

North Wales
Vulnerability and Exploitation Strategy
2021 - 2024

Update on Progress – March 2023

Contents

- 1. Executive Summary of 2021 – 24.....3**
- 2. Introduction.....4**
- 3. Governance.....5**
- 4. Specific areas of progress.....7**
- 5. Delivery Plan and updates.....8 - 16**

1. Executive Summary

Our vision:

'The people of North Wales can live safe, equal and violence-free lives, in communities without abuse or exploitation'.

North Wales is working together to tackle all aspects of Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse, Sexual Violence, Modern Slavery, Human Trafficking, Organised Immigration Crime and Exploitation.

The North Wales Vulnerability and Exploitation Board represents all statutory and non-statutory partners across the region, committed to a collaborative, joined-up approach to addressing all areas of vulnerability and exploitation.

The North Wales Vulnerability and Exploitation Strategy 2021-2024 involves a multi-agency approach to addressing vulnerability and exploitation in North Wales. Both Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) and Modern Slavery agendas are aligned to the four Strategic Aims:

PREPARE PREVENT PROTECT PURSUE

The Strategy enables and supports innovative practices and ideas, as well as supporting existing services, to provide a cohesive package of support for victims, survivors and their families. The Strategy also ensures perpetrators are held to account and supports communities to promote an ethos of safety, equality and well-being.

2. Introduction

The North Wales Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Abuse Strategic Board met for the last time in Spring 2020, due to a complete reform of the Strategic Board structure across North Wales. Following a substantial amount of work and consultation, it was decided that the VAWDASV agenda would joint with Modern Slavery, Human trafficking, Organise Immigration Crime and other areas of criminal exploitation. The new arrangement is called the Vulnerability and Exploitation Board.

A new Strategy was developed in 2020/21, which gives clear strategic aims for the region and under that is a Delivery Plan, showing short, medium and long-term objectives. This is currently being updated, to show the connections to the new All Wales VAWDASV Strategy and the Blueprint.

The Vulnerability and Exploitation strategy clearly shows that North Wales is committed to tackling exploitation of the most vulnerable in our society and is a priority for all partners within the statutory and non-statutory sectors.

The North Wales Vulnerability and Exploitation Partnership Board is a strategic network of agencies aligned across all six Local Authority Areas of North Wales (Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham), comprising statutory, non-statutory and third sector organisations.

The purpose of the strategic partnership is to generate a coordinated, efficient and productive response to tackle Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) and Modern Slavery, Human Trafficking, Organised Immigration Crime and Exploitation. We will achieve this by:

- Working collaboratively to ensure that individuals within our communities who may be vulnerable and/or subject to exploitation are identified and heard in order to achieve the best outcome for them.
- Building trust and confidence through working alongside and within our communities.

The Vulnerability and Exploitation Board is designed to capture and guide the partnership work, as well as overseeing the delivery of the strategy objectives, by all partnership agencies, under the Regional Strategy as well as relevant national legislation.

The current Strategy encompasses the work already being done under the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence agenda, as well as other areas of exploitation. It does not dilute the previous work done under the direction of the VAWDASV Board, but rather supports us to consider the agenda from a more holistic perspective, developing new areas of collaboration, both from a delivery aspect, as well as investigating new opportunities for joint commissioning.

3. Governance

The North Wales Vulnerability and Exploitation Partnership Board will be accountable for the Vulnerability and Exploitation Board Strategy. Chaired by the Chief Executive, North Wales Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Strategic Partnership Board provides oversight, direction and support to local partners to ensure a collaborative approach. The Board meets on a quarterly basis to monitor and evaluate progression towards the Strategic Aims and Objectives as outlined within the Delivery Plan and Actions. The Work Streams will, in turn address the aims and objectives within the Delivery Plan and move the work forwards in each of the agenda areas, reflecting the work directed by the national VAWDASV workstreams. This work will then be reported back to the Strategic Board and Welsh Government on a quarterly basis.

The Vulnerability and Exploitation Partnership Board Chair meets with counterparts from the Safer North Wales Partnership Board, Safeguarding Boards (Adults/Children), Contest Board, Local Criminal Justice Board, Area Planning Board and Regional Leadership Board to ensure alignment of work streams.

Vulnerability and Exploitation Board Representation and Partners

• Anglesey County Council	• Denbighshire County Council	• North Wales Youth Justice Service
• Barnardo's / Independent Child Trafficking Guardians (ICTGs)	• Flintshire County Council	• Office of Police and Crime Commissioner
• BAWSO	• Gwynedd County Council	• Probation Service
• BCUHB	• Haven of Light	• RASASC Wales
• Church in Wales	• HMP Berwyn	• Regional VAWDASV Team
• Conwy County Borough Council	• North Wales Police	• Welsh Anti-Slavery Leadership Group
• DASU North Wales	• North Wales Fire and Rescue Service	• Wrexham County Borough Council

Separate work streams or Task and Finish Groups involving respective partners are developed in order to deliver upon actions, to achieve the respective strategic aims and objectives. Whilst not an exhaustive list, this may include:

- Aberconwy WA
- Action for Children
- Advance Brighter Futures
- Association of Voluntary Organisations in Wrexham (AVOW) Border Force
- Caia Park Partnership
- Clwyd Alyn Housing Association Women's Aid
- Clwyd Alyn Housing Association
- Crown Prosecution Service
- Department Work Pensions
- Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team Wales (EYST)
- Family Friends
- Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA)
- Gorwel
- Hafan Cymru
- HMRC
- Homestart Wrexham
- Lucy Faithful Foundation
- Migrant Help
- Modern Slavery Helpline
- National Crime Agency
- National Ugly Mugs (NUM)
- New Pathways
- NFU
- NSPCC
- North Wales Women's Centre
- PACT
- Polish Integrated Support Centre (PISC)
- Red Cross
- Refugee Council Salvation
- Army
- Stepping Stones
- TGP Cymru
- The Trussell Trust
- Victim Support
- Wales & West Housing Association

4. Specific areas of progress during 2022/23

2022/23 saw a huge increase of referrals to the specialist sector, as victims and survivors found the confidence to seek support following the lifting of restrictions linked to the Covid-19 pandemic. Services saw increases of up to 50% across the board and waiting list inevitably increased for some specialist and therapeutic services. However, it was also a year of increased resource, not just from Welsh Government, but funders such as the Ministry of Justice and the Home Office, so North Wales saw the largest amount of VAWDASV related funding coming into the region since regionalisation.

The National Training Framework became fully embedded within the annual training plans of the Local Authorities, BCUHB and NWFRS, with completion rates climbing rapidly. Ask and Act Champions (Group 3) were still slow in coming forward, but this has gradually increased over the 12 months.

The IRIS pilot in the South Denbighshire cluster of GP surgeries has been a resounding success, with over 100 GPs and staff receiving enhanced training and support to recognise domestic abuse and make referrals for early intervention. We hope to see this rolled out across the Central region in 2023/24 and then across the wider region over the next 2 years, although sustainable funding is always a concern.

The North Wales VAWDASV Needs Assessment was completed during this period, showing the rapid increase in referrals to the specialist sector and the need for increased join up of funding, to ensure efficient and effective commissioning of services. A wider range of provision is available than ever before, with recovery programmes embedded into the existing provision across the region.

Children and Young people affected by VAWDASV have been a priority over the last year and there are now specialist Children and Young People's Workers embedded within more of the services than ever before. They offer a wide range of support, including one to one support, as well as play therapy within the refuges and targeted group programmes in many schools across North Wales.

The capital funding for disbursed units was used to address a previously unmet need, that of families fleeing abuse over the weekend or out of hours. Many families have been forced to stay in local hotels if refuges don't have space and this means they have no kitchen facilities, space for pets etc. There is now a specific building allowing large families to have a real "home" environment, while they wait for appropriate longer term provision. This increases the chances of them making the final move away from an abusive parent, but also gives them the opportunity to function as a family unit within their own space.

Vulnerability & Exploitation Strategy: Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)

No.	Strategic Objectives <i>(What do we aim to do?)</i>	Underpinning Activity <i>(How will we do it?)</i>	Lead / Owner <i>(Who will do it?)</i>	Timescales <i>(When will we do it?)</i>	Outcomes/Outputs/ Measures <i>(What does success look like?)</i>	Status/Update
VAWDASV 1	Challenge the public attitude to VAWDASV across North Wales through awareness raising, and space for public discussion with aim to decrease its occurrence	Share Welsh Government campaigns and Live Fear Free marketing materials with key partner agencies (regional VAWDASV Team) then local partner agencies to promote materials via their social media, websites etc.	VAWDASV Regional Team / All partners	Ongoing	- Promotional material is shared and distributed locally.	This work is part of the Regional Team's remit, working with WG to promote all national campaigns. The Regional Advisor sits on All Wales Communication Group and disseminates all relevant information to the V and E Board.
		Commission family support and parenting programmes to ensure that safe, healthy relationships are modelled and any inappropriate attitudes towards gender inequality are challenged and addressed appropriately.	Regional VAWDASV Commissioning Group	By March 2023	- There is a provision of family support programmes across the region	Family support programmes and specific workers for children and young people have been commissioned across the specialist sector, ensuring full

						coverage of CYP support across the region.
		Challenge cultural attitudes and change practice which can underpin Forced Genital Mutilation (FGM), Honour Based Violence and forced marriage.	Honour Based Abuse (HBA) and harmful practices work stream	Ongoing	- Increased reporting of HBA	NW HBA workstream established but on hold while links to national workstream is developed.
		Integrate VAWDASV into mainstream contracts to embed support for victims and their families in generic services e.g. substance misuse, homelessness and mental health	Regional VAWDASV Commissioning Group	By March 2023	- Integrated services for victims with complex needs	Regional Team working with APB and Local Authority commissioners (HSG) to ensure that VAWDASV is considered when supporting vulnerable families. Specific disbursed units for those with complex needs have been commissioned 21/22 and 22/23.
VAWDASV 2	Increase awareness in children, young people and adults of the importance of safe, equal and	Provision of children's support workers in specialist agencies, to work with children who have/are experiencing VAWDASV as well	Regional VAWDASV Commissioning Group /	By March 2023	- CYP workers available in every local area	Additional CYP workers commissioned during 22/23 with Needs-based

	healthy relationships, and empowering them to make positive personal choices	awareness raising work with local schools and youth groups,	Children & Young People work stream			funding from WG and these posts have been continued into 23/24.
		Schools and colleges to implement a trauma-informed ethos, enabling young people to feel safe to disclose abuse.	Children & Young People work stream	Ongoing	- Increased reporting within schools	CYP workstream has been established but on hold while cross-cutting themes with Safeguarding Board and Regional Partnership board are unpicked. This work likely to be picked up under the RPB Children's subgroup.
		Schools and colleges develop an approach to working with young people as bystanders to promote VAWDASV prevention and further social change.	Children & Young People work stream	By March 2023	- Delivery of bystander training within schools	Bystander training due to be commissioned and rolled out centrally, so work on hold to develop training pack until this is established.
VAWDASV 3	Increase focus on holding those who commit abuse to	Commission evidence-based perpetrator programmes and whole-family interventions with a	Regional VAWDASV	By March 2023	- There is a provision of appropriate perpetrator	Community-based Perpetrator (Behaviour Change)

	account and supporting those who may carry out abusive or violent behaviour to change their behaviour and avoid offending.	focus on encouraging and creating behaviour change at the same time as protecting their victims/ families from further abuse	Commissioning Group		interventions across the region	<p>provision commissioned. (Choose2Change)</p> <p>This involves partner and child support, in line with WG standards. Caring Dads is also commissioned as a parenting programme aimed at perpetrators.</p>
		Provide appropriate training to professionals to ensure they recognise perpetration of abuse and the effect it has on whole family engagement with services.	Perpetrators work stream	By March 2023	- Professionals recognise the signs and effects of working with a perpetrator within a vulnerable family	Six cohorts of 25 professionals have undergone training with Safe Lives, focused on working with perpetrators within a vulnerable family (Engaging with those who harm).
		Put Custody to community support in place for perpetrators and their families.	TBC – may sit with Criminal Justice Board	By March 2023	- A Robust pathway from assessment to programme within prison and then continuation in	This area of work sits with the Local Criminal Justice Board. A pathway for communication needs to be

					the community following release.	established to ensure the Vulnerability and Exploitation Board are informed of progress.
		Successfully identify and prosecute perpetrators of Sexual Violence	Sexual Violence Group / Perpetrators group	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduced attrition rates - Increased prosecutions 	This area of work sits with the Local Criminal Justice Board, although there is some cross over with the Sexual Violence workstream. The workstream are focussed on dip sampling NFA cases to see where the specialist sector could have been involved to support the victim during the criminal justice process.
VAWDASV 4	Make early intervention and prevention a priority.	Roll out the IRIS programme across North Wales	Regional VAWDASV Commissioning Group	By March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased reporting to GP surgeries across NW 	Successful OPCC funded pilot within South Denbighshire cluster completed,

						but continuation and roll out funding still at risk. BCUHB have committed to continuing the pilot for two quarters into 23/24, but nothing confirmed following the extension.
		<p>Increased support for women and girls during night-time economy –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of street marshals • Increase in police presence • Safer environments through street lighting • Training for licensees 	Safer North Wales Board - Safer Streets funding	By March 2023	- Reduction in VAWDASV related street crime	Safer Streets funding secured for Wrexham, Flintshire and Anglesey to provide safer street environments for women and girls. This includes street lighting, CCTV as well as street marshals and increased police presence.
		Training programme developed for businesses and Trade Unions to address workplace harassment	Regional Commissioning group to work with National Partnership Board	By March 2024	- Training rolled out to public and private sector	Regional Advisor liaising with WG training team to ensure national training package is developed and

						rolled out to local businesses
VAWDASV 5	Relevant professionals are trained to provide effective, timely and appropriate responses to victims and survivors	Implement National Training Framework to ensure that all professionals working in public facing roles are fully equipped to support victims and survivors of VAWDASV	Regional Workforce Development Group	Ongoing	- All professional trained to group 2 / 3 level	NTF Groups 1, 2 and 3 now embedded within LAs, BCUHB and NWFRS annual training plans. Completion rates for Group 1 (Awareness of VAWDASV) are over 50% for all Local Authorities and up to over 80% for one and for Ask and Act Groups 2 and 3 are over 2000 staff across the region.
		Work with criminal justice partners, to ensure that adequate training is provided in supporting victims of VAWDASV through the use of civil remedies.	Local Criminal Justice Board	Ongoing	- All victims to be advised of their rights regarding civil remedies	Updates required from LCJB
		Work with Criminal and Family courts to ensure that appropriate training is offered in coercive and controlling behaviours and the links with stalking and escalation	Local Criminal Justice Board	Ongoing	- All court staff to be trained in the effects of CCB, stalking and escalation of	Updates required from LCJB

					risk relating to DV	
VAWDASV 6	Provide all victims with equal access to appropriately resourced, high quality, needs led, strength based, intersectional and responsive services across North Wales.	Provide specialist support for victims based on their individual needs	Regional VAWDASV Commissioning Group	Ongoing	- Support packages available based on individual need.	Specialist sector commissioned to provide a wide range of interventions, including peer support, group programmes and individual therapeutic interventions delivered by highly skilled and qualified staff.
		Provide consistent IDVA/ISVA provision across North Wales, offering the same service to victims of VAWDASV, regardless of where in North Wales they are based.	Regional VAWDASV Commissioning Group	Contract in place until 2023/24	- All high risk victims access IDVA/ISVA support	Regional IDVA contract going into 5 th year in 2023/24 and contract to be fully evaluated during this financial year.
		Provide standardised MARAC / ADAPT process across North Wales	MARAC / ADAPT Steering Group	By March 2023	- All high risk victims heard at local MARACs	Regional MARAC Operating Protocol been developed and adopted and ADAPT been fully

						embedded across the region.
		Provide evidence based recovery programmes, to support victims in building resilience and strengthening their family/friend support network.	Regional VAWDASV Commissioning Group	By March 2023	- Increase numbers of individuals accessing recovery programmes	A range of recovery programmes provided by domestic abuse and sexual violence providers across the region.
		Commit to forward planning regarding the funding for any future contracts in the VAWDASV arena, to ensure sustainability	Regional VAWDASV Commissioning Group	Ongoing	- Joint Commissioning Plan for 23/24 in place	Future planning meetings been held with Regional VAWDASV team, OPCC, APB, HSG, BCUHB and LA commissioners. These will continue throughout 23/24 to ensure Needs Assessment is updated and commissioning responds to regional needs.