



**Live Fear  
Free Helpline**

Providing confidential support  
and information on domestic  
abuse, sexual violence and  
violence against women in Wales

**0808 80 10 800**

**Llinell Gymorth  
Byw Heb Ofn**

Darparu gwybodaeth a chefnogaeth  
cyfrinachol ynghylch trais domestig,  
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**Cymorth i Ferched Cymru  
Welsh Women's Aid**

**Rhoi Merched a Phlant yn Gyntaf  
Putting Women & Children First**

# ***Preventing domestic abuse & accessing support: the role of specialist services***

**Eleri Butler MBE  
Chief Executive, Welsh Women's Aid**

# Welsh Women's Aid



- **National charity in Wales (est 1978) working to end domestic abuse, sexual violence & all forms of “violence against women” crime types**
- **Focus on prevention across communities, services, partnerships, (training, workshops, direct services, policy & practice, accreditation)**
- **Survivor involvement, needs & safety at centre of all we do**
- **National coordination through WWA members/specialist services & direct service delivery, e.g.**
  - *Wales ‘Live Fear Free’ Helpline for women, men, young people*
  - *Children Matter: prevention, training, support for services*
  - *National network of specialist services*
- **Part of UK and EU network of services, researchers and partnerships**



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# Domestic abuse

- *Actual/threatened physical, psychological, sexual or financial abuse of a person by their partner, family member or someone with whom there is or has been a close relationship*

## **Home Office definition:**

*any incident or pattern of incidents of **controlling, coercive, 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**. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional.*

## “Violence against women” crime types

- *Directed at women because they are women or that impact disproportionately on women*
- **Includes:** *domestic abuse, rape and sexual violence, forced marriage, ‘honour-based’ violence, female genital mutilation, sexual harassment, stalking. sexual exploitation & trafficking*



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# What we know ...

- **1.4 million of women (140,000 high risk) and 700,000 men (aged 16-59)** report experiencing incidents of domestic abuse in past year (ONS); *women highest risk of repetitive, escalating abuse, to be controlled, live in fear, be killed*
- **2.6% prevalence** of abuse/neglect of older people in UK: *interpersonal abuse higher for women aged 66-74 & separated/divorced; 2 in 5 carers*
- Disabled women, regardless of age, sexuality, ethnicity or class, may be **abused or raped at a rate at least twice** that of non-disabled women
- 2 women murdered each week in England and Wales by a current/former partner; **149 UK women suspected to have been killed by known men in 2014** (1 woman killed every 2.4 days)
- Abuse by adult children/family members against older parents /family members is domestic abuse; mental ill-health & substance use increases risk of harm



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*The long-term impact on my health has been depression [. . .] I had it then when all that was going on and now for [. . .] nearly twelve years (survivor, 75 years)*

*In enduring this period [of abuse] I've had lots and lots of mental health problems. I've been in and out of the hospital having violent attacks of acute anxiety they said... because I didn't have the tools to manage what he was doing to me (survivor, 63 years).*

*I'm waiting for a hearing aid and now [. . .] I got severely bashed on my ear, and I'm told that I can't hear in this ear... it is a perforated eardrum (survivor, 76 years).*



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# What we know in Wales ...

- Police receive a call for assistance for domestic abuse **every 30 seconds**; **47,000 incidents of domestic abuse** reported to police last year
- Estimated **124,000 people** (16+) in Wales are victims of a sexual offence
- In 2013/14: there were **6,325 prosecutions** by the CPS across Wales - **5,637 domestic abuse, 257 rape, 431 sexual offences**; **conviction rate: 76%**

Welsh Women's Aid (2014/15) -

- **14,239 survivors** supported by specialist local domestic abuse services
- **28,526 calls to the Wales DA & SV Helpline**



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# Some barriers older people tell us they experience when seeking help:

- **Not knowing what support is available** – not able to access
- Being **judged, blamed, fear** of being injured or killed
- **Shame, lack of confidence and low self-esteem**
- **Communication barriers, dependency** on care and support
- **Lack of accessible safe housing** (refuge) & support options
- **Professionals' responses inadequate** and/or services not recognising experience as abuse
- Cumulative experience of **discrimination, abuse, harassment**



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*“ Disabled women still live in fear of abuse [not only in relationships but] on the street from strangers too – I’ve been pushed and abused and told in the street that I shouldn’t be allowed out or to leave the house because I’m disabled. There is a huge amount of discrimination against us ...”*

*“There is a real problem of perpetrators working within statutory systems, such as working as carers for social services... and services should also never use interpreters from the same community.”*

*“The focus of services should be what they can offer to increase women’s safety, not to judge women’s behaviour and what she is doing or not doing in response to experiencing violence.”*

*“I needed support, I was in a bad way, I was sectioned after my experience of abuse, I wanted support and counselling, I don’t want to be given drugs and be locked up in wards just because I’ve been abused. I want human responses to human distress which recognises my experience as a woman is very different from men”*



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# Specialist services for survivors & families

Survivors value specialist DA / SV / VAW services in Wales:

- **Live Fear Free Helpline**
- **Refuges and safe housing**
- **Community-based support from local services – help and advice, counselling,**
- **Peer support and groups**
- **Sexual violence support including for adult survivors of child sexual abuse**
- **Help for abusers to change or to manage their behaviour/risk**



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# New legislation to prevent domestic abuse - *Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015*

- **Duty on public services** (local authorities, health) **to prevent** violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, and ensure protection and support for survivors
  - ...*Across all public sector functions: need to remove or minimise any factors which—(a) increase the risk of violence against women and girls, or (b) exacerbate the impact of such violence on victims*
- Duty to implement **national and local strategies to improve responses & prevention in communities**
- **Education:** duty to report on progress by councils, statutory guidance on whole school approach to prevention,
- **Statutory guidance & directions** e.g. on commissioning, identifying and responding to VAW/DA/SV ('ask and act'), on training for all public authorities



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***“Better prevention with earlier intervention, more choice with a stronger voice, tackling inequalities and improving access to community services, and more support for people with long-term needs, would all be part of the picture in working toward an abuse-free world”.***

## **Creating change that lasts: strengths-based needs-led**

We need to understand the **different journeys** survivors might take to independence & freedom

- **We need to create safe disclosure points & access to support** in range of locations in local communities (*hairdressers, shops, community/day centres, chapels, WI, health centres*)
- We need trained trusted professionals in communities - professionals to provide **support and help based on needs**
- **Timely specialist support** for survivors, families, friends
- **Focus on prevention, on creating positive change** for survivors, families & communities



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Diolch yn fawr iawn - Thank you



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