

SUBJECT: Gwent Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Regional Arrangements

MEETING: Public Services Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 13th October 20205

DIVISIONS/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide committee members with a progress report on regional arrangements under the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015, focusing on how these arrangements support Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) in delivering the Act's objectives as a Relevant Authority.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The committee scrutinises the regional arrangements to ensure they are working effectively for the citizens of Monmouthshire and provides any feedback on the oversight and delivery mechanisms in place.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 establishes a legislative framework designed to strengthen the prevention of, and protection from, gender-based violence, domestic abuse, and sexual violence, whilst also enhancing the provision of support for those affected.
- 3.2 This Act imposes a statutory obligation upon Relevant Authorities to actively reduce risk factors and minimise the impact of such forms of violence. In addition, the Act mandates the formulation of joint local strategies between Local Authorities and Health Boards, ensuring a coordinated and collaborative approach to tackling these critical issues.
- 3.3 In 2016/17, the Monmouthshire Public Services Board (PSB), alongside the four other PSBs in Gwent, resolved to adopt regional arrangements for addressing Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse, and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV). At that time, this was a pioneering pathfinder initiative, with the objective of ensuring equitable support services across Gwent, irrespective of postcode. This ambition was to be realised through the establishment of a regional strategy underpinned by robust partnership working and solid collaboration.
- 3.4 Following the publication of the revised National Strategy for VAWDASV by Welsh Government in 2022, Gwent has now developed a new regional VAWDASV Strategy (2023–2026). This strategy sets out a clear framework for partnership working and governance arrangements, designed to ensure the effective delivery of the updated objectives set by the national strategy.
- 3.5 **Gwent Strategy 2023 -2026**

The strategy for Gwent, consists of the following objectives and fundamentals:

Objectives:

- **Prevention**
Improve arrangements for the prevention of gender-based violence, domestic abuse, and sexual violence.
- **Protection**
Enhance arrangements for the protection of victims of gender-based violence, domestic abuse, and sexual violence.
- **Support**
Strengthen support for people affected by gender-based violence, domestic abuse, and sexual violence.
- **Strategic Alignment**
Align local delivery with regional and national VAWDASV objectives through robust governance and partnership working.
- **Collaboration**
Foster partnership working and collaboration to improve services for victims and survivors, pooling resources and expertise regionally.
- **Data, Needs Assessment, and Monitoring**
Use shared data analysis and needs assessments to identify service gaps and target interventions more effectively.
- **Workforce Development**
Support the workforce through training, learning, and development opportunities to ensure staff have the skills and knowledge to serve residents affected by VAWDASV.
- **Accountability and Continuous Improvement**
Hold all partners accountable for their contributions, using thematic reviews, audits, and consultations to inform direction and improve services.

Fundamentals:

- **Survivor-focused Approach:**
The strategy is designed to ensure a consistent, survivor-focused, and evidence-informed approach to tackling VAWDASV locally and regionally.
- **Inclusive and Intersectional Service Delivery:**
Services are designed to be accessible for all communities, including older victims and those with no recourse to public funds.
- **Governance and Accountability:**
The Gwent VAWDASV Partnership Board provides strategic leadership, sets priorities, and ensures accountability for regional strategy implementation.

- **Integration with Other Priorities:**

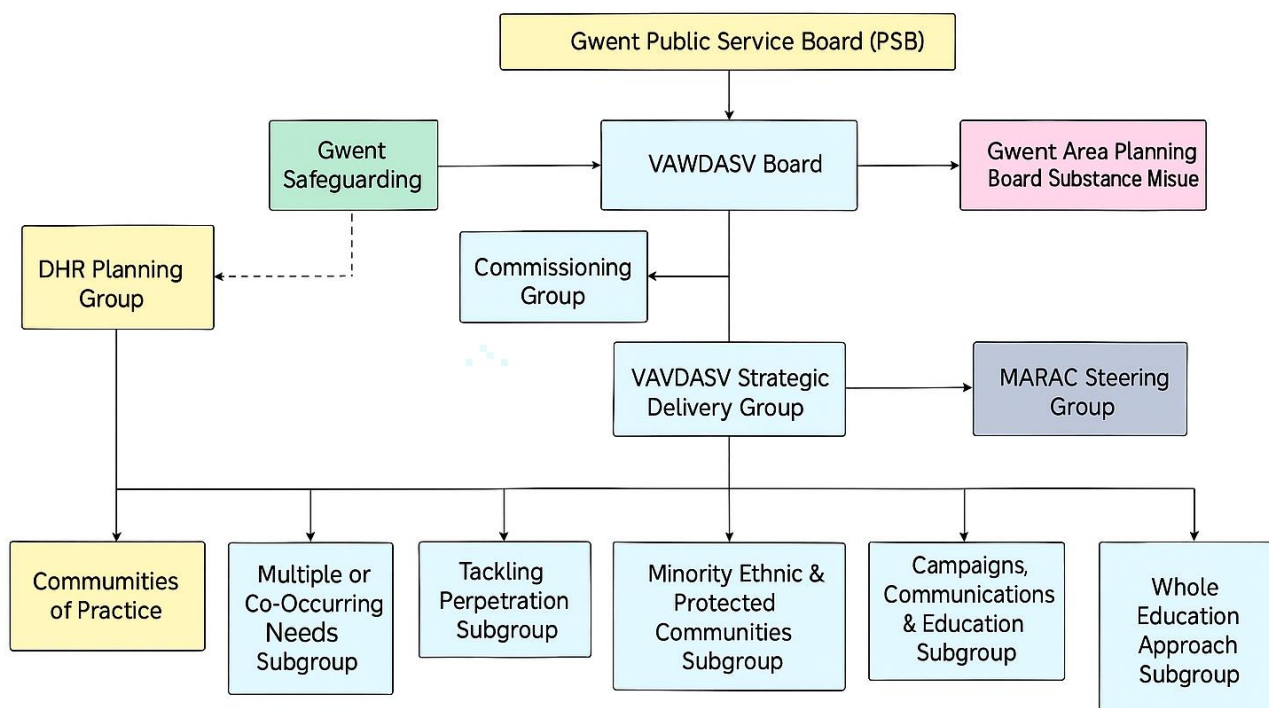
VAWDASV is embedded as ‘everybody’s business across public services, promoting integration with safeguarding, housing, and health.

3.6 The Gwent Strategic Delivery Group, reporting to the Gwent VAWDASV Board, coordinates the Strategy with members from Monmouthshire County Council, other Gwent local authorities, and partner organisations.

3.7 An extensive board and sub-group structure operates across Gwent to support the VAWDASV agenda, involving representatives from relevant authorities under the VAWDASV Wales Act as well as key partner organisations that contribute to addressing VAWDASV. Currently, there is no formalised mechanism for regional boards or sub-groups to share information or intelligence with the Monmouthshire Community Safety Partnership (CSP ~ Safer Monmouthshire Group); this situation is not unique to Monmouthshire. The existing process for information sharing relies on specific individuals, which limits resilience, concentrates responsibility, and poses risks to effective information dissemination. The VAWDASV Board has acknowledged this issue and is actively working to enhance information sharing processes with CSP’s collectively.

3.8 Gwent Board and subgroup structures:

Gwent Regional VAWDASV Governance and Reporting Structures



NB: There is also a regional subgroup for the National Training Framework for VAWDASV mandatory training, which has also not been included in the diagram above taken from the strategy.

4. Positive Achievements

- 4.1 Monmouthshire County Council is an active member of the Gwent VAWDASV Partnership Board, which aims to bring together a range of coordinated activities designed to align local service delivery with regional and national goals. Instead of a series of isolated efforts, the partnership is characterised by access to resources, funding from diverse streams, and the input of regional thematic subgroups. Such structures not only underpin sustainable models, like the regional Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) service, but also provide local staff with opportunities for professional development.
- 4.2 Planning and action are shaped by a variety of needs assessments from across the region, which assist in highlighting service gaps and interventions, where they are needed most. The groundwork feeds directly into strategic plans, helping Monmouthshire fulfil its statutory responsibilities, under the Wales act, and set priorities that genuinely reflect the needs of local communities.
- 4.3 Education and prevention are key workstreams which are supported by the Welsh Government Spectrum programme, which brings lessons about healthy relationships and VAWDASV directly to children and young people in school settings. The regional approach ensures that these messages, and the services that support them, are inclusive and accessible to all.
- 4.4 Service provision is part of a broader, integrated system. The regional IDVA team, with a full-time adviser based in Monmouthshire and with the support of a larger network, has aided over 1,500 high-risk victims across Gwent in the past year, including many from Monmouthshire itself. Specialist Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) services and practical support, like target hardening and transitional accommodation, further strengthen the safety net for those affected by domestic and sexual abuse.
- 4.5 Awareness-raising initiatives are ongoing and varied, ranging from the “Ask & Act” training delivered to authority and school staff, alongside tailored sessions for social care and housing professionals, and the in-school Spectrum programme, as well as supported campaigns such as White Ribbon Day. Webinars and community events also help to keep the conversations alive and responsive to emerging needs across the region.
- 4.6 The regional approach to VAWDASV is underpinned by a culture of collaboration. Multi-agency relationships, regular joint projects, and evidence-based pilots, such as the Older Persons Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment, demonstrate a shared commitment to innovation and learning. The Gwent VAWDASV Partnership Board guides this work, providing strategic leadership, monitoring progress, and ensuring that partnership working remains both robust and accountable.

5. Regional and Local Challenges

- 5.1 Data collection and monitoring and measuring impact: The implementation of the Gwent VAWDASV Strategy 2023–2026 has encountered several notable challenges that impact the effectiveness and reach of services across the region. A primary challenge lies in data collection and performance monitoring. Significant difficulties persist in gathering comprehensive data and monitoring performance, which in turn makes it challenging to measure the overall impact of the strategy on a whole-system

basis. As a result, there is a continued reliance on thematic and agency-specific data sources, such as criminal justice dashboards and IDVA service reporting, rather than integrated, system-wide metrics.

- 5.2 Accessibility of services in rural areas also remains a concern. At a local level, the rural nature of Monmouthshire presents unique barriers to accessing public services, particularly for victims residing in remote locations. This geographic challenge can hinder timely and equitable support for those most in need.
- 5.3 Service gaps and specialist needs further complicate delivery, and there are ongoing issues in ensuring that services are provided equitably to all groups, including male victims, rural communities, and individuals with no recourse to public funds. Identifying and addressing gaps in provision for protected communities and those with specific needs remains an ongoing priority.
- 5.4 Sustaining effective collaboration and integration across multiple agencies and boards is another area of challenge. Continuous partnership working is essential to avoid duplication of effort and to ensure that services are delivered efficiently and effectively, and there is more to be done in ensuring alignment across thematic boards, i.e. Boards that address crime & disorder, both locally and regionally, particularly where VAWDASV is a factor.
- 5.5 Resource allocation is also a persistent issue. Ensuring that sufficient resources and expertise are available at the local level is particularly challenging when regional resources are stretched, potentially impacting the quality and consistency of service delivery.
- 5.6 Communication and evidence sharing: Whilst the board plays a key role in facilitating needs assessments and intelligence gathering, there is a recognised need for more targeted communication and the sharing of evidence-based insights. Improved communication channels are necessary to ensure that local priorities are informed by the most current and relevant information available.

6. **Summary**

- 6.1 The Gwent VAWDASV Strategy and regional approach sets out a clear and ambitious framework for tackling violence against women, domestic abuse, and sexual violence across the region. A key strength of the strategy lies in its robust multi-agency governance structure, which enables coordinated action through the VAWDASV Board, strategic delivery groups, and thematic subgroups. This inclusive approach ensures that diverse needs, such as those of children and young people, minority ethnic communities, and individuals with complex needs, are addressed. The strategy also prioritises prevention, early intervention, and citizen engagement, which are essential for long-term impact.
- 6.2 It should also be recognised that challenges persist in aligning regional priorities, addressing service gaps, and improving the use of data and commissioning intelligence. Limited officer capacity and the complexity of the partnership landscape does hinder consistent delivery. To fully realise the strategy's aims, continued focus on accountability, resource coordination, and community voice is paramount.

RESOURCES

- 7.1 There are no resource implications as part of this report. Resources exist regionally and are coordinated through the Gwent VAWDASV Board. Where resource implications become necessary for Monmouthshire County Council, as a Relevant Authority, costed and evidenced recommendations will be made to the appropriate decision maker.

8. EQUALITY, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Gwent VAWDASV Strategy has been developed in line equalities legislation and acknowledges the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and Social Services and Wellbeing Act.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

[Gwent Regional VAWDASV Strategy 2023-2026 - DRAFT for Consultation](#)

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