

## WEN Cafe: Impact of Covid-19 on Violence Against Women

1<sup>st</sup> May 2020

### Summary of discussion and outcomes

KEY ACTIONS suggested by panel:

- Make VAWG a higher priority of WG
- Feminist Government is a good start, but on a practical level, we need a consistent service for victims so it's not patchy but it's consistent service across Wales – no postcode lottery. The VAWDASV act aim was to address postcode lottery – with the duties on prevent, protect, and support across Wales – we don't want ONE service, **but we do want a CONSISTENT service.**
- Cross Govt group should be established so that VAWG is the business of EVERY WG department.
- We need to treat VAWG as a pandemic. Look how resources can shift and our world has shifted since Govt said – 'Covid 19 is a pandemic, we will stop it'. They have moved heaven and earth to try and stop it. Now WG should do the same with VAWG. We must stop it, we can stop it. To address a pandemic we do not accept/ tolerate 'mild infection'. In the same way when we address VAWDASV we should be looking not only to address 'severe cases' but recognise infection is spread across society by the acceptance and tolerance of the 'mild symptoms' such as cat calling, women's unequal social status and 'boys will be boys' excuses.

### DISCUSSION

- As per 30th April, only 11 refuge places were available across Wales but these places were not necessarily where demand was, and nor do they address the complex needs of some survivors.
- Weekly dialogue between National Advisor with Victims Commissioner in England is very helpful. The weekly meeting is between the National Advisors & the DA Commissioner for England & Wales, and also includes the Victims Commissioner (also England and Wales). The DA Commissioner is attending the weekly 'sector call' where she hears from specialist services directly (again England and Wales) this could be seen to highlight that the DA commissioner is awake to both countries not just England.
- WG must be FLEXIBLE with their funding – situation changing day to day and week to week and its not always possible for the sector to say exactly what the money will be needed for next week therefore funding provided must be flexible and we need this within 2 weeks
- WG must have a Short term, medium term and long term response – this isn't going to be over soon and we must prepare for post-lockdown too future
- We also highlighted an anticipated increase in demand (partly mentioned below), but not just from Mental Health difficulties but also people having ability to access support services more easily after having 'endured' during lockdown
- Mental health of survivors and those working in sector will be affected and will need MORE support after lockdown – there will be a flood of people needing help, we and WG need to be prepared for this we did say this.

- In some circumstances removing the perpetrator from home would be a better and less disruptive solution for the survivor, so survivors don't have to move. If this happened the survivor must also receive specialist support. Abuse does not end when a relationship ends, and we must also emphasise that refuge accommodation is still a vital resource for many survivors providing both accommodation and support.
- Children – experiencing abuse in a household IS abuse. How do we engage children safely (and digitally as schools no longer can make referrals) if they are experiencing abuse. Supporting the non-abusive parent is also an effective means of support in addition to specialist support direct for children.
- Calls to helpline increasing but that isn't always coming through to refuge . This is because some people are not currently seeking refuge accommodation but other forms of support. The calls are different in character since lockdown being both more complex and more urgent at the point of call.
- A thank you to WEN for effective scrutiny of WG which is so important
- Innovative schemes e.g. in N. Wales leaflets going into all supermarket deliveries, plus a project which is being worked on by police to get helpline numbers printed onto supermarket receipts. We shared WWA bystander toolkit with the group.
- Non-Targeted delivery of messages is essential as one of the mechanisms for sharing info otherwise can put survivors in danger. However, targeted support is not always a bad thing. (Bystander Toolkit relevant here)
- Some of the police forces are reinforcing messaging around 'we are here for you'