



## **Inquiry into Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence – migrant women.**

### **1. What are the main challenges faced by the Police when attempting to support victims and / or survivors Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) in migrant communities?**

There are several challenges faced by the police when attempting to support victims, these can be broken down into the obvious barriers such as language, immigration status, the perception of the Police and other statutory agencies and fear of not being believed.

We need to ensure that migrants understand our supportive role as well as our enforcement role.

### **2. To what extent there is adequate specialist support available to migrant women and girls who are victims and survivors of SGBV.**

There are 3rd sector support agencies and many of them have specialist workers to help. In Wales we have BAWSO (Black and Asian Women's Step Out), and we have the Welsh Refugee Council who are a great help in signposting support. Other avenues of support are as follows:

IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocate)/ISVA (Independent Sexual Violence Advocate) Service

Local Authority

Immigration

National Asylum Support Service

Department of Work and Pensions.

New Pathways

Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC's)

There is always room for more when it comes to services – especially for those who have no recourse to public funds and are not able to access statutory or voluntary services and organisations due to their being a cost implication.

For migrants generally, the support provided is determined by the circumstances in which women have initial contact with the police. If they are illegal entrants looking to claim asylum, they are debriefed to establish whether they are victims of exploitation or crime and whether they require support from hospital, clinics or they are to be offered the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). Reviews are conducted to ensure that they are not inadvertently prosecuted by Immigration Enforcement. Protection of life and wellbeing is the priority.

Sexual assault victims would be offered the Forensic Medical Examination, if within the relevant forensic window together with crisis support from New Pathways. Being a victim supersedes any illegal entrant status and the provision of the NRM prevents any Immigration Enforcement activity taking place.

Information has been circulated following several safeguarding concerns raised following the Home for Ukraine Scheme.

### **3. What training do frontline staff receive so they have the knowledge to identify, support and refer victims affected by VAWDASV in migrant communities?**

A wide variety of training occurs across Wales. The below list is not exhaustive:

- Training input to new starters, Community Support Officers, police cadets and those undertaking the PiP level 2 accreditation on a number of subject areas linked to VAWDASV.
- DA (Domestic Abuse) Matters training
- Modern Slavery Police Transformation Unit (MSPTU) based in Devon & Cornwall are developing an NCALT package to be placed on the College of Policing site which, once approved by the MSPTU will be made available to all forces nationwide.
- HALO (Honour Abuse Liaison Officer) staff are trained to provide first responder support to victims of VAWDASV.
- Karma Nirvana trained staff risk assess victims of HA/FGM (Honour Abuse/Female Genital Mutilation) and Forced Marriage.
- Dedicated Modern Day Slavery Teams who provide advice and guidance.
- Initial Honour Baser Violence Training (3 days).
- Useful guides and information are placed on systems accessible to the Police.
- Joint multi-agency training for investigators
- [www.ukrainianswelcome.org](http://www.ukrainianswelcome.org) is a "one-stop shop" of useful websites, helplines, and other information – from where to get basic travel and housing advice to opening a bank account and understanding your rights as a worker. This is promoted by charitable organisation "Unseen" and has been shared with partners.

### **4. To what extent is the National Training Framework adequate and are there ways in which it could be improved?**

In relation to the National Training Framework, there is a clear need for additional support and training for front line officers in initially responding to incidents involving migrants as it is this initial encounter that will earn trust. The above training undertaken in Forces compliments the National Training Framework and provides the additionality required.

The VAWDASV Blueprint Approach will identify any further training needs required to fill gaps in practice and awareness.

**5. What guidance do the Police follow when dealing with victims and survivors of SGBV from migrant communities? How do you ensure there is a consistent approach across Wales?**

Each force in Wales will have a whole range of Policies and Procedures and Guidance on Honour Based Violence and Forced Marriage, Domestic Abuse, Female Genital Mutilation and Rape and Serious Sexual Offences. The policies mirror the College of Policing Approved Professional Practice and bring together both the investigative needs, safeguarding and support required to deal with these crimes.

There are many mechanisms in place to ensure a level of consistency across Wales.

This consistency will be supported by the VAWDASV Blueprint for Wales.

**6. Under what circumstances would the Police share immigration status of victims with the Home Office? In particular, is there a legal duty for such information to be shared?**

There is no legal duty to share information and if Immigration Services were to be a barrier to engagement with the victim, then police are unlikely to share. The immigration status of the victim is in itself a form of control that a perpetrator can have and can be the barrier to reporting in the first instance.

However, Organised Immigration Crime metric data is collated and shared with the NCA (National Crime Agency) who share the data with the Immigration Service.

**7. To what extent do the Police monitor serial abusers, in particular those who are bringing women into this country from abroad with a previous known or suspected history of abuse?**

If an offender comes to police attention because of an incident, dependant on the circumstances, there are specific safeguarding measures put in place to ensure that any attending officer is aware of this information from the outset. Serial Abusers having touched the Criminal Justice System inclusive of Policing can be monitored in different ways through recognised routes such as MAPP (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements) for Dangerous Offenders, Integrated Offender Management (IOM), the WISDOM programme for Domestic Abuse Offenders, MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference).

At a more local level monitoring of civil and criminal orders takes place.

**8. Can you explain what course of action the Police takes in the event they identify a serial abuser?**

The identification of a Serial Abuser can come to the attention of the Police in several different ways. There are many courses of action that can be taken and below is a list of some of the courses of action (the list is not exhaustive):

- Monitoring via formal arrangements such as MAPP, IOM, WISDOM, MARAC, Civil and Criminal Orders.
- Positive Action Policies

- Risk Assessment of victims, safeguarding, referral and sign posting of victims through to support services to ensure they receive the appropriate support and in some cases referral through the NRM.

#### **9. How is information on victims' rights relayed to migrant women?**

More generally this can be done through the support services, including the Welsh Refugee Council.

Recently under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme the following information pathways were put in place:

1. Via the Welsh Government's Sanctuary website, people from Ukraine arriving in Wales will receive information about life in Wales including about how to report any safeguarding concerns and that it is appropriate to do so. The website currently contains initial information for people from Ukraine which will be added to over time: Sanctuary | Ukraine (gov.wales).
2. A Helpline which is open 9am-5pm, 7 days a week, has been established for both hosts and people from Ukraine.
3. The latest Welsh Government guidance document which has been sent to all Local authority areas, contains numerous updates, including around VAWDASV.
4. An information sheet has been provided to all Police Forces to assist with sign posting.

#### **10. How do the Police work with communities on prevention and awareness-raising strategies? - The effectiveness of the 'Live Fear Free' campaign in relation to migrant women and girls? - Are there any gaps?**

Officers are made aware via training and information on their own internal systems that the Live Fear Free helpline information is available in 11 different languages and that they have access to Language Line.

Forces have engaged communities in several different ways utilising support agencies to facilitate this to raise awareness.