictions upon their visas, the most common of which is the 'no recourse to public funds' condition".

need which do vary between women and men and other groups of the people (see recommendation 6).

6.1.10 However, the Committee also recognises that anyone can be the victim or a perpetrator of domestic abuse and supports the inclusive approach of the Assembly Government's domestic abuse strategy.

6.1.11 The Committee agrees with Age Concern Cymru and the Commissioner for Older People in Wales that there is scope to further strengthen the inclusive approach of the Strategy in relation to older people.

Recommendation 2

The Welsh Assembly Government's domestic abuse strategy should better reflect the needs and circumstances of older people by ensuring that domestic abuse related publications make it clear that domestic abuse affects older people, for example, in the use of images. The revised strategy to be available by May 2009.

6.1.12 The term 'elder abuse' generally includes the abuse of older people by anyone in any setting. In addition to situations currently covered by the Assembly Government's definition of domestic abuse, this would also include abuse perpetrated in care home or day centre settings.

Recommendation 3

The Welsh Assembly Government should undertake work to identify the potential benefits and impact of extending the scope of its domestic abuse strategy to cover the abuse of older people perpetrated by anyone in care homes, day centres and other regulated settings.

The Welsh Assembly Government should report its evidence-based conclusions to the Committee by May 2009.

6.1.13 NSPCC Cymru noted that the current strategy does not reflect within it the underlying United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) basis of the Assembly Government's approach to children's policy. It believes that any future policy or guidance in this field should clearly state that domestic abuse is an infringement of the rights of children and young people under Article 19 of the Convention, and the access to support and help after experiencing domestic abuse is also a right under Article 39.

Recommendation 4

The Welsh Assembly Government's domestic abuse strategy and all associated guidance should explicitly state that domestic abuse is an infringement of the rights of children and young people, and that access to help and support after experiencing domestic abuse is a

right, as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The revised strategy to be available by May 2009.

6.2 Services and support for people affected by domestic abuse

6.2.1 Arrangements for the planning, commissioning and funding of services for people affected by domestic abuse are complex and vary across different parts of Wales. Voluntary sector organisations provide a significant proportion of specialist domestic abuse services, both independently, (e.g. as in the case of refuge provision), and in partnership with statutory organisations, (e.g. in the provision of support through Sexual Assault Referral Centres). Volunteers from a range of backgrounds, including survivors of domestic abuse, play a significant role in providing support to victims of domestic abuse. Voluntary sector organisations also support victims of domestic abuse through the provision of services to people with needs relating to their substance misuse, mental health or other complex needs. The problems associated with the funding of voluntary sector services are addressed in section 6.6 of this report.

6.2.2 Statutory sector organisations provide support to victims of domestic abuse through a range of channels, for example, local authority child protection and vulnerable adult teams, NHS primary and secondary care services and the criminal justice system.

6.2.3 The evidence presented to the Committee suggests that there are significant variations across Wales in the planning arrangements for the provision of services for people affected by domestic abuse and in the availability and accessibility of services on offer.

6.2.4 Contributors agreed that there is a need for a range of services which meet the needs of individuals and that a 'one size fits all' approach is not appropriate. Services identified as fundamental in the support they provide to victims of domestic abuse include:

- Refuge provision
- Support for domestic abuse victims remaining in their own homes
- Housing services, including move on accommodation
- Counselling
- Outreach / floating support, the Cymdeithas Tai Hafan Hope Project being a good example
- Signposting, information and advice, including information about accessing other services, debt counselling, and help in maintaining tenancies
- Advocacy, and the services provided by Independent Domestic Violence Advocates in particular
- Specialist sexual assault services and sexual health services
- Risk management interventions, MARAC - Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference, being an example of good practice for certain groups

- Support delivered through the criminal justice system, Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVCs) and Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) being identified as examples of good practice
- Other services which provide ‘access to justice’, for example, legal advice services
- ‘One Stop Shop’ type services which are able to deal with a range of support needs were identified as good models of service delivery, the Welsh Women’s Aid Bridge Project and Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) being examples.
- Other services which help people overcome barriers to getting out of an abusive situation, the RSPCA pet fostering scheme being a good example. The scheme not only deals with animal welfare issues but helps victims who might otherwise have remained in the home because they were worried about the cruelty an abusive partner would inflict on their pet.

6.2.5 Contributors agreed that a range of services should be available to people at an early intervention stage, at crisis point, and following crisis intervention. They also agreed that services should be fully inclusive and configured to meet the needs of different groups of people, including; women; children and young people; men; disabled people; people from BME backgrounds or faith communities; gay people; older people; and people who prefer to use Welsh rather than English.

6.2.6 There was a general consensus that current service provision does not adequately meet the needs of victims of domestic abuse in Wales. This consensus reflects the findings of the End Violence Against Women¹² report, *Map of Gaps: The Postcode Lottery of Violence Against Women Support Services*¹³.

6.2.7 The Committee is concerned about the variation in services provided in different parts of Wales and about the insufficient capacity of refuge provision, counselling and advocacy services and move on accommodation. Residential refuge provision is vital, but projects providing support in the home for victims of domestic abuse are equally important and one type of service should not be provided at the expense of another.

Some examples of specific concerns about these types of provision are highlighted below.

6.2.8 Refuge accommodation

Welsh Women’s Aid¹⁴ accommodated 1,407 women and 1,228 children in 2007-08. The organisation was unable to provide for 2,766 requests for refuge accommodation over the same period, a 51 per cent increase on figures for the previous year. Reasons for refusal include a lack of available bed space and complex personal needs which cannot be met. Contributors called for specialist refuge provision for women with particular needs

¹² End Violence Against Women is a campaigning coalition of individuals and organisations whose membership includes Rape Crisis, Women’s Aid, the Women’s National Commission, Amnesty International UK, the TUC, service providers and individuals who have experienced domestic violence: <http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/home.asp>

¹³ Page 25, *Map of Gaps: The Postcode Lottery of Violence Against Women Support Services* November 2007
http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/data/files/map_of_gaps.pdf

¹⁴ Welsh Women’s Aid *Annual Statistical Report April 2007 – March 2008*

including those with complex needs (e.g. substance misuse or mental health problems and women from BME or faith backgrounds). In particular there is a need for regional refuge provision for people with mental health and/or substance misuse issues, with 24-hour trained specialist staff.

Contributors felt that shared facilities in refuges are not ideal, particularly in refuges which take boys up to 18. According to Welsh Women's Aid, 17 of their 45 refuges are not fully accessible and 20 Women's Aid refuges will not take dependent young men aged between 16 and 18.

6.2.9 Counselling

Particular concerns relate to a lack of services for children and young people, the distances people have to travel to access services in rural areas and waiting times, both for counselling services provided through the NHS (typically, through the GP referral system) and for those provided by voluntary sector organisations.

“One of our member groups carried out research two years ago and 25 of our member groups replied... there were a number of difficulties of access to services for women with mental health problems.... There were no counselling services for women experiencing domestic abuse in their local areas, and there are gaps in refuge provision for women who have drug and/or alcohol problems. 46 per cent of women in refuge last year had domestic abuse issues as well as another complex need. That needs to be recognised. Women's Aid can support them, but the health service also has a role to play through counselling. The waiting list for counselling is massive in Wales....”

Welsh Women's Aid

6.2.10 Housing and accommodation

In addition to the issues relating to refuges, contributors also raised concerns about the lack of move-on accommodation for single women and women with children after they leave the refuge. Additionally, concerns were raised about the experiences of victims seeking help from local authority housing departments which do not always provide a solution to a housing problem which effectively supports a person affected by domestic abuse. Where grants are put in place for people to look for private housing accommodation there can be problems with finding money for bonds and rent top-up, and many prefer to be in social housing because of lower rents.

“It is very hard to get housing anywhere due to the crisis in provision.”

Aberconwy Women's Aid refuge

“If it wasn’t for this place I would be sleeping on the street.”

Client of Cymdeithas Tai Hafan supported housing project for young women

Recommendation 5

The Welsh Assembly Government should work with local authorities to evaluate the extent to which available and appropriate move-on accommodation for women and families leaving refuges meets the need.

The Welsh Assembly Government should work with local authorities and other partners to ensure that effective strategies are in place to fill gaps in the provision of appropriate move-on accommodation. The Committee to receive a progress report on this work by May 2009, and it should subsequently be included as a discrete section in the Welsh Assembly Government’s annual domestic abuse report.

6.2.11 Sustainable funding for core services was identified as a necessary pre-requisite if the needs of people affected by domestic abuse are to be more effectively met (see section 6.6). However, contributors also identified other ways of improving the support available to victims of domestic abuse, including:

- The provision of specialist training for existing staff within the domestic abuse sector;
- The recruitment of more volunteers to work within a variety of service settings from counselling to pet fostering;
- Improved commissioning practices to avoid duplication of services or poor prioritisation of areas of need;
- Awareness raising, training and education for public sector workers, and in particular, the police, magistrates, teachers, NHS workers and housing workers.

Recommendation 6

The Welsh Assembly Government should produce guidance directed at commissioning authorities. identifying the range and standards of services which should be provided to meet the needs of people affected by domestic abuse at an early intervention stage, at crisis point, and following crisis intervention. The guidance should cover the types of service identified in section 6.2.4 above.

The guidance should be evidence-based and reflect the different kinds and levels of need amongst people in different circumstances. It should also indicate what is reasonable in terms of how long people should have to wait to access different services. The guidance to be issued by May 2009.

The Committee recognised the enormous contribution made by volunteers from a range of backgrounds, including survivors of domestic abuse, to the provision of domestic abuse

support services in Wales. The Committee acknowledges that this contribution is not cost-neutral and that there are resource implications for organisations who want to recruit, train, support and retain suitable volunteers.

Recommendation 7

The Welsh Assembly Government should assist organisations who wish to recruit volunteers by:

- supporting domestic abuse organisations in the recruitment and retention of volunteers, for example, by publicising recruitment activities, and;
- financially supporting the training of volunteers recruited by organisations that can demonstrate that they are making an effective contribution in tackling domestic abuse in Wales, including those that offer counselling, advice and information services and pet fostering schemes.
- Identifying other ways to promote the services provided by these organisations.

The Committee to receive a progress report on work in this area by May 2009, and the Welsh Assembly Government to subsequently include it as a discrete section in its annual domestic abuse report.

6.3 Meeting the needs of different groups of people

6.3.1 The Committee recognises that different groups of people affected by domestic abuse have different needs and that current service provision might be meeting the needs of some groups of people more effectively than others. The Committee believes that there should be an equality of access to suitable services according to the needs and circumstances of people affected by domestic abuse. A great deal of evidence was gathered on this subject. This section of the report outlines some of the key areas of concern in relation to the provision of suitable services to different groups of people. The recommendations are intended to ensure that the needs of different groups of people in different circumstances are considered and addressed more effectively.

6.3.2 The Committee was interested in Age Concern Cymru's recommendation that a strategic action plan for older people should be developed with the involvement of older people to ensure the Assembly Government's domestic abuse Strategy is implemented effectively. Having taken evidence from a range of organisations which represent or support specific groups of people, the Committee feels that such an action planning approach could be effective in ensuring the needs of all people are met.

Recommendation 8

The Welsh Assembly Government should work with its partners to produce an action plan which provides details of how its domestic abuse Strategy will be implemented. The action plan should include key delivery milestones and should explicitly set out how the Strategy

will support people from the following groups who are affected by domestic abuse:

- Women
- Children and young people
- Men
- Older people
- People from Black and Minority Ethnic or faith backgrounds or communities, including women with no recourse to public funds
- Disabled people
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transexual people
- Carers
- People with complex needs, including those with mental health and/or substance misuse problems, who require specialist services such as 24-hour support in refuge
- People in rural areas, including taking account of rural transport issues in funding decisions
- Welsh speakers

The action plan should be developed with the involvement of people from the groups identified above and placed in the public domain. The Welsh Assembly Government should provide the Committee with a progress report on the action plan by May 2009 and subsequently include this as a discrete section in its annual domestic abuse report.

6.3.3 Below are some examples of the Committee's concerns in relation to particular groups of people.

Children

6.3.4 The Committee was particularly concerned that the needs of children and young people affected by domestic abuse are not being sufficiently met. Concerns were raised about the lack of early intervention, crisis and follow-on provision for children.

"We have to keep delivering front-line services and develop them to meet the needs of a broader range of women and children. However, it is only through prevention that we will eventually stem the flow of domestic violence. Work is being done with children in a front-line capacity and on funding services for children and young people, and there is recognition that children and young people need the kind of interventions that come with good counselling and good therapy, but we need to do more work within that context of prevention. When children access domestic violence services, it is our first opportunity, not only to support them through their immediate crisis, but it is about laying the foundations for prevention in the future and to support them in recognising that the relationships that they are witnessing are not healthy and are not positive."

Cardiff Welsh Women's Aid

Particular concerns were expressed by contributors about young men aged 14 and over who cannot be accommodated in refuges, and disabled children and children with a disabled parent, again who cannot be accommodated in refuge provision and might find it hard to move away from an area in which a care package has been arranged locally. Concerns were also raised about the availability and accessibility of services for young carers and young women with children of their own. Contributors also reported that children not in education, training or employment were falling through the net of service provision. Some refuges were not in a position to help them. Welsh Women's Aid reported research carried out in one local authority area which had revealed that "in around 90 per cent of the families, domestic violence was a significant issue for (excluded) children. The issue is that, if they are not in school, they are more vulnerable. Many of them will not be in refuge; they will just be at large."

"There are also few facilities and services for young women aged between 16 and 18 who come into refuge in their own right, not as children of a victim, but as victims themselves. Under the Children Act 2004, they are classed as children. However, they come in in their own right but they might not necessarily receive the services that they need. There are one or two - fewer than six - children's workers in refuges who have a youth remit. They are funded under the Extending Entitlement agenda. They can work with people aged up to 25. So, in those places they are served, but in many refuges, they are just treated as adults.

Refuges are quite limited with regard to what they can do with (excluded) children. It may be that they say that an older child who is not in education, employment or training cannot come into a refuge. That is a problem."

Welsh Women's Aid (Children's Services)

The Butterflies 'Right to Be Safe' Programme

The NSPCC provides support to adults, children and young people affected by domestic abuse through its Butterflies - Right to be Safe programme. This is a 10 week group work programme that can be delivered in English or Welsh. It provides parallel learning for women and children on the impact of domestic abuse on their lives. It helps them to 'unpack' their experiences and reframe them, whilst providing a therapeutic forum for children to explore their feelings in a safe environment

The women's group provides experiential learning about how domestic abuse impacts on the lives and developmental stages of their children. It allows women to safely explore their roles as mothers and facilitate positive behavioural change.

The children's group provides a safe environment to therapeutically explore their experiences of domestic abuse, build self-esteem, help develop emotional resilience and keep safe strategies. It provides a peer group forum where young children can 'break the

secret' and talk openly to each other about their fears and worries. Group work addresses the roles children often assume or have imposed, eg for girls this is more likely to be caretaker, mother's confidante or scapegoat, for boys it could be abuser's assistant. Assuming these roles has profound consequences for the child.

The teenagers at risk group provides an opportunity to explore how their experiences may still impact on their behaviour and values, to work on issues around anger and conflict, sex and gender. It helps to build self esteem and protective behaviours particularly around 'at risk' coping strategies they may use, for example promiscuity, drugs and alcohol. The young people are informed about more positive choices and coping strategies.

Safeguarding measures include a protocol agreement between the area social services department and the agency planning to run the programme, and enhanced Criminal Record Bureau checks and child protection training for facilitators. Contracts are completed with parents that set out clear expectations of the group process, confidentiality and its boundaries and responsibilities. In certain instances one-to-one intervention can be provided.

6.3.5 The need for more accessible information and advice was identified, for example, through a specialist children's helpline and/or website. Contributors were also worried about the lack of support for children who disclose experiences of domestic abuse as a result of it being raised as a Personal and Social Education (PSE) topic in school.

"I would highlight the need for funding for children's services. The preventative work will be hampered and hindered if teachers and youth workers do not know where to go with the information that they get."

Domestic Abuse Coordinator, Torfaen

"I do not think that the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference model works as well for young people. Those aged between 16 and 18 are old enough to be married, but they are also falling out of child protection procedures. This is an overlap between public protection, domestic abuse and child protection, and it is the people on the edges who fall through the gaps. I do not think that we are that good. I would like to have a young persons' worker who specifically works with, for example, a 16-year-old who has two children who comes through the unit. We always ensure that we have a young person on the team because it is important that the team reflects the city that it serves. Most of us are of a certain age, so it is quite nice to have one or two younger people because sometimes they want to talk to someone who reminds them of their mum and sometimes they do not".

"There is also a vulnerable group of young people who are involved in sexual exploitation. Domestic abuse for them would be from the person who is running them and who is taking their money. That group is difficult to access. The organisation that I work for, Safer Wales, has a service called Street Life for these young people. Street Life has made a referral into

MARAC, but only one so far. There is a group of young people, particularly the vulnerable ones, who we are poorer at accessing, because they are hard to reach”.

Jan Pickles, Cardiff Domestic Abuse Safety Unit

6.3.6 When Committee Members visited the NSPCC in North Wales, which delivers the ‘Butterflies’ programme for families affected by domestic abuse, they were told that some users of the service had reported abuse of children during contact visits. Contributors expressed concerns that poor decisions made about contact arrangements by the Family Court could be a contributory factor.

“There is a problem with the family courts. When a mother has had to take her child personally to the father, under the child contact order, there have been occasions where the father has followed them back to the refuge, and there has been verbal abuse and intimidation. They felt that that was not being factored in enough by the family courts.”

Mark Isherwood AM, reporting evidence from visits to refuges in North Wales

“Most families where there is domestic abuse are not subject to child protection procedures. One of the things that I am particularly worried about is the fact that every time the police are called out to a family where there is domestic abuse and there are children present they make a referral to social services, but social services are unable to deal with anyone but the highest risk. So, they know that there are all these families with domestic abuse because they log them, but nothing happens.”

Welsh Women’s Aid (Children’s Services)

Recommendation 9

The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure that the needs of children and young people affected by domestic abuse are met. In particular, it should ensure that:

- All children and young people in refuges are supported by specialist workers
- Children and young people moving on from refuge provision continue to be supported by specialist workers
- All children and young people who are known by organisations to have been affected by domestic abuse, or who disclose that they have been affected by domestic abuse should have timely access to age-appropriate counselling, therapeutic, mental health, advice and advocacy services as required
- Provision is made for young men aged 14 to 18 to be able to stay with their

mother or other carer when they need to leave the family home as a result of domestic abuse

- Provision is made for young women aged under 18 who are victims of domestic abuse from their own partner
- Provision is made for disabled children or the children of a disabled parent who needs to leave their home urgently. There is a need to address both the physical accessibility of refuges and to ensure that care packages can be re-arranged quickly after a move.

The Committee to receive a progress report on this work by May 2009, and it should subsequently be included as a discrete section in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.

Recommendation 10

The Welsh Assembly Government should work with CAFCASS and relevant voluntary sector organisations to:

- identify cases where children have been abused during contact visits or where mothers have been abused as a result of contact arrangements.
- take action to minimise the risks to children and women associated with contact arrangements in future.

A report should be submitted to the Committee by May 2009 which provides a summary of progress.

Women

6.3.7 Since the majority of the victims of domestic abuse are women, many of the general concerns raised about service provision impact on women. Specifically, concerns were raised by a number of contributors about the threat to women only services as a result of funding bodies demanding mixed or gender-neutral service provision.

“When it comes to commissioning and procurement, councils get a bit twitchy, and they are reluctant, when commissioning, to specify that services should be women-run services, or women-only services, because they fear that will fall foul of the EU legislation. So, there needs to be a lot of education for local authorities. If they are to go down the commissioning route, it is perfectly okay, within that commissioning process, to say that ‘This is what we want our local services to look like’. That would not contravene any legislation, and local authorities would get support. We come back to the strategy: if the strategy says ‘This is what we want our services to look like across the country’, and if you tie that in with local area agreements or targets for local authorities, you begin to build a wall of support for how you want to see services delivered locally, and you support local

authorities to do that.

“... it comes back to the gender definition, because local authorities are putting pressure on our groups to provide mixed services, and there is no evidence that there should be mixed services. The gender equality duty even says that, as domestic abuse is predominantly a crime against women, local authorities should be doing their utmost to prevent it—and they are not doing so.”

Cardiff Welsh Women’s Aid

6.3.8 The Committee was also made aware of the sexual health needs of female victims of domestic abuse. Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) are one route to providing safe and non-traumatic access to sexual health services including cervical screening (See recommendations 6 and 28).

The Committee hopes that recommendation 6 will help ensure that services are commissioned in order to meet assessed needs.

6.3.9 The NSPCC also raised specific concerns that women who have to maintain contact with an abusive partner as a result of contact arrangements made through the Family Court could be at risk. Recommendation 10 above attempts to address this.

Men

6.3.10 It was felt by some contributors that men as victims of domestic abuse are still an after-thought in some quarters. The Committee took evidence from the Dyn project on the specific needs of male victims, and agrees that commissioners should consider the needs of men from different backgrounds and circumstances affected by domestic abuse.

People from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds or faith communities and non-British citizens

6.3.11 Contributors felt that domestic abuse services are not always sensitive to the different needs of BME groups – this is a particular problem in refuges where facilities such as kitchens and bathrooms are shared. Specific BME provision is limited. Particular challenges in publicising support to women who do not have very good English Language skills and might be socially isolated were identified. Evidence highlighted the specific vulnerability of BME victims for whom leaving an abusive relationship carries fears of destitution, repatriation, and alienation from their entire family and community support network. The need to develop mentoring programmes that take account of distinctive gender boundaries for boys and girls in some BME communities was also recognised.

6.3.12 Contributors raised concerns about the plight of the significant number of women fleeing domestic abuse with ‘No Recourse to Public Funds’ (NRPF) under UK immigration rules. The circumstances of women and children who have no recourse to public funds varies. They may be asylum seekers fleeing domestic violence, women with a spousal

visa, women from accession states whose entitlement is based on employment, partners of men in the UK under immigration restrictions, eg students, trafficked women or single women, whose cases will be lower priority than those trying to escape domestic abuse with children, and for whom it is claimed the suicide risk may be particularly high. These groups of women may not be aware of the Home Office 'domestic violence rule' which allows them access to services and benefits, and the records of BAWSO (Black Association of Women Step Out Ltd) suggest that the length of time for an application under the 'domestic violence rule' varies between 6-12 months, not the 28 days they say is claimed by the Home Office. In 2006-07 BAWSO supported 50 women with NRPF, and that organisation alone was obliged to turn away 72 women with NRPF from refuge during 2007-08, a number they say seems to be increasing rapidly. Other evidence from the NSPCC, Welsh Women's Aid and service providers in North Wales indicates the need to review support for BME women and children who are fleeing domestic abuse, or would leave an abusive situation if they were confident of the support available to them.

"Over the last two years we have supported more than 127 women with no recourse to public money, and about 50 of those women were supported in our refuges. That is mainly because of the resource implication for us as support providers. We do not turn the rest of the women away and say that we cannot support them. We have an outreach project that supports women emotionally, and through their immigration status, on the outreach project. While they are here, we provide the same level of service that we can as support providers, but it also has resource implications with us.

"The main implication for us is the lack of benefit that they can claim. Therefore, we are foregoing the housing benefit that we would have claimed, which contributes to the running cost of our refuges, for every woman who comes in. At the same time, because they are not eligible for benefits, we have to get donations for clothing and to be able to give a minimal amount of money for food; we pay a woman around £20, for example, but that alone can be spent on nappies and baby food, so they are struggling. Therefore, in a way, they are coming away from poverty, but they are coming into another sort of poverty situation for us.

"The way forward for us - and this is our recommendation - on a governmental level, is to eradicate the woman with no recourse two-year rule, which would help women not to be impoverished when they leave a situation of domestic abuse. That is another issue—many women do not leave the home, although they are suffering abuse, because at least they will not have to put their children through hardship by leaving. However, again, it is a choice that a woman has to make, and it takes them a long time, through outreach work, to get to the point where they finally decide that we can support them. Much of the time, we have to give ourselves a capped time limit and cap the number of women whom we can support at any one time because of resource implications. Therefore, many women's aid organisations share responsibilities, so we are not the only ones—other women's aid organisations are taking women on as well."

Black Association of Women Step Out (BAWSO)

Recommendation 11

The Welsh Assembly Government should provide a more cohesive and resourced response to the needs of women with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) under Home Office Immigration rules, and request that the UK Government change the NRPF rules. Until such time as the NRPF rules are changed, it should:

- Identify ways to raise awareness of the 'domestic violence rule' and communicate it within information and awareness-raising activities on domestic abuse
- Monitor the time taken for the Home Office to adjudicate decisions under the domestic abuse rule in Wales to assess the cost relating to NRPF
- Consider a formula for support for bodies supporting women with NRPF
- Consider commissioning research to monitor the incidence and response to women with NRPF over the next two years
- Ensure that women with NRPF are considered as a priority for both health and social services in future partnership working arrangements.

The Committee to receive a progress report on this work by May 2009. It should subsequently be included as a discrete section in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.

6.3.13 Concerns were also expressed in relation to sex-trafficked women in particular, and victims of 'honour'-based violence and abuse related to forced marriage. Research by BAWSO to identify the level of contact professionals and practitioners are having with cases of forced marriage has been limited, but figures for the number of (mostly young) BME women in refuges in Wales who were being forced into marriage have shown an increase. Monitoring data and training professionals in this area is very important.

6.3.14 The Committee welcomes the involvement of organisations representing the views of BME victims of domestic abuse in the work of the Welsh Assembly Government's All-Wales Domestic Abuse Working Group, and the work of its sub-group on specific issues of 'honour'-related abuse, female genital mutilation and forced marriage. The Henna Foundation's recent consultation with Welsh practitioners found a high level of uncertainty and lack of confidence in dealing with 'honour'-based violence and forced marriage, but the practitioners involved were very positive about the development of a directory and toolkit to help them deal with these sensitive issues. The Committee welcomes further research into the extent of these problems in Wales, and the roll-out of initiatives such as the directory and toolkit to help support those affected. The Committee intends that recommendations 6 and 8 will help improve the extent to which the needs of people from BME backgrounds are identified and met.

Older people

6.3.15 As stated in section 6.1, the Committee agreed that there was scope to strengthen the Assembly Government's Strategy in relation to older people. It was felt by some

contributors that MARAC, shown to be effective for some women, may be less suitable for older people and that work with older high risk victims of domestic abuse might require a different approach. Concerns that people with dementia do not have access to justice where they are not judged as a reliable witness were also raised. Age Concern Cymru recommended that an *Access to Justice* pilot project should be undertaken in Wales and there were calls for free independent advocacy for older people affected by domestic abuse. Concerns about whether the Strategy supports the victims of elder abuse were also raised (see Recommendation 3 above).

Recommendation 12

The Welsh Assembly Government should work with the UK Government to secure funding for an 'Access to Justice' pilot project focusing on vulnerable older witnesses.

The Committee to receive a progress report on this recommendation by May 2009. It should subsequently be included in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.

Disabled people

6.3.16 Contributors presented evidence that disabled people's needs are not being met in some areas, particularly in relation to refuge provision. It was also acknowledged that the MARAC system might not be the best way of addressing the needs of high risk disabled victims of domestic abuse. According to Welsh Women's Aid, 17 of their 45 refuges are not fully accessible to disabled people. Only one refuge can accommodate guide dogs and one is able to provide services in Braille. The Committee intends that a number of the recommendations included in this report will help ensure that the needs of disabled people are more effectively met (Recommendations 5, 6, 8 and 9 in particular).

"I feel that the (MARAC) model works for that group (black and minority ethnic people). I do not think it works so well for people with disabilities or for people who are elderly.

"I have recently done some training, which was Home Office-funded, for a group from Age Concern. Many people see abuse as something that happens to younger people, but we pick up referrals of people over 80 and we do pieces of creative work around those people. Often, these people grew up in a time where there was nowhere to go and the attitude was that you made your bed, so you had to lie in it, you should get on with it because this is what married life is like. So, abuse could have been going on for 56 years and clearly they feel that there is no choice and no way out. We did a piece of work where we brought forward a hospital appointment for the alleged perpetrator and when the hospital transport service picked them up they telephoned us. We then went in and saw the victim, who could not come out of their home. So, co-ordinated pieces of work through MARAC are happening with regard to the elderly, but we are not so good with that group, because the voluntary sector that works with this group sees it more as carer abuse, and many people

do not meet the threshold for vulnerable adults.”

Cardiff Women’s Safety Unit

Carers

6.3.17 Contributors felt that the stress experienced by carers and the people they care for can lead to a situation in which domestic abuse is a risk in a family where it was not previously. It was felt that the best way to help carers is to make sure general support is available. Carers Wales argued that there should now be a debate about the ‘social contract’. Young carers were seen to be a particularly vulnerable group of children and young people affected by domestic abuse.

Recommendation 13

The Welsh Assembly Government to take a lead in generating public debate on the ‘social contract’ and what it is reasonable to expect of carers in Wales. The needs of carers to be taken into account in particular in the implementation of recommendations 6, 8 and 9 of this report.

The Committee to receive a progress report on this recommendation by May 2009.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transexual (LGBT) people

6.3.18 Most services say they provide support for people regardless of their sexuality. However, some contributors felt that gay people can experience particular problems, for example disclosing abuse might also mean they have to ‘come out’ and present themselves as gay. Contributors felt that some providers have found that gay men and heterosexual men may prefer to access support in different ways, with gay men preferring advocacy services. The Committee intends that recommendation 8 in particular should help ensure that the needs of LGB people are considered and met. Issues of particular relevance to transexual people were not raised during the Inquiry but the Committee has included them as a group referred to in recommendation 8.

“The risk profile for male victims in same-sex partnerships is very similar to that of women. Stalking is an issue for them, so they sometimes need to flee a home, so we need to provide some sort of refuge space for men in same-sex partnerships.”

Cardiff Women’s Safety Unit

People with complex needs

6.3.19 Existing domestic abuse services can find it difficult to accommodate victims who also have problems relating to substance misuse, mental health, or physical impairment. The Domestic Abuse Safety Unit in North Wales has called for 24-hour staffed refuges for people with complex needs.

6.3.20 The Committee notes that the implementation plan for the recently published Assembly Government substance misuse strategy, *Working Together to Reduce Harm*¹⁵, includes three actions relating to domestic abuse:

- Produce a module of the Substance Misuse Treatment Framework which sets out good practice in joint working between domestic abuse and substance misuse services to include agreed admission policies for women's refuges
- Undertake an audit of screening procedures for domestic abuse, to ensure that appropriate service responses are made when domestic abuse co-exists with substance misuse
- Undertake an audit of the availability of awareness training on domestic abuse for the substance misuse workforce and ensure that joint training is delivered to both workforces

6.3.21 The Committee intends that a number of recommendations included in the report should help address the concerns raised by contributors, in particular, recommendations 5, 6, 7, 8 and 24 (NHS involvement in Community Safety Partnerships).

People in rural areas

6.3.22 People in rural areas sometimes have to travel significant distances to access support services. In some rural areas services are very limited or non-existent and there are problems of isolation for those affected. Provision of transport services in rural areas must be taken into account in ensuring the accessibility of support services. The Committee received evidence from service providers in North Wales about increased demand for refuge places for black and minority ethnic women. In North East Wales in particular, this included women of East European and Portuguese origin, reflecting the local demographics. Some women seeking refuge in the area had to be sent to England or South Wales due to a lack of specialist places available.

Recommendation 8 explicitly refers to rurality.

Welsh speakers

6.3.23 Domestic abuse services do not always have the capacity to provide services through the medium of Welsh. This may be a problem for people who feel most comfortable communicating through Welsh. Conwy Domestic Abuse Forum pointed to problems where a Welsh speaking victim who has to move to refuge due to a domestic abuse situation may be placed in England, and these problems are exacerbated for children with disabilities due to changes in care package provision. Welsh language needs should be mainstreamed through the Welsh Assembly Government's domestic abuse Strategy.

¹⁵ Welsh Assembly Government *Working Together to Reduce Harm – Three Year Implementation Plan 1008-11* October 2008: <http://new.wales.gov.uk/dsjlg/publications/communitysafety/strategy/plane.pdf?lang=en>

“For most Welsh speakers, the ability to discuss their problems in their first language would help them to feel secure and would also help to build a good relationship with those who are offering support. It should also be ensured that the following are available through the medium of Welsh: schemes that are aimed at preventing domestic abuse, including school programmes and awareness raising schemes, the support that is available through various groups, including advisory services for men, women and children, the services provided for adults and children who have suffered sexual abuse.”

Welsh Language Board

Recommendation 8 explicitly refers to the needs of Welsh speakers.

Involving service users

6.3.24 Despite efforts by the Welsh Assembly Government and partner organisations to bring the subject of domestic abuse into the open, it still remains to a greater or lesser extent a ‘hidden’ crime and its victims can seem invisible in the process of developing a policy response to the problem. Committee Members are very grateful to those victims of domestic abuse who agreed to speak to them in the course of the inquiry, including those women living in refuge who were prepared to meet with and talk to a male Committee Member. As stated in recommendation 8 above, the Committee believes it is vital that service users are fully involved in identifying gaps in provision and developing services that meet their needs.

“There is so much more we would like to be able to offer and we need for so much more. We need to turn the whole thing upside down so the service providers tell Government what they need to tackle the problem.”

Aberconwy Women’s Aid refuge

6.4 Preventative work / challenging cultural attitudes

6.4.1 Time and again contributors stressed the importance of early intervention in tackling domestic abuse, and the Committee received some disturbing evidence from service providers about the extent to which young people were reporting abuse within their own relationships. Those working with young people in schools and youth settings reported a worrying acceptance of abuse by some young people, and this is borne out by research collated by Amnesty International as part of its Stop Violence Against Women campaign. Contributors stressed the importance of teaching young people about what constitutes a healthy relationship. The NSPCC’s therapeutic services for young people affected by domestic abuse stress the importance of helping young people re-learn what constitutes a safe, healthy relationship, so that inappropriate learned behaviours are not acted out in their own relationships as adults.

“Something that I picked up on and to which I refer here, is the recent National Union of

Students survey about safety for women that reveals that, even among the 18 to 21 age group, there are still entrenched attitudes about what is appropriate and what is not and who is to blame for what. That will continue, unless we start much earlier; even if we start in primary schools now, it will still take 10 years to feed that through. It is about giving people the tools to get out of it, if it happens, and to also give boys the tools to say, 'I cannot do this; this is not right'. “

Domestic Abuse Coordinator, Torfaen

General preventative work with children

6.4.2 Contributors highlighted several examples of work being undertaken in schools and in other settings aimed at changing attitudes about the acceptability of domestic abuse among children and young people. There is significant variation in the way these interventions are delivered across Wales, for example:

- They are delivered by a range of people including teachers, domestic abuse specialists from the voluntary sector and police officers
- Interventions are delivered in some schools as part of the PSE curriculum but not in others
- Some interventions are delivered through the ‘Crucial Crew’ initiative but this does not operate in independent or private schools
- They vary in the amount of time invested and the methods used to deliver them
- The focus can also vary and might involve the promotion of healthy relationships, attitudes around domestic abuse and violence generally
- Provision to children and young people who are not in school also varies across Wales
- Arrangements for providing follow-up support to children who disclose experience of domestic abuse also varies.

6.4.3 Contributors have called for sustainable funding and more consistency in the provision of general preventative work to children. Some youth offending teams (YOTs) are now looking at ways of using restorative justice to work with young people who are at risk of or vulnerable to domestic abuse.

6.4.4 The Committee agrees that preventative work with young people is crucial if domestic abuse is to be effectively tackled. Preventative work will include awareness raising of the issue of domestic abuse and the support available to those affected by it and attempts to challenge attitudes about the acceptability of violence and abuse. The Committee heard several examples of innovative awareness raising and preventative work being undertaken in primary and secondary schools across Wales and recognises the contribution of specialist domestic abuse workers from the voluntary sector in delivering programmes. The Gwent Healthy Relationships pack and the Spectrum pack developed by Cymdeithas Tai Hafan are two examples the Committee is aware of. The Crucial Crew initiative is also a useful vehicle for delivering awareness-raising. It was noted by one

contributor that although children and young people can access Childline, the domestic abuse number given out on wristbands as part of some work in schools was for the National Domestic Abuse Helpline, primarily for adult victims. Preventative work should be delivered consistently over the time that children remain in primary and secondary education, not just in particular year groups, and age-appropriate materials and support should be available. It is also vital that work is undertaken consistently not just in schools but in all educational and youth settings, to ensure excluded children and young people are reached.

“We know, for instance, in Torfaen, that around 90 per cent of children with anti-social behaviour orders come from an abusive background. We know that the youth offending teams work with a high number of children who come from an abusive background. So, there is much anecdotal evidence around. We are not collecting anything specifically at present but that might be worth considering as a project.

“What staff quite often see is a difficult child, and they do not look beyond the difficulty; they do not look at what has been the cause of that difficult behaviour. We write children off because they are disruptive and we do not look behind that behaviour.”

Domestic Abuse Coordinator, Torfaen

6.4.5 The Committee is concerned that there is the great variety of approaches across Wales and a lack of co-ordinated evaluation. For example, in Swansea a domestic abuse information worker is located in a youth information project setting. They go into schools to deliver domestic abuse awareness-raising and offer support around those sessions to provide counselling and support to children and young people who disclose as a result, and the teachers and staff who work with those young people. By contrast, the Domestic Abuse Coordinator for Torfaen reported a lack of adequate support services for young people who disclosed abuse as a result of the awareness-raising work in schools there. There was no children’s worker in refuge, and counselling and children’s mental health services were overstretched. The Committee is obviously concerned that all children and young people in that situation have a clear, safe avenue for accessing help and support.

The Committee intends that recommendations 8 and 9 should help address this problem.

Recommendation 14

The Welsh Assembly Government should fund work to evaluate the preventative work currently being undertaken with children in schools and other educational settings throughout Wales. This research to be carried out as a matter of urgency. On the basis of its findings, the Assembly Government to issue guidance to schools and other voluntary and statutory organisations that work with children and young people that sets out the key components of an effective prevention programme. Guidance to be issued by May 2009. The Welsh Assembly Government to put in place a mechanism to monitor implementation

of the guidance.

The Committee to receive a progress report on this work by May 2009. It should subsequently be included as a discrete section in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.

Recommendation 15

The Welsh Assembly Government should fund work to evaluate the availability of:

- support services to children who disclose domestic abuse as a result of preventative work in schools and youth settings, and,
- the adequacy of current arrangements for the training of teachers and other professionals working with children and young people, particularly in relation to the handling of domestic abuse disclosures.

The aim of this research to identify gaps in provision, to highlight best practice to be shared across Wales and to identify where additional funding or support is needed to enable statutory and voluntary sector providers to work together to deliver support services consistently.

The Committee to receive a progress report on this work by May 2009. It should subsequently be included in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.

General preventative work with adults

6.4.6 The Committee also recognises the importance of raising awareness of the support available to people affected by domestic abuse and the unacceptability of violence and abuse with adults. Raising awareness and challenging attitudes amongst all sections of the population was seen as a crucial component of preventative work by many contributors working to tackle domestic abuse in different parts of Wales. Cardiff Welsh Women's Aid stressed that funding should not be diverted from frontline services to support the prevention agenda. The Assembly Government was seen as having a role in undertaking awareness raising, attitude changing and myth busting campaigns, including those which aim to help voluntary sector organisations recruit volunteers. The Scottish Government's awareness raising campaigns were praised.

6.4.7 The Welsh Assembly Government recommends that local authorities have workplace policies on domestic abuse, but it is not mandatory, and during a rapporteur visit to one local authority in North Wales it was noted that no workplace policy was in place.

Recommendation 16

The Welsh Assembly Government should work with partner organisations to develop a national information strategy to support the implementation of the domestic abuse strategy. The strategy should:

- Support the implementation of workplace policies in public sector organisations in Wales.
- Identify the ways in which the following types of information will be effectively publicised:
 - Details of support services available to people affected by domestic abuse
 - Advice on sources of legal advice
 - Materials which challenge attitudes about the acceptability of violence and abuse and domestic abuse related myths.

The Welsh Assembly Government and its partner organisations should involve representatives of particular groups, for example, those from BME communities or backgrounds, to ensure that information is accessible, both in terms of the language or format in which it is produced and the places it is publicised, and appropriate to each target group.

The Committee to receive a progress report on this work by May 2009. It should subsequently be included in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.

Awareness raising and training with public sector workers

6.4.8 The Committee understands the crucial importance of ensuring that workers in a range of key service areas are consistently identifying and responding to people affected by domestic abuse. Examples include: the police, magistrates and other criminal justice workers, family court staff, GPs, A&E staff, midwives and other health workers, teachers, local authority housing department workers and social service workers. The Committee recognises that significant progress has been made in a number of areas in terms of both training delivered as a component of generic training for all workers in a particular area and in terms of specialist training delivered to certain workers who are more likely to come into contact with people affected by domestic abuse than their colleagues. However, the Committee is concerned that even for children's services personnel and police officers training is not always mandatory, and there is still significant scope for improvement across a number of areas.

Recommendation 17

The Welsh Assembly Government should provide the Committee with a joint Ministerial report on current arrangements to ensure that workers within the following settings are competent in identifying and supporting people affected by domestic abuse (both in the

provision of direct services and by referring to or signposting specialist services):

- Primary and secondary health care settings
- Local authority housing departments and social housing landlords
- Schools and other educational and youth settings
- Family court
- Local authority social service departments

The Welsh Assembly Government should also liaise with the UK Government to identify arrangements for the training of police officers, magistrates and other criminal justice workers.

The Committee to receive a progress report by May 2009 on actions being taken to ensure that staff working in these areas are competent to identify and respond to the needs of people affected by domestic abuse. Further progress reports to be included in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.

6.4.9 A number of contributors stressed the crucial need for awareness of domestic abuse amongst key professional groups. Welsh Women's Aid, for example, called for mandatory training for criminal justice workers (including all police and magistrates), with NCH Cymru (re-named as Action for Children) expressing concerns about the lack of awareness among family court staff. The Committee identified a mismatch in the evidence received from different contributors about the extent to which these staff have received training, therefore the Committee would wish to be reassured that this area has been given sufficient attention. Teachers and housing department workers were also seen as a key group for whom domestic abuse training is crucial. The Assembly Government's Midwifery and Health Visiting Domestic Abuse Pathway was identified by several contributors as an example of good practice.

The NSPCC said:

"Awareness raising is one of the key issues, certainly for professionals, such as health visitors and maternity nurses in the case of pregnant women. We know that there is a higher risk of domestic abuse at that time. So, if people are aware of that fact, they can be extra vigilant, and can explore some of those issues. Staff working in schools should be aware of how domestic abuse can manifest itself in a child's behaviour. There may be changes in behaviour - a young person may even be overachieving at school, because they may think, 'If I am good and achieve at school, dad will stop hitting mum'. Staff should be aware of all the ways in which that can manifest itself. It is very complex. The key to providing support and places for low-risk young people to turn to is for all professionals who work with children and young people to have that awareness".

Some contributors provided examples of the problems which can arise when professionals have poor levels of awareness. Welsh Women's Aid expressed this concern in relation to court staff:

“Sentencing for domestic abuse-related incidents is a key concern for WWA and our members. Sentences handed down for domestic abuse-related incidents are routinely inappropriate; that the most common sentences for domestic abuse perpetrators are bind-overs and fines is highly problematic.”

6.5 Perpetrator Programmes

6.5.1 Perpetrator programmes have been developed to try to help perpetrators change their unacceptable behaviours and attitudes. There is variation in the provision of perpetrator programmes across Wales in terms of the models used and waiting times. Within the criminal justice system, the Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP) has been developed to work specifically with convicted offenders in the community and has been delivered within the prison setting. Perpetrator programmes are also delivered by voluntary sector organisations, many of which have been backed by the UK Government.

6.5.2 Key issues or concerns raised by contributors relating to perpetrator programmes include:

- Methodological difficulties involved in evaluating perpetrator programmes and demonstrating that they constitute an effective way of tackling domestic abuse, particularly in terms of evaluating the effectiveness of community-based programmes.
- The lack of sustainable funding for perpetrator programmes, in particular, those provided by the voluntary sector. Community perpetrator programmes were seen by some contributors to be very important for ‘non-convicted’ perpetrators and to address the long waiting lists for access to programmes.
- A co-ordinated community approach to domestic abuse was seen as fundamental to protect victims and rehabilitate offenders, with Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) being seen as examples of good practice. These models are based on information exchange and require all agencies to work together in a co-ordinated way. Some contributors felt that greater clarity was needed around data protection issues to better facilitate the sharing of information between agencies, particularly in health and social services. Most perpetrator programmes focus on the safety of victims and the role of women’s safety workers was seen as very important. Within the probation service, women’s safety workers provide support to the men’s partners and facilitate a two-way flow of information exchange. This was seen to be “absolutely crucial” in protecting the victims of domestic abuse.
- The importance of building an awareness of and addressing sexual violence in all perpetrator programmes was identified.

6.5.3 The Committee heard evidence of community programmes for perpetrators of domestic abuse who have not been convicted of an offence. The Committee also

appreciated the concerns of witnesses about the potential dangers associated with the unregulated delivery of programmes which are not evidence based and have not been evaluated.

6.5.4 The Committee supports those who feel strongly that any work done with perpetrators of domestic abuse should be regulated to ensure adherence to minimum standards and very strict criteria. Concerns were expressed that some programmes which are not based on recognised models are being established without any regulation and it was felt that this could be dangerous for victims. It was highlighted that some voluntary organisations do not have access to the right training or information to risk assess people properly, and that poorly delivered programmes could actually increase the risk of domestic abuse.

6.5.5 Restorative Justice was seen by some contributors to be an effective way of working with perpetrators of domestic abuse, with the SORI programme at HMP Cardiff being identified as an example of best practice. The Committee recognises that views on the use of restorative justice as a domestic abuse intervention are polarised. Some contributors felt that there were risks around the use of restorative justice, especially in relation to high risk offenders and those still in violent relationships. Others felt that it identifies and responds to a gap in provision, in particular, by providing a victim-centred service. Victim Support Gwent, which works with partners of those involved in the SORI programme at HMP Cardiff, reported the views of a domestic abuse victim involved in SORI who found it helpful in ‘finding closure’ and moving on positively in their lives.

“I contacted one of the ladies that I have supported, who has done the Freedom programme and been involved in IDAP; she now works with Women’s Aid. I asked her to give me one statement from her point of view as a victim of crime, whom I had supported through the SORI programme, that I could bring to the committee to say what it had given to her. She gave me one word - ‘closure’ - which was huge. She said that she was a better person, a better mother and a better member of society because she would not accept the treatment that she had received. It gave her confidence and the understanding of what she had been told by the Freedom programme, Women’s Aid, family members and so on - that it was not her fault: it took a perpetrator to get her to believe that. I thought that that was immense; that is what makes it real, and that is what I am bringing to the table today.”

Victim Support Gwent

6.5.6 Statutory programmes for convicted abusers which are run by the prison and probation service (and funded by the UK Government) appear to have a strong focus on risk assessment and to be well evaluated, although the contributors highlighted problems in terms of waiting times and drop out rates.

“The successful programmes in Europe and in this country have key features that we are trying to replicate in the SORI pilot, which we are about to do using the Home Office grant

that we have received. We are concerned about safeguards for victims and procedures for checking voluntarism - it must be voluntary for all parties; there must be no coercion. There needs to be a multi-agency approach - and we are looking at the multi-agency risk assessment conferences model, because it has been successful. Support services need to be available before and after any restorative intervention. Sufficient staff resources are required to ensure safety, and there needs to be rigorous training and supervision.”

Restorative Justice Coordinator, HMP Cardiff

Recommendation 18

The Welsh Assembly Government should undertake an evaluation of the availability and efficacy of community perpetrator programmes delivered by voluntary sector organisations which are open to self confessed perpetrators of domestic abuse who have not been convicted of an offence. On the basis of its findings the Assembly Government should issue guidance to service commissioners which identifies the components of effective practice and sets out minimum standards for such programmes.

The Welsh Assembly Government should work with its partner organisations to ensure that only service providers who can meet the required standards and deliver an effective service are funded to provide such services.

The evaluation and guidance to be completed by May 2009. It should subsequently be included in the Welsh Assembly Government’s annual domestic abuse report.

6.6 Funding

6.6.1 Funding arrangements for the provision of services and interventions aimed at preventing, and supporting people affected by domestic abuse are complex. The organisations which provide such services in Wales are funded by a range of devolved, non-devolved and charitable bodies, including:

- The Welsh Assembly Government
- UK Government departments including the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice and also the National Offender Management System
- A wide range of grant awarding bodies, such as the Big Lottery Fund, BBC Children in Need, and Lloyds TSB
- Statutory organisations such as local authorities, the police, prison and probation services
- Statutory partnership bodies, such as Community Safety Partnerships

6.6.2 The Welsh Assembly Government operates a three year funding cycle for voluntary sector organisations but this is not the case with many other funding bodies. The number of funding streams, as well as their different eligibility criteria, timescales, application procedures and monitoring requirements, place significant pressures on some service providers. It is vital that the responsible Welsh Ministers work closely with their UK Government counterparts to minimise the negative impact of this situation on the delivery of domestic abuse services in Wales.

“The (Welsh Assembly Government) strategy is good but unless you have the people on the ground to do the work, what’s the point? It needs proper funding going straight to local grass-roots groups”.

Domestic Abuse Safety Unit (DASU)

6.6.3 The clearest and most common theme to have emerged from the evidence provided by contributors relates to the lack of sustainable funding. Current funding arrangements, contributors have argued, hamper the implementation of the Welsh Assembly Government’s Strategy in a number of ways. For example:

- Service planning and development is hampered and sometimes skewed according to the priorities of funders rather than assessed and demonstrable areas of need. A reported example of this would be the pressure on organisations to provide service for women and men, at the cost of women-only services. A further reported example would be the criteria attached to the Supporting People funding which does not support the development of outreach work
- Service provision is also skewed by competition, both that between provider organisations for limited funding opportunities, and as a result of the emphasis on high risk cases which reduces the amount of funding available for preventative and early intervention work
- Short-term funding results in short-term staff contracts which have a negative impact on attempts to recruit and retain experienced and qualified staff
- There are no arrangements to ensure a continuation of funding for effective pilot schemes once short-term project funding comes to an end
- The bureaucratic demands of having to apply for a number of funding streams, and providing different monitoring data, where bids are successful, places a significant drain on staff resources
- Some witnesses have argued that statutory partners are not contributing to projects which help them meet their own responsibilities, for example, through the services provided by Sexual Abuse Referral Centres (SARCs)
- The lack of sustainable funding impacts on the availability of services for groups with particular needs, for example, children and young people, disabled and older people, and people from BME backgrounds or faith communities.

Some examples of specific concerns about the lack of sustainable funding in relation to four specific types of provision are highlighted below:

6.6.4 Children’s workers: Despite funding made available by the Welsh Assembly Government to Welsh Women’s Aid for children’s workers, the overall funding of refuge based and outreach children’s workers was seen to be “piecemeal”, with funding being provided by a range of other organisations to fill the gap including local authorities, Community Safety Partnerships, BBC Children in Need and Comic Relief. The level of specialist support for children affected by domestic abuse was assessed as being inadequate by those who those who have provided evidence to Committee, including Welsh Women’s Aid, local Women’s Aid Groups and Children in Need, which has provided funding for children’s workers for a number of years. These organisations and several others have called for core funding, along the lines of that provided by the Scottish Government (see below).

“It has become patently clear over a long time that the dependence of some organisations on our funding for what can only be deemed core, essential services for the welfare of children in the most vulnerable of situations is growing to a proportion that is not sustainable. We have a long record of commitment to this sector and to the children in this sector. We are worried that we cannot sustain that level of funding, and the purpose of my paper is to illustrate the fragility of the funding regimes that exist. Some services appear to be funded as an optional add-on, when that is patently not the requirement: these are essential services.”

BBC Children in Need

6.6.5 Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs): During a rapporteur visit to the North Wales Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (RASASC), Mark Isherwood AM heard that, with the exception of the North Wales police, funding for partners involved in the delivery of a North Wales SARC, due to be launched later this year, was not yet in place. Funding has been awarded by Lloyds TSB and other bids have been made, including a bid to the Home Office. The Director of RASASC, a key partner in the SARC, has argued that one year funding awards “keep an organisation in crisis”. Funding for SARCs should extend beyond core capital funding to ensure that the full range of services they offer are funded on a sustainable basis for the long term.

“The SARC is there, it’s happening, but nobody is sure yet how it will work and who is doing what, when or how. What would change life dramatically would be an administration worker, but there’s no pot of money for this and we’re fire-fighting all the time.

“There is no funding in place for the future. We are applying for the Big Lottery. If we could get grant money for five years for at least half of what we need, we could plan for the future and use that as leverage for obtaining the balance of funding.

“We need help. We are so under-resourced it is frustrating but we’re here because we care about the people we work with.”

North Wales Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre

6.6.6 Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVCs) / Independent Domestic

Violence Advocates/Advisers (IDVAs): The Chief Crown Prosecutor for the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in South Wales, amongst others, argued that SDVCs had been shown to be effective in increasing the number of successful prosecutions against perpetrators of domestic violence. IDVAs are a central component of their success, yet the role does not attract secure funding. The Chief Crown Prosecutor for the CPS in South Wales has recommended that secure funding for the IDVA role would represent an important change for people affected by domestic abuse. In Wrexham an Independent Domestic Violence Adviser was trained and in post for 14 months before returning to more secure employment with the local authority. The postholder's resignation was believed to be due to the insecurity of the funding position for the IDVA post.

6.6.7 Access to Legal Aid: The Legal Services Commission highlighted changes to the financial eligibility rules for legal aid in domestic abuse cases which came into force in April 2007, with victims of domestic abuse being identified as a priority group. However, it was noted that the funding is not ring-fenced for domestic abuse work and has not been secured for the future.

6.6.8 The funding model of the Scottish Government has been praised by several contributors. The Scottish Government has three separate budget lines for Violence Against Women, Children's Workers in Women's Aid refuges, and Rape Crisis Centres¹⁶, which were worth a total of just over £7.9 million in 2008-09.

Recommendation 19

The Welsh Assembly Government should undertake a review of all funding streams which are potentially available to statutory, voluntary and other providers of services for people affected by domestic abuse, including Supporting People, by May 2009. The review should include an assessment of whether the current potential funding mechanisms facilitate the provision of the range of services necessary to support people affected by domestic abuse at an early intervention, crisis and post crisis stage. The review should also assess the impact of funding mechanisms on the recruitment and retention of staff to provide those services.

Further progress reports to subsequently be included as a discrete section in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.

Recommendation 20

The Welsh Assembly Government should provide core funding for key services for

¹⁶See Scottish Government *An funding overview for VAWFS, CSWAF and RCSF, plus a list of projects successful in securing VAWFS for 2008-11*. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Equality/violence-women/Successful>

children and young people affected by domestic abuse including:

- Children and young people workers in refuges
- Outreach workers for children and young people who have moved on from refuge accommodation
- Counselling
- Advocacy
- Mental health services (CAMHS)

Sustainable core funding should be secured by May 2009.

6.6.9. Many of the problems associated with the lack of sustainable funding were also identified by the Committee in its previous inquiry into voluntary sector funding in Wales.

Recommendation 21

The Welsh Assembly Government to ensure timely implementation of the recommendations of the Committee's previous Inquiry into voluntary sector funding in Wales, in particular to review progress on recommendations 8-14 which relate to the provision of accessible and sustainable funding, and report an update to the Communities and Culture Committee at the earliest opportunity and no later than May 2009. Further reporting to be included in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.

6.6.10. Conviction rates in domestic abuse cases in Wales have increased significantly in recent years, and the Committee welcomes the role of the Specialist Domestic Violence Courts, Independent Domestic Violence Advisers and Sexual Assault Referral Centres in this respect. It wishes to see secure funding for these initiatives to ensure that domestic abuse victims in all parts of Wales have the same safe and swift access to the criminal justice system. Evidence from the Legal Services Commission identified some issues with lack of information about legal aid and the cost of legal advice. The Committee notes the Commission is considering introducing a fixed fee for domestic abuse cases to avoid any abuses within the system of already vulnerable people. Lack of support for victims when they reach court was also highlighted by its work with domestic abuse victims in North East England.

"Another issue is a lack of support when people get to court, which is frustrating for us to hear, because we know that Victim Support is present at court and that the courts service staff are committed to ensuring that the court experience is as pleasant as it possibly can be. However, people have often told us that they have been left on their own or they have seen the person who has attacked them nearby with his or her family, and that it has been an unpleasant and frightening experience for them. So, all we can do is to relay those experiences and try to work together with others to make sure that it does not happen again."

Recommendation 22

The Welsh Assembly Government should work with relevant UK Government departments, as a matter of urgency, to ensure that all key partners in funding Sexual Assault Referral Centres, Specialist Domestic Violence Courts and Independent Domestic Violence Advisers are core funded to the extent that these services will be sustainable over the long-term. Sustainable funding should be secured by May 2009.

Progress in this area should subsequently be included as a discrete section in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.

6.7 Multi-agency working and strategic arrangements

6.7.1 The *Crime and Disorder Act 1998*, as amended, places a responsibility on partnerships of local authorities, police, fire authorities and local health boards in partnership with others, to formulate and implement local strategies for the reduction of crime and disorder and substance misuse. The Welsh Assembly Government's domestic abuse strategy identifies Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) as *"the driving vehicle to deliver this strategy"*.

The Strategy recommends that specific measures aimed at tackling domestic abuse are to be incorporated into local Community Safety Plans and that Community Safety Partnerships work closely with Domestic Abuse Fora to assist with this work.

6.7.2 The Committee is concerned that not all CSPs are working as effectively as they might in co-ordinating action to tackle domestic abuse.

"The main way to help combat domestic abuse is to work in partnership and in tandem together; this is crucial. I will give you an idea of what happens across Wales from a coordinator's perspective. There are now 18 co-ordinators across Wales, so there is almost one for every local authority.,.,

"Every co-ordinator has a different pay scale, a different job description, and a different line of reporting. Some report to the police, some report to the local authority, some are registered charities within their own right.

"Each community safety partnership views domestic abuse at a different priority level. I have been doing some research across the local CSPs across Wales. Some community safety partnerships invested between £20,000 and £60,000 on their community safety plan towards domestic abuse last year, while others gave £2,000. So, across Wales, it is totally

different.”

Carmarthenshire Domestic Abuse Forum

6.7.3 Arrangements for the planning and commissioning of domestic abuse services and interventions vary significantly across Wales. Contributors have identified a number of examples of what they consider to be good practice in multi-agency working including groups which, for example, aim to tackle domestic abuse by reducing risks for children or adults already known to partner agencies through the sharing of information, or by identifying areas of unmet need and commissioning pilot projects to meet them.

“The weekly Children’s Services Panel enables sharing of information and addressing lots of issues before they get to the MARAC and also post-MARAC. The Members meet weekly but we also work together in between. The Panel has been a great success and we recommend that all areas should have it.”

Flintshire County Council Children’s Services Domestic Abuse Panel

6.7.4 Contributors also spoke about their concerns and frustrations about local strategic arrangements for tackling substance misuse.

“It’s great in meetings, there’s lots of agreement round the table, but then people go away and take forever while we have to come back to the centre and deal with the problem.”

North Wales Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre

6.7.5 Since the relative advantages of regional arrangements have not been evaluated, it is not clear whether particular models are more or less likely to be effective in addressing domestic abuse than others.

Examples of concerns raised by contributors about current arrangements include:

- The lack of coherence and joined-up working between key partners in different parts of Wales
- NHS service providers were identified by a number of contributors as failing to engage with the cross-cutting agenda to tackle domestic abuse
- Significant variation in the role and position of local authority domestic abuse coordinators
- A lack of clarity about which organisations are responsible for the commissioning of particular services, for example, follow-on support for children and young people who have been affected by domestic abuse, and services for victims of domestic abuse with complex needs such as those relating to substance misuse, mental health problems or physical impairment
- A lack of centrally held and easily accessible information, for example, a list of all domestic abuse co-ordinators and independent domestic violence advocates

- Adults and children affected by domestic abuse are not sufficiently involved in the planning and development of services
- The Gender Equality Duty is not being used to its full potential to drive forward the domestic abuse agenda within and amongst public bodies in Wales
- The financial resources required to support strategic arrangements are taking funds away from front line services
- There is a need for Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs) to work together more effectively to ensure consistency in practice across criminal justice agencies in Wales
- The lack of corporate targets or key performance indicators relating to domestic abuse within some statutory organisations could divert resources away from domestic abuse provision
- National organisations like Victim Support experience difficulties in trying to engage with key stakeholders and funders across Wales as a result of the number or regional bodies involved and differences in boundaries across sectors
- The number of regional bodies involved in delivering services to victims of domestic abuse could be resulting in duplication of efforts and, in some cases, gaps in services
- The Welsh Association of Police Officers identified difficulties arising from a general lack of clarity about the rules governing information transfer / sharing and the different responsibilities and accountabilities of various sectors and organisations. In their evidence to the Committee, Welsh Ministers acknowledged the importance of disclosure and information-sharing protocols that protect the interests of victims of domestic abuse, and pointed to the new disclosure protocol between CAFCASS and the Police
- Some contributors spoke about the good will amongst those who meet in multi-agency groups but the subsequent lack of action, possibly resulting from the situation identified by the Welsh Association of Police Officers above. The North Wales Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre has called for better management and direction for strategic planning groups
- The Legal Services Commission identified a lack of support for victims of domestic abuse when they get to court and also felt that a national information strategy was needed to signpost victims to services and support.

6.7.6. In order to address the current lack of consistency and coordination at a strategic level, and to identify and capitalise on existing good strategic practice, the Committee makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation 23

The Welsh Assembly Government should evaluate the efficacy of multi-agency planning structures and the role of the domestic abuse co-ordinator in all parts of Wales in terms of:

- Service planning and commissioning;

- Information sharing; and
- Risk management

In particular, the Welsh Assembly Government should evaluate the extent to which Community Safety Partnerships are acting as an effective driving vehicle for the local implementation of the strategy.

The findings of this evaluation should be disseminated to all partner agencies with advice on what works, by May 2009. Further reporting to be included as a discrete section in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.

Recommendation 24

The Welsh Assembly Government to ask Community Safety Partnerships to:

- Demonstrate what they are doing to tackle domestic abuse in their area
- Provide details of the resources committed to tackling domestic abuse by each statutory partner
- Demonstrate how citizens and domestic abuse service providers have been involved in action planning to tackle domestic abuse.
- Demonstrate any work with the criminal justice system to support early intervention programmes and highlight any obstacles to effective working, particularly in relation to links between domestic abuse and substance misuse

If Community Safety Partnerships do not comply with the request, the Assembly Government should consider how joint powers with the Secretary of State contained in the *Crime and Disorder Act 1998* could be used to require Partnerships to take these actions.

The Committee to receive a progress report on this work by May 2009. It should subsequently be included in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.

6.7.7 The Committee has heard evidence which suggests that NHS bodies do not always play a significant role in multi-agency attempts to tackle domestic abuse.

“We have done quite a lot since 2005 to develop as many SARC’s as we have, as it is extremely difficult to do that. It is even more difficult to sustain a SARC once you have developed it. The Home Office will give you the start-up costs, and we have received funding for independent sexual violence advisers within those posts. However, after that, SARC’s should be funded by the statutory bodies. They look for partnership between health, Communities First, social services, the police and the statutory body. We have further developed the three centres in Wales. [...] The difficulty that we find is that we cannot get the health authority to interact with us on the funding, and it is a huge struggle for us because we cannot get that partnership.”

Libby Jones, New Pathways

6.7.8 It would appear that misunderstanding amongst some health professionals about data protection legislation is a barrier to NHS information sharing with other agencies. The Committee noted that the MARAC process demonstrates that safe and appropriate information-sharing can help protect high-risk individuals, and concerns about data protection have been overcome to some extent in the field of child abuse.

6.7.9 Evidence from the Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC’s) in Wales also indicates that most women who suffer sexual assault or domestic violence are extremely reluctant to visit health clinics and genito-urinary medicine clinics, understandably due to the trauma of the experiences they have suffered. This has profound consequences as they do not benefit from regular smear tests to detect cervical cancer, or get tested for sexually transmitted diseases. These are vital tests for these women considering the experiences they have had. The SARC’s provide an opportunity for the services of GUM clinics and cervical smears in a safe, less traumatic, trusted environment. By conducting these clinics in the SARC for the women who have suffered sexual assault or domestic violence the local health organisations would be providing a vital health service for a crucial section of society that are currently not being served. The Welsh Assembly Government should look at the possibility of taking sexual health services into the SARC’s rather than expecting women to access them by going into hospitals and clinics. Further research in this area would be welcomed (see Recommendation 26).

Recommendation 25

The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure that senior health service representatives play a full part in multi-agency attempts to tackle domestic abuse, particularly through Community Safety Partnerships, identifying and helping to overcome barriers to NHS involvement in the domestic abuse agenda.

In order to facilitate this, the Welsh Assembly Government should issue guidance to Local Health Boards and NHS Trusts clarifying the implications of data protection legislation within this setting. This guidance should also be made available to medical and nursing bodies. The guidance to be issued by May 2009. Further reporting to be included in the

Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.

6.7.10 A number of contributors identified the Gender Equality Duty contained within the *Equalities Act 2006* as a mechanism for driving forward the domestic abuse agenda in public bodies which is not currently being effectively utilised.

"The gender equality duty is a significant tool that can be used to ensure that public bodies are prioritising this issue. The gender equality duty places a legal duty to prioritise action on the most significant areas of gender inequality and we believe that, given the gravity, the scale and the impact of domestic abuse, public authorities should be considering domestic abuse as one of the key issues for them to tackle in terms of tackling gender inequality."

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Recommendation 26

The Welsh Assembly Government should work with the Equality and Human Rights Commission to identify ways in which the Gender Equality Duty and other equality legislation might be used to progress action to tackle domestic abuse within key public bodies, and report back to the Communities and Culture Committee by May 2009. Further reporting to be included in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.

6.8 Evaluation, monitoring and research

6.8.1 Many of the organisations who provide services and interventions aimed at preventing and supporting victims of domestic abuse, and those involved in the rehabilitation of perpetrators, provided the Committee with evidence of the ways in which they monitor and evaluate success. Contributors made a number of recommendations which they believe would result in a more effective implementation of the principles of the Assembly Government's Strategy. These fell into two broad categories:

Action to increase understanding of the prevalence and nature of domestic abuse

6.8.2 Professor Jonathan Shepherd of the University Hospital of Wales recommended a four stage approach to improve the domestic abuse evidence base through the collection of data in hospitals, and A&E departments in particular:

- NHS Trusts in Wales with A&E departments should all have information systems which are capable of identifying repeat attenders, and particularly repeat attenders who are injured.
- Basic data collection should be followed up with practical action. An effective model involves having a nurse with responsibility for analysing the information collected to identify victims followed by support and referral to relevant organisations.
- Involvement of senior NHS practitioners in the community safety agenda through CSP involvement
- A compulsory audit of domestic violence activity as part of the rolling programme of clinical audits in NHS trusts with A&E departments

6.8.3 A number of contributors identified areas where, in their view, research should be undertaken to inform service design and commissioning practice. These include:

- A focus on domestic abuse and older people
- A focus on domestic abuse and carers
- Independent evaluation of the MARAC approach
- Further evaluation on restorative justice and perpetrator programmes
- Evaluation of schools based and other preventative programmes
- Research into continuing low levels of charging in domestic abuse cases

6.8.4 The Committee supported Professor Jonathan Shepherd's recommendations relating to the improvement of the domestic abuse evidence base through the collection of data in hospitals, and A&E departments.

Recommendation 27

The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure, by May 2009, that:

- NHS Trusts in Wales with A&E departments have information systems which are capable of identifying repeat attenders, and particularly repeat attenders who are injured.
- Basic data collection should be followed up with practical action, for example, by having a nurse with responsibility for analysing the information collected to identify victims followed by support and referral to relevant organisations.
- An audit of domestic violence activity is undertaken as part of the rolling programme of clinical audits in NHS trusts with A&E departments

Outcomes of this work should be included in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.

Robust monitoring and evaluation of domestic abuse services and interventions

6.8.5 A number of witnesses talked about the importance of being able to demonstrate that interventions are effective in a context of limited financial resourcing. For example, in their written evidence, BAWSO state:

“It is too easy to report ‘good progress’ and the ‘delivery of outcomes’ without reference to robust and verifiable monitoring and evaluation practices. Progress must be measurable and must go beyond claiming the establishment of a new initiative or a number of new projects to evidencing their impact. Sound monitoring and evaluation will enable attention to be paid to services that are not effective and gaps in provision. It will also balance claims of progress and success where they are exaggerated or unsubstantiated. The current determined approach towards policy and project reviews is entirely correct and must be maintained if the appropriateness and quality of services is to improve.”

Recommendation 28

The Welsh Assembly Government should undertake a programme of research to inform service design and commissioning practice in a number of ‘under-researched’ areas including:

- The needs of older people affected by domestic abuse
- The needs of carers affected by domestic abuse
- The sexual health needs of women affected by domestic abuse
- Evaluation of community based perpetrator programmes for domestic abusers who have not been convicted of an offence
- Evaluation of preventative and awareness raising programmes aimed at children and young people

The Welsh Assembly Government should work with the UK Government to identify scope for undertaking research into levels of charging in domestic abuse cases and an independent evaluation of the MARAC approach. The Committee to receive a progress report on this work by May 2009. It should subsequently be included in the Welsh Assembly Government’s annual domestic abuse report.

7. Recommendations

<p>1</p>	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government to report on progress with implementing the Communities and Culture Committee’s domestic abuse inquiry report by May 2009, and thereafter to publish and lay before the Assembly an annual report on: the effectiveness of its strategy; how its action plan for implementation is progressing; and how the responsible Welsh Ministers are working with their UK Government counterparts on funding the delivery of domestic abuse services in Wales.</p> <p>Reporting should include detail on the specific areas indicated in the Communities and Culture Committee’s report recommendations.</p>
<p>2</p>	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government’s domestic abuse strategy should better reflect the needs and circumstances of older people by ensuring that domestic abuse related publications make it clear that domestic abuse affects older people, for example, in the use of images. The revised strategy to be available by May 2009.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government should undertake work to identify the potential benefits and impact of extending the scope of its domestic abuse strategy to cover the abuse of older people perpetrated by anyone in care homes, day centres and other regulated settings.</p> <p>The Welsh Assembly Government should report its evidence-based conclusions to the Committee by May 2009.</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government’s domestic abuse strategy and all associated guidance should explicitly state that domestic abuse is an infringement of the rights of children and young people, and that access to help and support after experiencing domestic abuse is a right, as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The revised strategy to be available by May 2009.</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government should work with local authorities to evaluate the extent to which available and appropriate move-on accommodation for women and families leaving refuges meets the need.</p> <p>The Welsh Assembly Government should work with local authorities and other partners to ensure that effective strategies are in place to fill gaps in the provision of appropriate move-on accommodation. The Committee to receive a progress report on this work by May 2009, and The Welsh Assembly Government to subsequently include it as a discrete section in its annual domestic abuse report.</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government should produce guidance directed at commissioning authorities, identifying the range and standards of services which should be provided to meet the needs of people affected by domestic abuse at an early intervention stage, at crisis point, and following crisis intervention. The guidance should cover the types of service identified in section 6.2.4 above.</p>

	<p>The guidance should be evidence based and reflect the different kinds and levels of need amongst people in different circumstances. It should also indicate what is reasonable in terms of how long people should have to wait to access different services. The guidance to be issued by May 2009.</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government should assist organisations who wish to recruit volunteers by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting domestic abuse organisations in the recruitment and retention of volunteers, for example, by publicising recruitment activities, and; • financially supporting the training of volunteers recruited by organisations that can demonstrate that they are making an effective contribution in tackling domestic abuse in Wales, including those that offer counselling, advice and information services and pet fostering schemes. • Identifying other ways to promote the services provided by these organisations. <p>The Committee to receive a progress report on work in this area by May 2009, and the Welsh Assembly Government to subsequently include it as a discrete section in its annual domestic abuse report.</p>
<p>8</p>	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government should work with its partners to produce an action plan which provides details of how its domestic abuse Strategy will be implemented. The action plan should include key delivery milestones and should explicitly set out how the Strategy will support people from the following groups who are affected by domestic abuse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women • Children and young people • Men • Older people • People from Black and Minority Ethnic or faith backgrounds or communities, including women with no recourse to public funds • Disabled people • Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual people • Carers • People with complex needs, including those with mental health and/or substance misuse problems, who require specialist services such as 24-hour support in refuge • People in rural areas, including taking account of rural transport issues in funding decisions • Welsh speakers <p>The action plan should be developed with the involvement of people from the groups identified above and placed in the public domain. The Welsh Assembly Government should provide the Committee with a progress report on the action</p>

	<p>plan by May 2009 and subsequently include this as a discrete section in its annual domestic abuse report.</p>
9	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure that the needs of children and young people affected by domestic abuse are met. In particular, it should ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All children and young people in refuges are supported by specialist workers • Children and young people moving on from refuge provision continue to be supported by specialist workers • All children and young people who are known by organisations to have been affected by domestic abuse, or who disclose that they have been affected by domestic abuse should have timely access to age-appropriate counselling, therapeutic, mental health, advice and advocacy services as required • Provision is made for young men aged 14 to 18 to be able to stay with their mother or other carer when they need to leave the family home as a result of domestic abuse • Provision is made for young women aged under 18 who are victims of domestic abuse from their own partner • Provision is made for disabled children or the children of a disabled parent who needs to leave their home urgently. There is a need to address both the physical accessibility of refuges and to ensure that care packages can be re-arranged quickly after a move. <p>The Committee to receive a progress report on this work by May 2009, and it should subsequently be included as a discrete section in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.</p>
10	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government should work with CAF/CASS and relevant voluntary sector organisations to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify cases where children have been abused during contact visits or where mothers have been abused as a result of contact arrangements. • take action to minimise the risks to children and women associated with contact arrangements in future. <p>A report should be submitted to the Committee by May 2009 which provides a summary of progress.</p>
11	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government should provide a more cohesive and resourced response to the needs of women with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) under Home Office Immigration rules, and request that the UK Government change the NRPF rules. Until such time as the NRPF rules are changed, it should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify ways to raise awareness of the 'domestic violence rule' and

	<p>communicate it within information and awareness-raising activities on domestic abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the time taken for the Home Office to adjudicate decisions under the domestic abuse rule in Wales to assess the cost relating to NRPF • Consider a formula for support for bodies supporting women with NRPF • Consider commissioning research to monitor the incidence and response to women with NRPF over the next two years • Ensure that women with NRPF are considered as a priority for both health and social services in future partnership working arrangements. <p>The Committee to receive a progress report on this work by May 2009. It should subsequently be included as a discrete section in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.</p>
12	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government should work with the UK Government to secure funding for an 'Access to Justice' pilot project focusing on vulnerable older witnesses.</p> <p>The Committee to receive a progress report on this recommendation by May 2009. It should subsequently be included in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.</p>
13	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government to take a lead in generating public debate on the 'social contract' and what it is reasonable to expect of carers in Wales. The needs of carers to be taken into account in particular in the implementation of recommendations 6, 8 and 9 of this report.</p> <p>The Committee to receive a progress report on this recommendation by May 2009.</p>
14	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government should fund work to evaluate the preventative work currently being undertaken with children in schools and other educational settings throughout Wales. This research to be carried out as a matter of urgency. On the basis of its findings, the Assembly Government to issue guidance to schools and other voluntary and statutory organisations that work with children and young people that sets out the key components of an effective prevention programme. Guidance to be issued by May 2009. The Welsh Assembly Government to put in place a mechanism to monitor implementation of the guidance.</p> <p>The Committee to receive a progress report on this work by May 2009. It should subsequently be included as a discrete section in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.</p>
15	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government should fund work to evaluate the availability of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support services to children who disclose domestic abuse as a result of preventative work in schools and youth settings, and, • the adequacy of current arrangements for the training of teachers and

	<p>other professionals working with children and young people, particularly in relation to the handling of domestic abuse disclosures.</p> <p>The aim of this research to identify gaps in provision, to highlight best practice to be shared across Wales and to identify where additional funding or support is needed to enable statutory and voluntary sector providers to work together to deliver support services consistently.</p> <p>The Committee to receive a progress report on this work by May 2009. It should subsequently be included in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.</p>
<p>16</p>	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government should work with partner organisations to develop a national information strategy to support the implementation of the domestic abuse strategy. The strategy should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the implementation of workplace policies in public sector organisations in Wales. • Identify the ways in which the following types of information will be effectively publicised: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of support services available to people affected by domestic abuse • Advice on sources of legal advice • Materials which challenge attitudes about the acceptability of violence and abuse and domestic abuse related myths. <p>The Welsh Assembly Government and its partner organisations should involve representatives of particular groups, for example, those from BME communities or backgrounds, to ensure that information is accessible, both in terms of the language or format in which it is produced and the places it is publicised, and appropriate to each target group.</p> <p>The Committee to receive a progress report on this work by May 2009. It should subsequently be included in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.</p>
<p>17</p>	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government should provide the Committee with a joint Ministerial report on current arrangements to ensure that workers within the following settings are competent in identifying and supporting people affected by domestic abuse (both in the provision of direct services and by referring to or signposting specialist services):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary and secondary health care settings • Local authority housing departments and social housing landlords • Schools and other educational and youth settings • Family court

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authority social service departments <p>The Welsh Assembly Government should also liaise with the UK Government to identify arrangements for the training of police officers, magistrates and other criminal justice workers.</p> <p>The Committee to receive a progress report by May 2009 on actions being taken to ensure that staff working in these areas are competent to identify and respond to the needs of people affected by domestic abuse. Further progress reports to be included in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.</p>
18	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government should undertake an evaluation of the availability and efficacy of community perpetrator programmes delivered by voluntary sector organisations which are open to self confessed perpetrators of domestic abuse who have not been convicted of an offence. On the basis of its findings the Welsh Assembly Government should issue guidance to service commissioners which identifies the components of effective practice and sets out minimum standards for such programmes.</p> <p>The Welsh Assembly Government should work with its partner organisations to ensure that only service providers who can meet the required standards and deliver an effective service are funded to provide such services.</p> <p>The evaluation and guidance to be completed by May 2009. It should subsequently be included in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.</p>
19	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government should undertake a review of all funding streams which are potentially available to statutory, voluntary and other providers of services for people affected by domestic abuse, including Supporting People, by May 2009. The review should include an assessment of whether the current potential funding mechanisms facilitate the provision of the range of services necessary to support people affected by domestic abuse at an early intervention, crisis and post crisis stage. The review should also assess the impact of funding mechanisms on the recruitment and retention of staff to provide those services.</p> <p>Further progress reports to subsequently be included as a discrete section in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.</p>
20	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government should provide core funding for key services for children and young people affected by domestic abuse including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people workers in refuges • Outreach workers for children and young people who have moved on from refuge accommodation • Counselling • Advocacy

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health services (CAMHS) <p>Sustainable core funding should be secured by May 2009.</p>
21	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government to ensure timely implementation of the recommendations of the Committee's previous Inquiry into voluntary sector funding in Wales, in particular to review progress on recommendations 8-14 which relate to the provision of accessible and sustainable funding, and report an update to the Communities and Culture Committee at the earliest opportunity and no later than May 2009. Further reporting to be included in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.</p>
22	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government should work with relevant UK Government departments, as a matter of urgency, to ensure that all key partners in funding Sexual Abuse Referral Centres, Specialist Domestic Abuse Courts and Independent Domestic Violence Advisers are core funded to the extent that these services will be sustainable over the long-term. Sustainable funding should be secured by May 2009.</p> <p>Progress in this area should subsequently be included as a discrete section in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.</p>
23	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government should evaluate the efficacy of multi-agency planning structures and the role of the domestic abuse co-ordinator in all parts of Wales in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service planning and commissioning; • Information sharing; and • Risk management <p>In particular, the Welsh Assembly Government should evaluate the extent to which Community Safety Partnerships are acting as an effective driving vehicle for the local implementation of the strategy.</p> <p>The findings of this evaluation should be disseminated to all partner agencies with advice on what works, by May 2009. Further reporting to be included as a discrete section in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.</p>
24	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government to ask Community Safety Partnerships to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate what they are doing to tackle domestic abuse in their area • Provide details of the resources committed to tackling domestic abuse by each statutory partner • Demonstrate how citizens and domestic abuse service providers have been involved in action planning to tackle domestic abuse. • Demonstrate any work with the criminal justice system to support early intervention programmes and highlight any obstacles to effective working,

	<p>particularly in relation to links between domestic abuse and substance misuse</p> <p>If Community Safety Partnerships do not comply with the request, the Assembly Government should consider how joint powers with the Secretary of State contained in the <i>Crime and Disorder Act 1998</i> could be used to require Partnerships to take these actions.</p> <p>The Committee to receive a progress report on this work by May 2009. It should subsequently be included in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.</p>
25	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure that senior health service representatives play a full part in multi-agency attempts to tackle domestic abuse, particularly through Community Safety Partnerships, identifying and helping to overcome barriers to NHS involvement in the domestic abuse agenda.</p> <p>In order to facilitate this, the Welsh Assembly Government should issue guidance to Local Health Boards and NHS Trusts clarifying the implications of data protection legislation within this setting. This guidance should also be made available to medical and nursing bodies. The guidance to be issued by May 2009. Further reporting to be included in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.</p>
26	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government should work with the Equality and Human Rights Commission to identify ways in which the Gender Equality Duty and other equality legislation might be used to progress action to tackle domestic abuse within key public bodies, and report back to the Communities and Culture Committee by May 2009. Further reporting to be included in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.</p>
27	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure, by May 2009, that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NHS Trusts in Wales with A&E departments have information systems which are capable of identifying repeat attenders, and particularly repeat attenders who are injured. • Basic data collection should be followed up with practical action, for example, by having a nurse with responsibility for analysing the information collected to identify victims followed by support and referral to relevant organisations. • An audit of domestic violence activity is undertaken as part of the rolling programme of clinical audits in NHS trusts with A&E departments <p>Outcomes of this work should be included in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.</p>
28	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government should undertake a programme of research to inform service design and commissioning practice in a number of 'under-researched' areas including:</p>

- The needs of older people affected by domestic abuse
- The needs of carers affected by domestic abuse
- The sexual health needs of women affected by domestic abuse
- Evaluation of community based perpetrator programmes for domestic abusers who have not been convicted of an offence
- Evaluation of preventative and awareness raising programmes aimed at children and young people

The Welsh Assembly Government should work with the UK Government to identify scope for undertaking research into levels of charging in domestic abuse cases and an independent evaluation of the MARAC approach. The Committee to receive a progress report on this work by May 2009. It should subsequently be included in the Welsh Assembly Government's annual domestic abuse report.

Annex 1

Organisations and individuals who gave evidence in person to the Committee

16 April 2008

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr Brian Gibbons, Minister for Social Justice and Local Government• Gwenda Thomas, Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services• Jocelyn Davies, Deputy Minister for Housing• Peter Jones, Deputy Director, Community Safety Division• Anna Slatter, Policy Lead, Major Health Conditions• Paul Webb, Head, Housing Strategy and Services Unit	Welsh Assembly Government
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30 April 2008

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jan Pickles, Director	Cardiff Women's Safety Unit
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Morgan Fackrell, Chief Executive• Nesta Lloyd-Jones, Legal Issues Co-ordinator• Tamara Kendall, Crisis Information and Development Manager	Welsh Women's Aid
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sam Jones, Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator	Carmarthenshire Domestic Abuse Forum

7 May 2008

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sophie Howe, Senior Political Officer• Jennifer Dunne, Research and Foresight Officer	Equality and Human Rights Commission
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14 May 2008

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Temporary Chief Constable Andrew Edwards, Dyfed Powys Police• Temporary Inspector Owain Richards, Dyfed Powys Police• Detective Superintendent Rhiannon Hodges, Gwent Police	Welsh Association of Chief Police Officers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professor Jonathan Shepherd CBE	University Hospital of Wales

5 June 2008

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Naz Malik, Chief Executive• Farhana Tegwen Malik, Operations and Projects Manager	All Wales Ethnic Minority Association (AWEMA)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alihya Mohammed, Acting Director	Minority Ethnic Women's Network
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bronwen Malik, Senior Student Counsellor	Swansea Metropolitan University
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Libby Jones, Director	New Pathways

19 June 2008

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cheryl Martin, Children and Young People's Service Delivery Co-ordinator• Claire Sharp, Welsh Women's Aid Children's Services Manager	Welsh Women's Aid
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jon Trew	Victim Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mutale Nyoni, Chief Executive• Angelina Jones, Service Delivery Director• Rakhshanda Shahzad, Domestic Abuse Manager, South Wales	Black Association of Women Step Out Ltd (BAWSO)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samsunear Ali, Director Corporate Service • Donna Powell, Support Worker 	
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3 July 2008

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christopher Woolley, Chief Crown Prosecutor, South Wales 	Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) Wales
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ed Beltrami, Chief Crown Prosecutor, North Wales CPS • Susan Duncombe, Assistant District Crown Prosecutor for Eastern Trial Unit 	Criminal Justice Boards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joy Kett, Assistant Director • Simon Jones, Policy and Public Affairs Manager 	NSPCC Cymru
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cathy Davies, Chief Executive 	Cymdeithas Tai Hafan

17 July 2008

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter Hosking, Senior Policy Officer • Elaine Richards, Policy Officer 	Children's Commissioner for Wales
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marc Phillips, Head of Children in Need Wales 	BBC Children in Need
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adam Rees, Dyn Project Co-ordinator 	Dyn Project

24 September 2008

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ruth Marks MBE 	Older Person's Commissioner for Wales
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roz Williamson, Director 	Carers Wales

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Louise Hughes, North Wales Project Officer • Richard Kynaston, Advocacy Co-ordinator • Sarah Stone, Director of Policy and Public Affairs 	Age Concern Cymru
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1 October 2008

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immy Lee, Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator 	Torfaen County Borough Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alison Shotbolt, Communities that Care Co-ordinator, Children and Young People's Strategy Unit, City and County of Swansea • Amy Seddon, Domestic Abuse Worker, Children and Young People 	Domestic Abuse Information Project, Swansea

22 October 2008

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Julia Houlston-Clark, Restorative Justice Co-ordinator, Cardiff Prison • Karon Eyers, Victim Support Gwent 	Her Majesty's Prison Service – SORI Programme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sara Kovach-Clark, Head of Family Policy 	Legal Services Commission
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anne Haynes, Co-Director 	Sea Change Domestic Violence Training and Consultancy

Annex 2

Schedule of Committee Papers

Date	Name of Organisation	Paper Reference Number	Transcript Paragraph Reference
16 April 2008	Welsh Assembly Government	CC(3)-06-08 (p1)	7-133
30 April 2008	Cardiff Women's Safety Unit	CC(3)-07-08 (p1)	2-49
30 April 2008	Welsh Women's Aid	CC(3)-07-08 (p2)	50-124
30 April 2008	Carmarthenshire Domestic Abuse Forum	CC(3)-07-08 (p3)	126-177
07 May 2008	Equality and Human Rights Commission	CC(3)-08-08 (p2a) & (p2b)	144-184
14 May 2008	Welsh Association of Chief Police Officers	CC(3)-09-08 (p1)	2-94
14 May 2008	University Hospital of Wales	N/A	95-148
05 June 2008	All Wales Ethnic Minority Association (AWEMA) and Minority Ethnic Women's Network (MEWN)	CC(3)-10-08 (p1)	6-116
05 June 2008	New Pathways	CC(3)-10-08 (p2)	118-185
19 June 2008	Welsh Women's Aid	CC(3)-11-08 (p1)	4-61
19 June 2008	Victim Support	CC(3)-11-08 (p2)	65-106
19 June 2008	Black Association of Women Step Out	CC(3)-11-08 (p3)	107-185
03 July 2008	Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) Wales	CC(3)-13-08 (p1)	10-101
03 July 2008	Criminal Justice Boards	CC(3)-13-08 (p2)	10-101
03 July 2008	NSPCC	CC(3)-13-08 (p3)	102-175
03 July 2008	Cymdeithas Tai Hafan	CC(3)-13-08 (p4)	176-243
17 July 2008	Children's Commissioner for Wales	CC(3)-14-08 (p1)	4-62
17 July 2008	BBC Children in Need	CC(3)-14-08 (p2)	64-91
17 July 2008	Dyn Project	CC(3)-14-08 (p3)	92-132
24 September 2008	Older People's Commissioner for Wales	CC(3)-15-08 (p1)	4-62
24 September 2008	Carers Wales	CC(3)-15-08 (p2)	63-108
24 September 2008	Age Concern Cymru	CC(3)-15-08 (p3)	109-188
01 October 2008	Torfaen County Borough Council	CC(3)-16-08 (p1) & (p1a)	5-88
01 October 2008	Domestic Abuse Information Project, Swansea	CC(3)-16-08 (p5)	155-215
22 October 2008	Her Majesty's Prison Service – SORI Programme	CC(3)-19-08 (p2)	100-160
22 October 2008	Legal Services Commission	CC(3)-19-08 (p3)	161-201
22 October 2008	Sea Change Domestic Violence Training and Consultancy	CC(3)-19-08 (p4) & (p4a)	202-234

Copies of all papers and transcripts can be found at <http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third-assem/bus-committees-third-ccc-home/bus-committees-third-ccc-agendas.htm>

Annex 3

Respondents to the Call for Written Evidence

Voluntary Sector

- Welsh Women's Aid - general
- Welsh Women's Aid – Children and Young People's Services
- Delyn Women's Aid
- Radnorshire Women's Aid
- Cardiff Women's Aid
- Cardigan Women's Aid
- Aberconwy Women's Aid
- Swansea Women's Aid Group
- Brecknock Women's Aid
- Rhyl & District Women's Aid
- Lliw Valley Women's Aid
- Domestic Abuse Safety Unit (previously Deeside Women's Aid)
- Dyn Project
- Cymdeithas Tai Hafan
- New Pathways
- Help the Aged
- Age Concern Cymru
- NCH Cymru
- NSPCC Cymru
- BBC Children in Need
- Children's Commissioner
- Triangle Wales
- Black Association of Women Step Out
- All Wales Ethnic Minority Association (AWEMA) and Minority Ethnic Women's Network (MEWN)
- Victim Support
- RSPCA
- Amnesty International Wales
- YWCA
- Relate

Statutory Sector

- Welsh Assembly Government: The Minister for Social Justice and Local Government, Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services and the Deputy Minister for Housing

- Domestic Abuse Information Project, Children and Young People Services, Community Regeneration, Swansea
- Gwynedd Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator
- Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
- Wrexham Children and Young People's Services
- Powys County Council
- Denbighshire County Council
- Flintshire County Council
- Conwy County Borough Council
- WLGA
- Cwm Taf NHS Trust
- Conwy & Denbighshire NHS Trust
- Child Protection Service of the National Public Health Service for Wales
- Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Welsh Language Board
- Welsh Association of Chief Police Officers
- Legal Services Commission
- Police Authorities of Wales
- National Offender Management Service Wales
- Crown Prosecution Service

Multi Agency

- Cardiff Women's Safety Unit
- Carmarthenshire Domestic Abuse Forum
- Powys Domestic Abuse Forum
- Neath Port Talbot Domestic Abuse Forum
- Ceredigion Domestic Abuse Forum
- Monmouthshire Domestic Abuse Forum
- Torfaen Community Safety Partnership and the Torfaen Domestic Abuse Forum
- Caerphilly County Borough Safer Caerphilly Community Safety Partnership and the Caerphilly Domestic Abuse Forum
- Newport Safeguarding Children Board
- Ynys Môn Community Safety Partnership
- Criminal Justice Boards

Other

- Pat McCarthy – campaigner and survivor
- University Hospital of Wales – Professor Jonathan Shepherd CBE
- Tamsin Stirling Associates Ltd

- Sea Change Domestic Violence Training and Consultancy
- University of West England

Please note that the above list does not include any organisations or individuals who indicated they did not wish their details to be published

Annex 4

Committee visits

During the course of the Inquiry the Committee visited the following organisations:

- New Pathways
- Cymdeithas Tai Hafan
- NSPCC Cymru

Mark Isherwood AM undertook rapporteur visits to:

- Domestic Abuse Safety Unit
- Aberconwy Women's Aid
- Flintshire County Council Domestic Abuse Panel
- North Wales Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre

Annex 5

Call for Evidence

Committee Inquiry into Domestic Abuse

The Communities and Culture Committee has chosen to carry out an inquiry into domestic abuse; and is calling for those with an interest or expertise in this area to submit written evidence.

Background

“It has been estimated that domestic violence will affect 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men in their lifetime and that some 77% of victims of domestic violence are women” (Source: Home Office publication Crime in England and Wales 2006-07). The Welsh Assembly Government published a Domestic Violence Strategy in 2005. Domestic abuse embraces not only physical violence but includes, for example, emotional abuse and isolation from friends, family or other potential sources of support. Services for victims of domestic abuse are funded and provided by a range of organisations; the Welsh Assembly Government, the Home Office and the voluntary sector.

Terms of Reference

It is proposed that the Committee should review:

- Delivery of the Welsh Assembly Government’s strategy for tackling domestic abuse;
- Provision of support to victims of domestic abuse, including support provided to witnesses in the criminal justice system
- Resources allocated by relevant bodies such as, the Assembly Government, Home Office, health and social services and criminal justice agencies to implement domestic abuse policies.
- Provision of compulsory and voluntary interventions aimed at perpetrators of domestic abuse, including the allocation of resources to support such interventions;

- Initiatives aimed at preventing domestic abuse; for example, school programmes and awareness raising initiatives.

The Committee will also:

- Make recommendations on actions that could be taken to tackle the problem of domestic abuse in Wales.

Some of the issues to cover during evidence gathering sessions:

- The availability and accessibility of support for different groups; including counselling services for – men, women, children, people from ethnic minority communities, older people and disabled people;
- The provision of services for adults and children who have suffered sexual abuse within a domestic context;
- The response of different sectors to domestic abuse, including, criminal justice, health and social care agencies;

- How the national strategy is delivered at a local level, the ways in which different bodies and agencies work with each other to ensure the best response;
- The allocation of resources to tackle domestic abuse and any potential conflict between the aims and objectives of different funding sources;
- Statistical evidence of the rates and nature of domestic abuse, including incidences of murder, conviction rates, geographical trends;
- The impact of isolation exacerbated by, geographical, cultural and individual factors; and
- Processes for monitoring and evaluating outcomes.

Interested parties are invited to submit written evidence to the committee clerk at the address below, to arrive no later than Friday 9th May 2008. If possible, please supply an electronic version by e-mail to the following address:

Community.Culture.Comm@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

Please indicate whether you would be interested in presenting your views to the Committee in person.

It is normal practice for the National Assembly to publish evidence provided to a committee. Consequently your response may appear in a report or in supplementary evidence to a report. You will, unless you request otherwise, be identified as the author of the evidence although the National Assembly will not publish any other information which it considers to be personal data.

You should be aware however that in the event of a request for information submitted under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, it may be necessary to disclose the information that you provide even though this has not been published.

If you are providing any information, other than personal data, which you feel is not suitable for public disclosure, or if you do not wish your identity, as author of the evidence, to be disclosed, this must be clearly identified, together with your reasons for wishing to withhold the material in question. The National Assembly will take this into account when publishing information or responding to requests for information.

Annex 6

Glossary of terms

LSCB - Local Safeguarding Children's Board

Formerly Area Child Protection Committee, a LSCB is a statutory multi-agency forum for developing, monitoring and reviewing local child protection policies and procedures and where necessary conducting Serious Case Reviews.

IDVA – Independent Domestic Violence Advisors

Domestic violence advocates (also known as Independent Domestic Violence Advisors or IDVAs) are trained specialists whose role is to improve the safety for all survivors of domestic violence, including children. They particularly focus on providing a service to survivors at medium to high risk of harm. They work directly with survivors to provide advice and support to help them make safety plans and understand the options they have. They are active participants in MARACs.

MARAC – Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) aim to provide a forum for sharing information and taking actions which will reduce future harm to very high risk victims and their children. Organisations signed up to the information sharing principles, protocol and procedure include police, health, local authorities, the National Probation Service and the voluntary sector. The MARAC system was developed in-house by the Cardiff Women's Safety Unit and went live in Cardiff in March 2003. In March 2008 the Home Secretary announced that MARAC was to be available to every High Risk victim of Domestic Abuse across the UK by 2011.

SARC – Sexual Assault Referral Centre

Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) are recognised by the Home Office as a model of good practice in the provision of immediate aftercare to victims of serious sexual violence. SARCs are designed to offer victims of sexual crime an integrated service where victims can receive medical care, psychological counselling, legal advice and other support, all in one place from professionally trained staff. They also aim to relieve some of the pressure on police service resources by providing centralised facilities where they can meet with the victim, conduct forensic examinations and gather evidence. There are currently SARCs based in Cardiff, Carmarthen, Colwyn Bay, Merthyr Tydfil, Risca and Swansea.

SDVC - Specialist Domestic Violence Courts

Under the Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVCs) system, accredited advisers offer victims one point of contact during and after a case; all Criminal Justice Staff and

Magistrates are trained on domestic violence; perpetrators and victims are separated in Court; and specific court listing practices enhance the effectiveness of the Court and support services. The aim of the SDVCs is to improve local responses to domestic violence cases and increase the number of these offences successfully prosecuted. There are currently SDVCs in Caerphilly, Cardiff, Flintshire, Neath, Newcastle and Ogmore, Pontypridd, Swansea County and Wrexham Maelor, with a further court planned for Barry.