

Cylchlythyr | Circular

Tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence in HE

Date: 25 November 2020
Reference: W20/39HE
To: Heads of higher education providers in Wales
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This guidance provides information on tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) in higher education and provides case studies to share practice.

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Introduction

1. This guidance provides information on tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) in higher education and provides case studies to share practice.
2. HEFCW's [2019-20 remit letter](#) states that: 'Following the introduction of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 (the Act), I would like the Council to work with Welsh Government officials on the development and issuing of guidance to the sector on how institutions in Wales can contribute to the pursuit of the purpose of the Act.'
3. The Welsh Government's [National Strategy on VAWDASV](#) (2016-21) identifies six objectives, set out in **Annex A**, to be achieved by November 2021 which HE providers may find useful in shaping priorities and deliverables. We will continue to engage with HE providers to understand their progress in tackling VAWDASV as it relates to staff and students.
4. We previously published this [information](#) on our website in March 2020 but are now publishing it as a circular to inform HE providers review of the Strategic Equality Plans in the light of Covid-19. This review of Strategic Equality Plans was recommended by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in correspondence dated September 2020.
5. This guidance:
 - i. contributes to HE providers' ongoing strategic equality planning, well-being and health planning, student experience developments, safeguarding policies and related processes;
 - ii. responds to our 2019-20 remit letter¹ request and related legislation (**Annex B**);
 - iii. responds to, and is informed by, the Universities UK's (UUK) three evidence-based [Changing the Culture](#) reports² and their recommendations; and it
 - iv. takes account of responses to HEFCW's consultation ([W19/34HE](#)) on developing effective guidance on tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence in higher education.
6. Examples of practice on tackling VAWDASV are provided. Case studies from one provider should not be taken to mean that similar or equivalent practice is not delivered by HE providers.
7. We recognise that violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence affects everyone, including those that experience it indirectly, including children, family and friends. VAWDASV impacts on all aspects of a person's life, including their learning, wider resilience, well-being and mental health. Therefore, HE providers should ensure that their VAWDASV provision and services are

¹ HEFCW remit letter 2019-20, para 34.

² Changing the culture (2016), Changing the culture: one year on (2018) and Changing the culture: two years on (2019).

available to all staff and students that need it and that all relevant policies reference VAWDASV.

8. Women and girls are disproportionately more likely to directly experience many forms of violence and abuse, including forced marriage and female genital mutilation. Therefore, the [Welsh Government's strategy](#) and this guidance are predominately focused on violence against women. In the HE context this guidance includes both staff and students ³.
9. In 2018, 70% of female students and recent graduates surveyed at UK universities had experienced sexual violence⁴. Despite this, only 6% of those students who had experienced sexual assault or harassment reported their experience of sexual violence to their university or the police⁵.
10. From March 2019, the Welsh Future Generations Commissioner was the first employer in Wales to provide paid domestic abuse leave to the employees, which is a policy now adopted by Welsh Government. The new financial support policy has been extended in November 2020 to include an opportunity to apply for a cash grant of up to £500, a salary advance or loan of up to £5,000 to help finance any essential supplies and relocation costs.

Consultation responses

11. We received 14 responses to our *Tackling VAWDASV in HE* [consultation](#) from a diverse group of organisations, as well as examples of practice from HE providers. We have also received advice from Welsh Government officials with responsibility for VAWDASV national strategy developments. We have taken account of these responses and the effective practice examples in finalising this guidance. The respondents are listed at **Annex C**.

Defining violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence

12. Violence against women and girls encompasses (but is not limited to):
 - physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family (including children and young people), within the general community or in specific contexts such as higher education, including domestic abuse, rape, and incest;
 - sexual harassment, bullying and intimidation in any public or private space, including work;
 - commercial sexual exploitation, including prostitution, lap dancing, stripping, pornography and trafficking;
 - child sexual abuse, including familial sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation and online abuse;

³ See evidence and data in Welsh Government's Strategy on VAWDASV (2016-21) and Universities UK's Changing the Culture reports.

⁴ [Revolt Sexual Assault and The Student Room, Students' Experience of Sexual Violence \(2018\)](#)

⁵ [Revolt Sexual Assault and The Student Room, Students' Experience of Sexual Violence \(2018\)](#)

- so called 'honour based' violence, including dowry-related violence, female genital mutilation, forced and child marriages, and 'honour' crimes.⁶
13. Domestic violence and abuse is defined in the Welsh Government strategy as any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:
 - psychological;
 - physical;
 - sexual;
 - financial; and
 - emotional.
 14. Controlling behaviour is defined in the Welsh Government strategy as a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by:
 - isolating them from sources of support;
 - exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain;
 - depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape;
 - regulating their everyday behaviour.
 15. Coercive behaviour is defined as an act or pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuses that is used to harm, punish or frighten a victim.

Legislative and regulatory context

16. The legislative and regulatory context for this guidance is set out in **Annex B**.

Policy context

17. Universities UK (UUK) has published:
 - [Changing the Culture](#): Report of the Universities UK Taskforce examining violence against women, harassment and hate crime affecting university students (2016);
 - [Changing the Culture: one year on](#) - An assessment of strategies to tackle sexual misconduct, hate crime and harassment affecting university students (2018);
 - [Changing the Culture: two years on](#) – Tackling gender-based violence, harassment and hate crime (2019).
18. The 2016 report summarises the evidence considered by the UUK Taskforce to examine violence against women, harassment and hate crime affecting university students. It makes a series of 23 recommendations for universities

⁶ [Welsh Government's National Strategy on VAWDASV \(2016-2021\)](#)

and UUK. These recommendations cover both prevention activities and how universities can respond to these issues more effectively in future. The 2018 report, based on research carried out by the then Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, assesses higher education's progress in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in implementing [recommendations](#) from the UUK's 2016 report [Changing the Culture](#). The report's findings note that:

- success in the sector is significant, but variable;
- active senior leadership is vital in how far HE providers can progress;
- there has been an increase in disclosures in the past year and a positive indication of cultural change;
- HE providers report barriers to progress in areas including sustainable funding for resources, training for students and staff across larger providers and maintaining a consistent approach across the sector.

19. In 2016, UUK published [guidance](#) to HE providers offering advice on handling alleged student misconduct which may also constitute a criminal offence. The comprehensive guidance provides general information applicable for all UK HE providers and included:

- the basis for disciplinary action;
- alleged misconduct that may constitute a criminal offence;
- general principles;
- record keeping;
- provision of information and support;
- referral to the police;
- precautionary action;
- criminal investigation and prosecution;
- internal disciplinary procedures;
- outcome of criminal processes;
- example code of conduct;
- case studies; and
- a risk assessment example.

20. In 2017, UUK published a [directory](#) of 30 case studies. The directory details responses from universities, including a wide-range of innovative projects, from improving incident reporting procedures, to improving student and staff training in this area. The directory is intended to be a developing resource that will continue to grow as universities share initiatives and experiences within the UK and internationally.

Effective practice: UK case studies in the UUK directory relate to:

- ✓ commitment from senior leadership and ensuring an institution-wide approach;
- ✓ prevention of incidents;
- ✓ enabling an effective response;
- ✓ reporting and support processes;
- ✓ recording incidents;
- ✓ staff and student training;
- ✓ effective external relationships;
- ✓ drawing on good practice;
- ✓ online harassment and hate crime reporting.

21. In 2018, HEFCW invited Advance HE to publish for Wales a [briefing](#) on violence against women, sexual misconduct and harassment (August 2018). The briefing includes nine recommendations, under three themes:
 - senior leadership to secure prioritisation and adequate resourcing;
 - a holistic institution-wide approach; and
 - effective prevention strategies.

22. More recently, in October 2019, Universities UK published [Changing the Culture: two years on](#). Universities UK surveyed almost 100 universities as a follow-up to its harassment and hate crime taskforce (Changing the Culture), exploring how HE providers are addressing some of the challenges raised and acting on its recommendations. The report confirms that encouraging progress has been made at individual HE providers, particularly in tackling gender-based-violence, with common activities including increased training for staff, preventative campaigns and development of partnerships with third sector and specialist organisations.

23. The UUK report concludes that:

‘Importantly, a message emerging from a survey is that prevention is beginning to foreground response; a fundamental principle of the UUK taskforce recommendations. Various examples and open-text comments provided by the participating universities demonstrate how prevention is seen as a clear driver for sustainability’.

And:

‘Responsibility for creating a culture in higher education whereby any form of misconduct towards a student or staff member will not be tolerated resides with everyone. While change takes time, it is vital that the current momentum to tackle this agenda in higher education continues’⁷.

24. In November 2019, Jane Hutt AM issued a [written statement](#) welcoming the publication of the [2020-21 Annual Plan of the National Advisers for Violence against Women, Gender-based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence](#). HEFCW’s consultation on this VAWDASV guidance was referenced in the plan.

Actions to tackle violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence

25. HEFCW’s guidance to HE providers is based on the Welsh Government’s *National Strategy on Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence 2016-2021* objectives and the UUK VAWDASV recommendations⁸. Our guidance is intended to be high-level and applicable to all HE providers and it recognises the importance of collaborative working with other public bodies⁹.

⁷ Changing the Culture: two years on (2019) p65.

⁸ We will review our guidance when the Welsh Government revises its strategy.

⁹ [Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence public services good practice guide](#)

26. As identified in [Is Wales Fairer 2018](#), in Wales we have seen an increase in domestic abuse and sexual violence reported and recorded, although it is widely recognised that under-reporting is still a considerable issue. Therefore, we will encourage HE providers to monitor available data to inform prioritisation of this work including their own processes.
27. Included in this section are case studies from HE providers providing examples of how they are tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. Each university has provided a case study. We recognise that similar activities may be taking place at other universities. Therefore, these examples are indicative of HE providers' practice rather than a comprehensive record.
28. Reflecting the [Well-being of Future Generations Act](#) (2015) ways of working, HEFCW recommends that HE providers:
 - i. plan long-term to change cultures and challenge behaviours;
 - ii. seek active involvement of staff, students and VAWDASV experts;
 - iii. prioritise prevention and promote support for those affected by violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence;
 - iv. ensure integration of approaches to tackle VAWDASV are embedded across policies and processes as appropriate;
 - v. secure collaboration with relevant third sector organisations and other appropriate organisations.
29. To make progress towards tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence against students and staff, HE providers should:

1. Plan long-term

- ✓ ensure senior leadership and appropriate resources are committed to tackling violence and abuse;
- ✓ in developing and revising Strategic Equality Plans, including ongoing revisions to take account of the impact of Covid-19 studying and working in HE from 2020, as well as well-being and health strategies and implementation plans, consider including VAWDASV-related objectives and/or actions relating to staff and students;
- ✓ secure a 'whole-system' approach to tackling violence and abuse;¹⁰

¹⁰ A whole system approach should include: preventative work undertaken to challenge attitudes of staff and students; VAWDASV specialist training for staff and students to identify survivors and respond appropriately to disclosures; robust referral pathways to specialist services are in place; robust processes for holding perpetrators to account are developed, published and enforced; support is provided for survivors to enable them to continue with their academic career and participate in university life; and that there is strong strategic leadership at the HE provider.

- ✓ ensure that the necessary infrastructure for effectively responding to, and supporting, those who have experienced violence, domestic abuse and/or sexual violence is developed, maintained and well-publicised;
- ✓ ensure that student and staff codes of conduct incorporate clear behavioural expectations to tackle VAWDASV and articulate the procedure(s) to be followed in the event of a breach/ allegations of breaches of these expectations, including possible disciplinary outcomes (for example, termination of contracts);
- ✓ ensure systems are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve provision and services;
- ✓ ensure that the HE providers' code of conduct is robustly enforced, including by holding perpetrators¹¹ to account;
- ✓ avoid the use of non-disclosure agreements if their actual effect – whether intentional or not – is to prevent survivors of VAWDASV from disclosing or reporting abuse and/or preventing providers' responses to allegations of abuse to other agencies;
- ✓ consider the potential for VAWDASV provision and services to be supported from fee and access plan investment to contribute to securing equality of opportunity;
- ✓ ensure HE providers' policies and processes include tackling behaviour that uses technology to control women;
- ✓ ensure that specialist services and resources are available to a high and equal standard in both English and Welsh;
- ✓ ensure [work place policies](#) reflect the likelihood that employees will include both perpetrators and victims of VAWDASV and they include appropriate support and responses that are consistent with safe and effective practice;
- ✓ consider *Good Practice Guidance for Public Services and Welsh Government Standards* when designing perpetrator policies¹²;
- ✓ recognise responsibilities for contributing to the development and evaluation of effective, evidence-based services for perpetrators by providing their associated expertise (for example, through research);

Case study: Wrexham Glyndŵr University: White ribbon accreditation

The University's longer-term planning includes working towards the '[white ribbon accreditation](#)' which promotes challenging and changing cultures that lead to harassment, abuse and violence against women. The University is

¹¹ We recognise the term 'perpetrators' is contested. We have used the term 'perpetrator', as those who commit an offence under VAWDASV on the advice of Welsh Government.

¹² <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/perpetrator-service-standards.pdf>

developing an action plan to deliver on its commitment to helping stop violence against women, along with active steps that will be taken to achieve this.

The action plan's objectives will include information on:

- Prevention: Bystander intervention training for students and staff;
- Responding: processes for staff and/or student alleged misconduct, including a full review of disciplinary regulations; and
- Supporting: signposting mechanisms to improve communication and independent support for staff and students.

By promoting Welsh Government campaigns such as '[Live Fear Free](#)' and '[This is not love. This is control](#)' the University has raised awareness of support for people experiencing VAWDASV.

Case study: University of Wales Trinity Saint David: Creating safe and inclusive learning environments

As part of its induction for all new students, the University has introduced new sessions to facilitate conversations around equality, diversity and the student experience. These sessions have been collaboratively developed with the students' union to introduce a range of topics including inappropriate behaviours, becoming an active bystander, what constitutes sexual violence and the importance of consent.

The sessions have been welcomed by students and have provided an opportunity to foster an open environment and respect for students and staff.

2. Seek active involvement

- ✓ work with staff, students and their representative bodies to increase awareness of safe, equal and healthy relationships and that abusive behaviour is always wrong;
- ✓ work with specialist VAWDASV services to train, as appropriate, staff and students to provide effective, timely and appropriate responses to those who have experienced, or are experiencing, VAWDASV and to understand their responsibilities to appropriately report a child at risk or an adult at risk, including by building effective referral pathways to the specialist services for those needing support;
- ✓ involve students' and staff unions in developing, maintaining and reviewing all elements of a cross-institution response;
- ✓ secure commitment to partnership working between law enforcement, universities, health and the wider support network whilst recognising institutional boundaries;

- ✓ take account of the impact of trauma associated with adverse childhood experiences related to VAWDASV in supporting students;
- ✓ collaborate with specialist VAWDASV services to ensure that support is available for perpetrators, who have expressed a desire to change their behaviour, to access accredited perpetrator programmes;
- ✓ ensure students are part of developing associated policies as experts with lived-experience, where they feel able to contribute.

Case study: Bangor University: Developing an informal intervention process

The University has trialled a new and supportive way of responding to certain types of disclosure and encouraging students and staff to report incidents of harassment. The intervention allows students or staff informally to report an incident that has breached the University's code of conduct but is not a criminal act, and to engage voluntarily in conversations aimed at encouraging positive behaviours.

This way of working has been successful in enabling people to understand the implications of their actions. In 2018/19, this approach resulted in 42% of cases being resolved using these intervention process, with 100% of respondents being satisfied with the outcome.

Case Study: Aberystwyth University: Bystander project – Working to create safer communities

In response to the #MeToo movement, the University has collaborated with Welsh Women's Aid to offer Bystander Intervention training to students to raise awareness of VAWDASV issues and how witnesses can respond effectively. The training has provided students with the skills and confidence to respond appropriately when they are worried someone may be experiencing abuse or sexual violence.

The programme has been offered twice a year in workshops led by specialists from Welsh Women's Aid with support from University staff. This preventative approach has considered cultural norms that condone sexism and harassment. Students have considered a variety of topics including culture and gender, rape and sexual assault, domestic abuse and how to safely intervene as a trained Bystander.

'Aberystwyth University has been very successful in promoting Bystander Intervention with students and staff, and the support for the project has been fantastic. The University has shown a tremendous commitment to addressing violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence on campus.'

Alice Lilley, Welsh Women's Aid.

3. Prioritise prevention

- ✓ prioritise early intervention by using evidence to challenge and change attitudes and behaviour, as well as providing more general awareness-raising and signposting information to the HE provider's population;
- ✓ embed a comprehensive prevention programme which takes account of the needs of diverse communities including, but not limited to, people with protected characteristics and Welsh speakers;
- ✓ increase awareness and challenge negative attitudes towards the prevention of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence across staff and student populations from induction and throughout time at the HE provider;
- ✓ review regularly the extent to which HE providers are continuing to implement UUK *Changing the Culture* recommendations and consider whether and, if so, what more should be done to make progress towards tackling VAWDASV.

Case study: University of South Wales : A proactive approach

The University's students' union adopted a proactive approach to raise awareness and empower its staff and students. This included Active Bystander training sessions being delivered to all students' union staff which covered the University's values and challenging unacceptable behaviours.

All members of University sports' teams, clubs and societies were required to undertake training on expected behaviours and values at the University before participating in extra-curricular activities.

In total, over 40 training sessions have been delivered to around 750 students and staff. Feedback has been positive and the students' union may disseminate the training to the University chaplaincy team to strengthen the support available to all students and staff.

Case study: Cardiff University: Creating the culture

The University's VAWDASV preventative work has focused on raising awareness across the whole University community. This has resulted in a tiered approach which has been supported through:

- multi-platform events;
- bespoke online resources;
- social media;
- videos;
- blogs.

The available resources include: an e-learning module; Recognise, Enquire and Act workshops for frontline staff; and a bystander workshop for students which aims to address issues highlighted in the UUK reports.

These services have all taken into consideration the importance of bilingual services and resources and the diversity and complexity of the lived student experience. In this way, the University has actively encouraged disclosure and has sought to remove any barriers from reporting through the introduction of an online disclosure service and an Employee Assistance Programme. The University has collaborated with specialist external services to respond to the challenge of tackling VAWDASV. The University is now focused on both increasing the number of trained staff and student leaders, and the development of a Restorative Approaches Model to help minimise harm and build relationships.

4. Ensure Integration

- ✓ ensure staff and student safeguarding and resilience policies and practices take account of tackling violence and abuse and [Wales Safeguarding Procedures](#)¹³;
- ✓ provide governing bodies with regular progress reports summarising progress towards adopting a cross-institution approach to tackling VAWDASV;
- ✓ take account of how different cultures and beliefs influence the thinking and behaviour of students and staff around issues related to VAWDASV.

Case study: Cardiff Metropolitan University: A cross-university task group

The University has set up a task group to consider the impact of VAWDASV and it has engaged senior leaders from across the institution. An agreed terms of reference has been set to commission projects to address the issues set out in the VAWDASV Act. This includes:

- development of a policy statement;
- review of existing policies and procedures for managing student misconduct;
- development of regulatory policies and procedures;
- specialist staff training from '[New Pathways](#)' and '[Children in Wales](#)';
- meetings with Welsh Government to discuss VAWDASV developments;
- student workshops on myths and attitudes;
- introduction of Bystander training;

¹³ HEFCW circular [W20/08HE](#) provided funding to review safeguarding processes, which should take account of tackling VAWDASV.

- development of a Sexual Misconduct webpage on the student portal; and
- consideration of a system for anonymous reporting.

All of the projects are reviewed in terms of meeting the needs of a bilingual staff and student population.

Case study: Bangor University: Effective training for senior members of staff

The University's Pro-Vice-Chancellor has led work related to VAWDASV following the University's commitment to UUK's recommendations in 'Changing the Culture' (2016). As a result, the University has recruited a Student Equality and Diversity Officer and developed an online training course for all student-facing staff in responding to disclosures of sexual violence. The course has been well-received and a subsequent second tier course has been developed for senior managers.

This training course enables senior staff to develop their knowledge of the law on sexual violence, the barriers to reporting it, societal attitudes towards all forms of violence against women and girls and the impact this has on gender equality. Particular emphasis is placed on the appropriate responses and increasing the confidence of senior staff to take the most appropriate forms of action in all cases.

5. Secure collaboration

- ✓ commit to tackling VAWDASV in their student charters;
- ✓ work with appropriate professionals, including third sector agencies¹⁴, to ensure that violence and abuse awareness-raising and training is provided to staff and all students while at the institution, for example VAWDASV e-learning via NHS Wales¹⁵;
- ✓ work with NUS Wales, students' unions, staff representative bodies and unions to promote and deliver information, advice and campaigns to tackle abuse and violence;
- ✓ provide those experiencing violence and abuse with information and access to specialist support within the institution and/or local community;

¹⁴ In particular agencies that support groups with different protected characteristics e.g. [BAWSO](#)

¹⁵ This service is only available to relevant authorities explicitly referenced in the VAWDASV Act. HE providers can register their domain on NHS link: <https://learning.wales.nhs.uk/login/index.php> to enable access for all staff and students to undertake training using the HE provider email address.

- ✓ promote national VAWDASV campaigns including the Welsh Government's [Live Fear Free](#)¹⁶ campaign which includes awareness raising on tackling violence and abuse including female genital mutilation, modern slavery, honour-based violence, forced marriage and gender stereotypes. Recent campaigns include '[Don't be a Bystander](#)' and '[This is not Love: This is Control](#)'; '[This is Sexual Abuse](#)' campaign.
- ✓ promote relevant helplines, such as the
 - (i) [Live Fear Free](#) helpline, a free 24-hour confidential helpline offering support and advice to all victims of abuse and violence, regardless of gender and sexual orientation, and to "concerned others" such as family members, friends and colleagues; and
 - (ii) the [Dyn](#) male helpline providing dedicated information and advice for Heterosexual, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual men who are experiencing domestic violence and abuse from a partner.
- ✓ promote effective practice on tackling violence and abuse, including practice from across the UK and more widely¹⁷.

Case study: University of Wales Trinity Saint David : A cross-sector approach

As part of its recent developments, the University has developed first disclosure guidelines for use by staff. The University has recognised that alleged perpetrators may not be university students and, therefore, has developed an effective, supportive network with other agencies. Police teams have attended student induction events and Dyfed-Powys Police's mobile unit visited the University during 2018/19 during Hate Crime Awareness week.

Case study: The Open University: Support through court, domestic abuse resources.

The Open University's Open [Justice](#) Centre delivers a [course](#) in partnership with [Support Through Court](#), a charity operating across 23 courts in England and Wales. The charity provides support to people facing the civil or family justice system without legal representation. It uses a network of 750 volunteers trained to provide emotional and practical support to clients throughout the court process.

The purpose of the course, which was part-funded by the Ministry of Justice, was to help build and develop the soft skills of those volunteers. There are nine modules in total, three of which have a key focus on domestic abuse training.

1. Introducing domestic abuse
2. Supporting survivors of domestic abuse
3. Supporting clients who are accused of perpetrating domestic abuse.

¹⁶ This service is available for all heterosexual, gay, bisexual and transsexual women and men.

¹⁷ [Equally safe Scotland: Strategy to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls](#)

As the Open University provided some funding and legal expertise in the production of the materials, open access to the course is freely available as part of the Open Justice Centre's wider commitment to promoting legal capabilities in the community. This work follows on from similar projects with the [United Nations](#) and [AdviceUK](#) in addition to signposting the [Live Fear Free Helpline](#). The Open Justice Centre can be contacted at open-justice@open.ac.uk

Sharing practice

30. As part of HEFCW's policy development and monitoring processes, we will continue to work with the Welsh Government on policies related to tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence in HE.
31. There are a number of third sector organisations in Wales that support survivors of domestic abuse and/or sexual violence. The [Dewis Cymru](#) website is a search engine of resources and services available across Wales. The website is continually updated when new services become available.

Assessing the impact of our policies

32. We have carried out an impact assessment to help safeguard against discrimination and promote equality and we included specific equality-related question in the consultation circular. We also considered the impact of policies on the Welsh language, and Welsh language provision within the HE sector in Wales and potential impacts towards the goals set out in the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 including our Well-Being Objectives. Contact equality@hefcw.ac.uk for more information about impact assessments.
33. We consider that tackling VAWDASV will have a positive impact on our contribution to the [Well-Being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) including, but not limited to, supporting a more equal Wales and a healthier Wales. We have worked collaboratively to involve partners and taken a long-term approach.
34. We accept that it will take time for specialist, fully bilingual support to become available, however it is important to develop Welsh medium services collaboratively in the longer-term. However, we recognise that tackling VAWDASV should be a priority for all HE providers and there should not be any negative implications for people for whom Welsh is their language of choice.

The Welsh Government's National Strategy on VAWDASV identifies six objectives, to be achieved by November 2021 which HE providers may find useful in shaping priorities and deliverables.

Objective 1: Increase awareness and challenge attitudes of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence across the Welsh population;

Objective 2: Increased awareness in children and young people of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships and that abusive behaviour is always wrong;

Objective 3: Increased focus on holding perpetrators to account and provide opportunities to change their behaviour based around victim safety;

Objective 4: Make early intervention and prevention a priority;

Objective 5: Relevant professionals are trained to provide effective, timely and appropriate responses to victims and survivors; and

Objective 6: Provide victims with equal access to appropriately resourced, high quality, needs led, strength based, gender responsive services across Wales.

Legislative and regulatory context for this guidance

1. [The Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) aims to improve prevention, protection and support for those affected by violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual and to improve the public sector response to such abuse and violence.
2. The Welsh Government's [National Strategy on Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence 2016-21](#) recognises the importance of other organisations' contributions to delivering the purpose of the Act. To make progress, the Welsh Government recognise that collaborative working with, and between, public services, devolved and non-devolved partners, independent specialist and wider voluntary sector organisations is essential.
3. The Welsh Government's National Strategy on VAWDASV identifies six objectives, set out in **Annex A**, to be achieved by November 2021 which HE providers may find useful in shaping priorities and deliverables¹⁸.
4. The Welsh Government's [National Strategy on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence: Cross Government Delivery Framework 2018-2021](#) confirms its collaboration with higher education:

Effective practice: 'We have collaborated with Swansea University to deliver a training programme across Wales on sex work and substance misuse. This is being turned into e-learning and will be available on our forthcoming Harm Reduction website'.

5. The Welsh Government published its Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence [progression report](#) April 2018 to March 2019:

Effective Practice: The Welsh Government's 2018-19 progress report notes that:

The Welsh Government has worked with Cardiff Metropolitan University to undertake a rapid evidence assessment of what works with domestic abuse perpetrators. This was published in December 2018; and

A grant was provided to Swansea University to support stalking and harassment research and training in collaboration with the Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarships (KESSII) programme funded by the European Social Fund.

¹⁸ See Welsh Government National strategy on violence against women domestic abuse and sexual violence 2016-20, p.18.

6. Other relevant Welsh legislation and reports include:
- the [Equality Act 2010](#) and Public Sector Equality Duty ([PSED](#)) in Wales (2011): The Act protects people with protected characteristics from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society; the PSED aims to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity between people; and foster good relations between people;
 - the [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#): The Act encourages providers to ensure that they consider the presence of children and vulnerable adults on campus.
 - the [Higher Education \(Wales\) Act 2015](#): The Act requires regulated providers to prioritise equality of opportunity and the promotion of higher education in fee and access plans.
 - the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#): Tackling VAWDASV contributes to improving social well-being in Wales, a more equal and healthier Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities. Our approach to tackling VAWDASV is informed by the five ways of working.
 - [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\) \(2018\)](#): The Act includes requirements and data protection controls when considering what information can be shared between parties and between different internal and external services. Students should be kept informed if or/and when their information and data will be shared in accordance with clear institutional guidelines¹⁹.
7. HEFCW's [2019-20 remit letter](#) states that: 'Following the introduction of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 (the Act), I would like the Council to work with Welsh Government officials on the development and issuing of guidance to the sector on how institutions in Wales can contribute to the pursuit of the purpose of the Act.'
8. The Welsh Government's [Nation of Sanctuary Plan](#) (2019) recognises that refugees and asylum seekers may require support as survivors of VAWDASV.
9. The [Equality and Human Rights Commission Wales](#), the Welsh Government regulator of equality and diversity, published [Is Wales Fairer](#) 2018. Findings include the challenges to women's safety and to career progression.
10. The Wales Centre for Public policy published its *Domestic Abuse Interventions in Wales* [report](#) in September 2020. The report confirmed that issuing guidance on VAWDASV to HE providers was within HEFCW's remit and key to primary prevention of domestic abuse.

¹⁹ [HEPI report on student data \(2019\)](#)

List of respondents to HEFCW's consultation on tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence in HE

Aberystwyth University

Aberystwyth University Students' Union

Bangor University

Cardiff University

Cardiff Metropolitan University

Hywel Dda University Health Board

New Pathways

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent

The Open University

Swansea University

University of South Wales

Welsh Government

Welsh Women's Aid

Wrexham Glyndŵr University