# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **International Women’s Day** |
| **DATE**  | **10 March 2020** |
| **BY** | **Jane Hutt, Deputy Minister and Chief Whip** |

I welcome this opportunity to mark International Women’s Day. It is well over 100 years ago since the first International Women’s Day took place. Since then it has grown into a truly global event – a day to recognise the achievements of girls and women, irrespective of factors such as nationality, ethnicity, language, culture, age, sexuality, disability, wealth or politics.

However, gender inequality remains a persistent and stubborn issue around the globe. International Women’s Day allows us to take stock and celebrate the achievements of women and girls, but it also provides an opportunity to take stock of our actions to promote a fairer, more equal world for women and girls.

In March last year, as part of our Gender Equality Review, I shared with you our ambitious vision to achieve equality. Last September saw the publication of *Deeds not Words* and a *Roadmap* setting out challenging recommendations of what we need to do in Wales to advance gender equality.

Achieving equality needs long-term sustained action. I am pleased to announce that I have today published a plan to advance gender equality in Wales which sets out priority areas for the coming years:

<https://gov.wales/advancing-gender-equality-action-plan>

In advancing equality for women we must ensure that multiple, intersecting forms of disadvantage and discrimination are challenged and called out where we witness them. We are focusing on equality of outcome which I believe will be the key to achieving the vision and our goals for a gender equal Wales.

The intention of the Gender Equality Review was to set out a long-term plan for change. We recognise that this is a significant piece of work which will span 20 years of sustained intervention to create the changes we want. This means that the impact of the Gender Equality Review will run through successive government terms and will commit future governments to sustained action to advance gender equality in Wales.

The Review has shone a light on areas we need to improve and has challenged us to do better. It recognised that progress is being made and I would like to take this opportunity to briefly highlight some of the good work that is making a real and positive difference to the lives of women and girls in Wales today.

2020 marks the fifth anniversary of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act. It was a landmark piece of legislation and I am proud of the progress we have made on this issue which affects people from all walks of life, irrespective of protected characteristics.

As of February, over 173,000 people in Wales have accessed training through the National Training Framework. That is more than 173,000 professionals who are more knowledgeable, more aware and more confident to respond to those experiencing domestic abuse and sexual violence.

The ‘*This is Not Love. This is Control’* campaign was developed with survivors of abuse. It launched in January 2019 to raise awareness of coercive control, domestic abuse and sexual violence. To date, the campaign videos have been viewed more than 240,000 times online, and there have been over 76,000 campaign page views on the Live Fear Free website.

Data from the Live Fear Free helpline suggests a significant increase in the number of calls received about coercive control since the launch of the campaign. Police forces in Wales have seen an increase in reporting coercive control, indicating it is now more readily recognised as a crime.

It is unacceptable that girls and young women are subjected to sexual harassment whenever they go out in public.  Evidence from girls and young women show that street harassment is still prevalent. I held a roundtable discussion with young women, trade unions, transport providers, key VAWDASV stakeholders and public authorities last year to explore how we can collectively put an end to street and sexual harassment in Wales.

The Childcare Offer is helping to tackle in-work poverty by supporting parents, particularly mothers, into employment and making it easier for parents to take up and retain employment. As of July 2019, almost 16,000 children were accessing the Offer. It is now available across Wales, over a year earlier than originally planned.

A typical parent whose child is benefitting from 20 hours of childcare per week is getting the equivalent of an extra £90 per week – money they would not otherwise have had. A review is being undertaken to consider expanding the offer to women in training and on the route to employment.

To address period dignity, we committed over £3.3 million this financial year to provide free period products to women and girls on low-income, and learners in all schools and Further Education colleges in Wales. The same funding levels have been committed for 2020/21.

As well as supporting our disadvantaged young girls and women, the funding will go wider – focusing on dignity, equality and well-being for all. We are working towards breaking down the stigma and taboos that still exist, encouraging the use of reusable and eco-friendly products.

I chaired a Roundtable group comprising of stakeholders from across Wales to provide expert advice to the Welsh Government. Their input has been invaluable in the development of a Period Dignity Action Plan which will be published by the summer.

To improve diversity in public life, we provide support to the Women’s Equality Network Wales and EYST to run mentoring programmes. These are proving successful by providing women and ethnic minority women with the tools and confidence to put themselves forward.

On 27 February, I launched our Public Appointment Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, *Reflecting Wales in Running Wales*, setting out a wide range of initiatives to increase diversity in public appointments.

We are supporting women to enter, re-enter and develop in the workplace through a number of initiatives including:

* the Agile Nation 2 programme which aims to promote gender equality by working with individuals and employers;
* The Limitless programme which works with women affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence; and
* The Community Employability Programmes – Parent and Childcare Employment (PaCE), Communities for Work and Communities for Work Plus.

We are supporting girls and young women to consider non-traditional career paths, such as STEM. Initiatives include the Physics Mentoring Programme, the Engineering Education Scheme Wales and the Improving Gender Balance pilot scheme. All of these include workshops specifically focused on girls, with the aim of increasing the numbers from secondary schools engaging with STEM industries.

We are working closely with partners to deliver the recommendations set out in the Female Offending Blueprint, which I published alongside a Youth Justice Blueprint in May last year.

There is no female prison in Wales and we do not want one.  Welsh women need a safe and secure facility that is fit for purpose whilst allowing then to maintain contact with their families, particularly children.  A key recommendation in the Female Offending Blueprint relates to the development of a trauma-informed women’s residential centre in Wales. We are working with the UK Government for this to happen quickly.

International Women’s Day is a day to celebrate women’s achievements. However, history has not sufficiently recognised or recorded the many accomplishments of the women of Wales.

If we want to get the future right, then we need to start by correcting our history. I am proud that Welsh Government has provided funding to support the Purple Plaques campaign, the ‘100 Welsh Women’ list and the Monumental Welsh Women project which will deliver five statues of women across Wales. Each of these is highlighting the remarkable women of Wales.

I attended the unveiling of the Purple Plaque for peace campaigner, Eunice Stallard, on Friday in Ystradgynlais. It is the fifth such plaque in Wales and I hope there will be many more to come. The first statue, for Betty Campbell - the first Black head teacher in Wales - will be completed later this year.

The theme of International Women’s Day this year is *Each for Equal*. This theme fits well with our vision and the work already underway across Welsh Government to address inequality and tackle the barriers.

We are not complacent – there is more to be done. But Wales has much to be proud of and we stand committed to supporting women and girls to aspire and achieve and to advance gender equality in Wales.