



# VAWDASV

Gwent Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence  
Trais Yn Erbyn Menywod, Cham-drin Domestig a Thrais Rhywiol Gwent

**Title:** UPDATE REPORT ON BEHALF OF THE GWENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, DOMESTIC ABUSE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE PARTNERSHIP BOARD

**Subject:** GWENT VAWDASV PARTNERSHIP BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

**Version:** 1

**Date:** June 2021

## 1.0 Purpose

The Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 places a duty on Local Authorities and Local Health Boards to publish a report of the progress made during each financial year in achieving the objectives specified in local/regional strategies. The statutory responsibilities under the VAWDASV (Wales) Act 2015 are discharged through the VAWDASV Partnership Board and annual reporting against the regional strategy and delivery plan are submitted into Gwent Public Services Boards.

The Gwent Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) strategy 2018 – 2023, approved by each of the Gwent Public Services Boards in 2018 prior to publication in May 2018, sets out Gwent's aims against the six strategic priorities. This report describes the progress made against the Strategy in 2020/21. A glossary of abbreviations used within the document can be found at the end of the report for reference.

This report has yet to be signed off by each Public Services Board, and as such has been published on the Gwent Safeguarding website, subject to final endorsement on behalf of all 5 Public Services Boards.

## 2.0 Background

The Gwent Regional Team was established in April 2015 to formalise regional collaboration; to bring together and further develop structures to implement new legislative requirements under the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015. The early development of the regional model based on progress made as the pilot area for regionalisation for Welsh Government. Cordis Bright independently evaluated this in 2015, based on a set of recommendations that set the direction for continued regional working. As the national pathfinder region, we have brought together the strategic governance, development and co-ordination of the VAWDASV agenda ahead of other regions in Wales.

The Welsh Government VAWDASV Grant is one element of funding that contributes to the regional response to VAWDASV. This grant funds the regional coordination team, training, communication and engagement and just over 50% towards the regional IDVA service. Funding is on annual basis on approval of the regional delivery plan.

The Gwent VAWDASV Partnership Board (Board) provides governance for the region in respect to VAWDASV. Board membership includes representatives from each of the five local authorities, Gwent Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Wales Ambulance Service Trust, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, Registered Social Landlords, Supporting People (Housing Support Grant) Regional Teams, South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, Gwent Safeguarding Boards, and VAWDASV specialist sector partners. A senior Welsh Government Official attends each Board meeting enabling two way sharing of information, practice sharing and risk management.

Through a structure of working groups the VAWDASV Partnership Board, ensures that the priorities identified in the regional Strategy translate into actions that can make a real difference to the well-being and safety of people living in Gwent, both now and in the future.

Working groups, reporting into the Board, are listed below:

- Gwent VAWDASV Strategic Delivery Group
- Gwent Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) Planning Group
- Gwent VAWDASV Communication and Engagement Group
- Gwent VAWDASV Whole Education Approach Group
- Gwent VAWDASV Commissioners Group
- Gwent MARAC Steering Group
- Gwent VAWDASV Perpetrator Response Group
- Gwent VAWDASV Training Sub Group
- Gwent VAWDASV Specialist Sector meeting

The level of membership and collaboration across the groups enables representation from all partners, maintaining a strong focus on those affected by VAWDASV across Gwent.

To strengthen the work of the region and beyond, Gwent is represented on Welsh Government groups including: Sustainable funding group; National Training Framework Ask and Act Steering Group; Single Unified Safeguarding Review Steering Group and associated sub groups; All Wales Honour Based Abuse Leadership Group; and the Welsh Government (WG) Perpetrator Work Stream and associated task and finish groups. All learning from these groups is shared with Board and relevant sub groups, and provides Gwent with the opportunity to raise any concerns with the appropriate members of Welsh Government.

### 3.0 Strategy and Delivery plan

As detailed above the initial focus for the Board was to formalise regional collaboration by developing and publicising The Gwent VAWDASV Strategy 2018 – 2023. Published in May 2018, the strategy identifies six Strategic priorities that will contribute to the pursuit of the **prevention** of violence and abuse, the **protection** of victims and the **support** of all those affected. <https://www.gwentsafeguarding.org.uk/Documents-en/VAWDASV/Gwent-VAWDASV-Strategy.pdf> .

Since publication, detailed objectives and actions under each strategic priority (SP) are identified and monitored through the annual delivery plan. The Gwent Strategic Delivery Group is responsible for monitoring and evaluating progress against this delivery plan, with key risks escalated to the Gwent VAWDASV Partnership Board. In addition to the monitoring and evaluation undertaken by the Strategic Delivery Group (SDG) and Board, relevant authority scrutiny processes also evaluate performance through an annual progress report. Key progress against each strategic priority is detailed in the appendix.

### 4.0 Key 2020-21 Considerations

2020-21 was an unprecedented year due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The beginning of the year saw a pause in Board and sub group meetings and the delivery plan to enable a focus on supporting all partners to respond to the needs of those accessing support and services, and enabling a change from more face-to-face support to virtual methods such as phone and video calls for the majority of people.

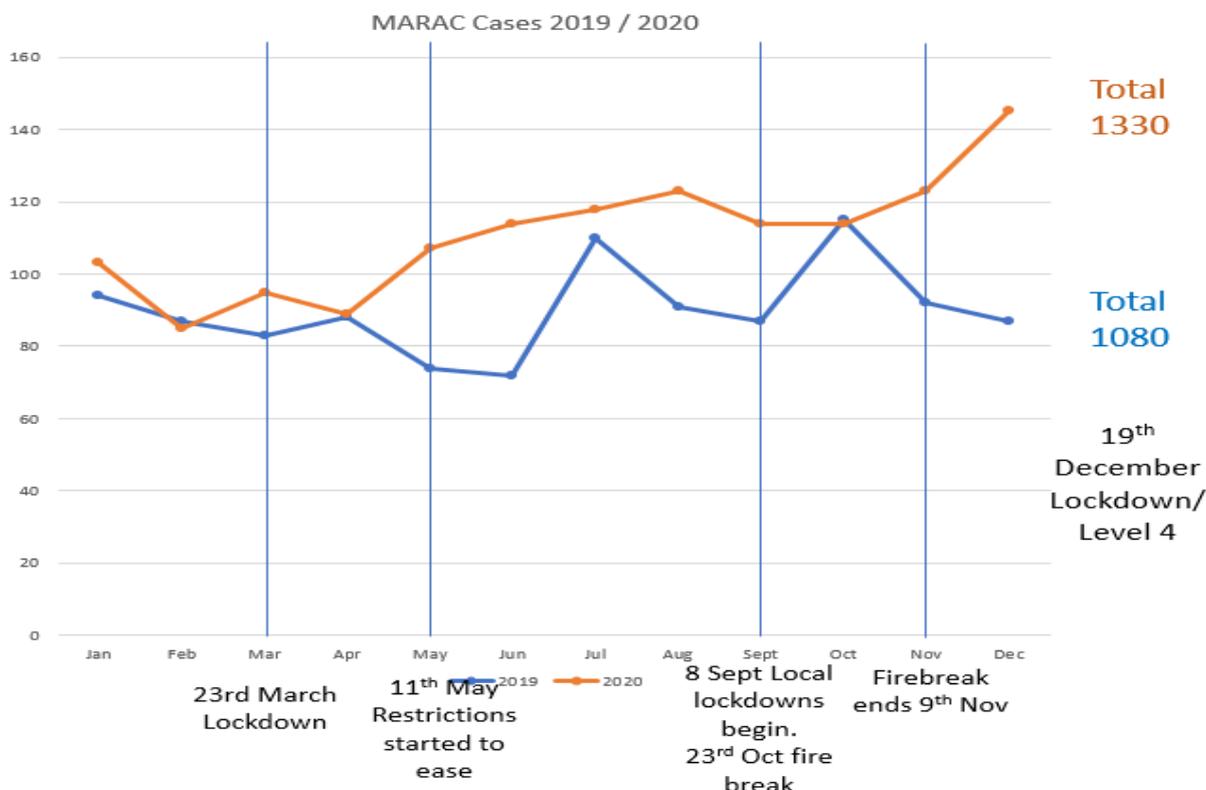
Despite media reports of increased calls to helplines in England, in Gwent we saw a drop in police calls and referrals to specialist support services. In order to support all agencies with this we worked with partners including the specialist sector, Gwent OPCC and Gwent Police to develop key campaign messages shared on social media to highlight how support services were still open and providing advice and support provision. This was in addition to the region supporting the Welsh Government 'Home Shouldn't be a Place of Fear' campaign.

For partners we developed a monthly Gwent VAWDASV COVID-19 update which updated all agencies on key challenges across the region, along with highlighting any areas of concern with other Board members and member organisations. This helped to work with agencies to address issues such as a reduction in social service referrals to specialist services as an example. A daily information round up circulation list further enabled a process to share any local and national information and communications thus supporting all those involved in supporting those affected by VAWDASV across the region.

The specialist sector met regularly following initial changes to support methods to share best practice and work on solutions together. This group helped to identify and prioritise service needs and provision to utilise additional WG, Housing Support Grant funding, and Ministry of Justice funding, together with the Gwent Commissioning Group. Within the region we were successful in obtaining some significant additional funding from WG, the MoJ and other sources to support those affected by all forms of VAWDASV via specialist sector organisations. By working together the region has been able to increase its provision of dispersed accommodation units via WG Capital funding and HSG revenue funding for support.

The regional delivery plan for 2020-21 remained flexible to respond to changes in need and demand at different points throughout the year in line with relaxing and increasing restrictions in relation to the pandemic. The graph below details the impact of these changes on the MARAC demand in particular: The graph also evidences the decrease in referrals

at times of 'lockdown' and a surge when restrictions are lifted and the importance of local and national campaigns, such as the WG 'Home shouldn't be a place of fear' campaign.



## 5.0 Survivor Engagement

Survivor engagement is key to the work and focus of the region and the regional strategy. Towards the end of this financial year we utilised additional WG funding to commission Re:cognition to engage with and learn from seldom heard communities. This engagement work focused on four key protected characteristic communities:

- LGBTQ+
- Older people
- Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnic communities
- Disabled adults

This report was completed at the end of the financial year, and contains the findings from engagement with citizens and organisations. The findings and associated recommendations will be used to form the basis of a Gwent VAWDASV Community of Practice to further develop our engagement work across all communities to inform the regional needs assessment, commissioning decisions and service development across the region.

Online methods of engagement and communication have been key during this year. In addition to local and national awareness raising activities, a regional conference was facilitated in March 2021 aimed at improving awareness of all forms of VAWDASV across practitioners and citizens in Gwent. 92 individuals from across Gwent and beyond attended during the day to hear from a range of local and national speakers including Luke Hart sharing his family's history of domestic abuse, coercive control and domestic homicide, and Jasvinder Sanghera sharing her experience of honour based abuse and forced marriage.

## 6.0 Commissioning and Partnership Collaboration

Partnership collaboration has a strong foundation across Gwent, and this has been further enhanced during 2020-21. The link with the Gwent Safeguarding Boards strengthened during the year with a focus on working together to safeguarding all those affected, or at risk of VAWDASV. Exception Safeguarding Board meetings were held with VAWDASV issues and concerns forming part of the standing agenda. This enabled an effective way of working together where any issues in relation to citizens and processes arose. An example of this is where specialist service managers were reporting a drop in referrals from social services, this was raised with Board members and a reminder of pathways, and support available, shared with all local authority social service teams. The established communication partnerships across the region with all Local Authorities and Health services ensured all staff groups and communities could access specialist services for themselves and the communities they worked for. The Gwent Safeguarding Boards held a virtual practitioner event during safeguarding week, and the VAWDASV agenda was integral to the event.

An independent review of the regional resource and governance for the VAWDASV agenda was commissioned and shared at the end of the 2020-21 financial year. This report identified a number of areas of improvement and further work to strengthen this area is ongoing with 2021-22 to be a transitional year. This coincides with planning for a regional Public Services Board for Gwent. This will look to build upon existing arrangements, and ensure VAWDASV is seen as *'everybody's business'* across regional boards rather than purely for the VAWDASV Partnership Board. Joint working was illustrated clearly this year with an Adult Practice Review finding evidence of Coercive Control within an intimate partnership of someone with social care needs. The report, and associated action plan, was shared with the Gwent Safeguarding Boards and the Gwent VAWDASV Partnership Board with a clear focus of the need for joint working.

During 2020-21 the Case Review Group which sits under the Gwent Safeguarding Board supported the work of the region in relation to the Domestic Homicide-Adult Practice Review (DH-APR) pilots. This pilot is part of the work of the Single Unified Safeguarding Review work being led by Liane James at Welsh Government, and involves using the Adult Protection Review methodology within a Domestic Homicide. This pilot has many positives and Gwent are fully involved in the WG Steering and working groups to further develop a SUSR process across the whole of Wales. It became clear to the VAWDASV DHR regional group that a single review with a practitioner learning event would provide better learning outcomes for the region, practitioners and families. Gwent piloted the first DH-APR and presented the report and findings to the Home Office Quality assurance panel. This was the basis for the current Welsh Government development of the Single Unified Safeguarding Review (SUSR).

The regional VAWDASV Commissioning Strategy developed by the Commissioners Group following the WG Statutory Guidance for the Commissioning of VAWDASV Services was approved by the relevant Boards during 2020-21 and the framework was used to identify and prioritise requests for additional funding via Welsh Government and the Ministry of Justice, based on the regional needs assessment and up to date information from the specialist sector and other key partners. The group developed and utilised a prioritisation matrix to help allocated WG funding for 2021-22 at the end of this financial year and this will be further developed during 2021-22. This group has supported the relationship with all commissioners of VAWDASV services across the region and has enabled successful bids for services from WG and the Ministry of Justice via the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

### Looking forward

Public bodies and specialist sector organisations across the region are expecting a significant rise in referrals and need for support across all communities now restrictions are starting to ease. Concerns have been discussed since lockdown was introduced in 2020 about limited opportunities for people affected by VAWDASV to be able to report and/or seek support, this is a particular concern in relation to children and young people who had very little opportunity to speak to trusted adults such as teachers and welfare staff in schools. Additional funding has been successfully received from Welsh Government and the Ministry of Justice to support specialist sector services to prepare for and address this expected rise in need. The 2021-22 regional delivery plan is designed to adapt flexible to variations in demand and opportunities for additional funding and service development.

As mentioned in section 4.0, sustainable funding to safeguard high risk victims of domestic abuse across Gwent is a key priority for partner agencies. Discussions during 2020-21 continue into early 2021-22 in relation to sustainable funding for both services and processes. Work is ongoing on the regionalisation of Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) provision which is likely to mean changes for those affected by sexual violence in Gwent, and the region is involved in a review of sexual violence services starting early 2021-22.

The implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act covering England and non-devolved agencies in Wales, along with the updated Welsh Government VAWDASV National Strategy due to be published towards the end of 2021 will also influence the work across the region and will be reflected within the regional implementation plan. Considerations will be made as to the need to update the regional strategy based on the Act, the National Strategy and any associated guidance and indicators.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Hartshorn', written in a cursive style.

**Rob Hartshorn**  
**Chair, on behalf of Gwent VAWDASV Partnership Board**

## **APPENDIX**

Highlighted progress against each of the six strategic priorities during 2019-20 are listed below, although it is important to note some overlap. As highlighted earlier, not all data for 2019-20 is available, but has been incorporated where available.

### ***Strategic Priority 1: Increase awareness and challenge attitudes of VAWDASV across Gwent:***

Overseen by the Gwent VAWDASV Communication and Engagement Group

- There has been a shift of focus and building of a social media presence and use during 2020-21 due to pandemic and limited access to physical buildings. All partners have worked together to develop, and share key local and national campaigns to raise awareness of VAWDASV and where to seek help and support. Information and campaigns shared included the Welsh Government 'Home shouldn't be a place of fear' campaign, Stop it Now Wales! Sexual exploitation campaign, the Ask for Ani initiative, Gwent Police 'between the lines' campaign and locally developed materials and campaigns. This was particularly important at the beginning of the pandemic when there was a sharp drop in police calls and sector referrals.
- Facilitation of a regional online conference aimed at raising awareness of all aspects of VAWDASV and support available across all community groups and practitioners. Feedback from the day included:
  - *This was a brilliant, moving, inspiring and informative day. I was deeply so much of it. Thank you for organising such a fantastic day.*
  - *Thank you so much for allowing me to attend, one of the few benefits of Lockdown is being able to attend some incredible events online, yours being the best one over the past 12 months! The range of speakers you had was fantastic, I had heard and follow several of your speakers so it was great to see them speak but also others like Luke Hart, wow! I remembered the story in the press but to hear him speak and so eloquently, well that will stay with me forever honestly. Everyone who spoke was so passionate with their story and it was very thought provoking, interesting perspective from Cath Hill at Phoenix and absolutely right though the work that needs to be undertaken with perpetrators if anything is going to change. Thank you so much for being such an industry leader with this conference and network, if there are any further events I would love to attend if possible.*
- Developed a partner communication pack including printed, social media and partner website campaign materials to support a number of key VAWDASV related dates, including the following:
  - World elder abuse day 15th June 2020
  - International Men's Day
  - Sexual Violence Awareness Week
- The region has facilitated a community based event to mark White Ribbon Day on the 25<sup>th</sup> November each year. Due to the pandemic restrictions this was transferred to an online event #149challenge. This encouraged organisations, clubs and individuals to raise awareness of the 149 women killed by men in the previous year by undertaking various challenges. This was hugely successful with various challenges shared via social media including hidden rocks and fitness challenges, and Newport County Football club wearing white ribbon t-shirts when warming up for their televised match.
- Additional community based communication funding from Welsh Government was used to purchase and disseminate hand sanitiser bottles with the Live Fear Free details, together with printed information on local services, to vaccination sites across the region

***Strategic Priority 2: Increase awareness of children and young people on safe, equal and healthy relationships, and that abusive behaviour is always wrong***

Overseen by the Gwent VAWDASV Whole Education Approach Group

- The WEA group continued to meet in order to maintain open lines of communication, with a particular focus on ensuring learners were monitored and issues identified in the absence from school.
- The impact of COVID-19 and the associated restrictions was seen strongly in the ongoing increase of Operation Encompass calls and notifications.
- Amendments to the Gwent Operation Encompass Guidance were made by Newport City Council educational safeguarding staff to ensure that teachers and schools staff felt supported in how to make contact with families in a safe and effective way.
- A review of the Gwent Guidance for schools was undertaken with an updated version was signed off in December 2020 and circulated within each Local Authority.
- During the national and local lockdowns three local authorities made use of this time for teachers and rolled Ask and Act Group 2 into schools across the LA's. This enabled 99 school staff to complete Group 2 Ask and Act training between January and March 2021.

***Strategic Priority 3: Increased focus on holding perpetrators to account and provide opportunities to change their behaviour based around victim safety***

Overseen by the Gwent VAWDASV Perpetrator Response Group

- Following successful bids for WG and Ministry of justice funding for perpetrator services, Phoenix DAS were able to continue the services for female perpetrators and other people not suitable for existing support groups across all areas in the region. Throughout the year, Phoenix DAS secured £378,466 from Home Office Perpetrator Programme Fund and PCC core funding to extend and expand youth and adult perpetrator services in Gwent, increase support for victims and pilot online interventions.
- A Gwent Action Plan was developed by the sub group which identifies areas of good practice and development opportunities based on the WG best practice guidance. This will be utilised to improve the response of public bodies across the region from 2021-22.
- The Barnardos Opening Closed Doors projects secured Home Office funding to continue their work with families affected by Domestic Abuse across all local authority areas other than Caerphilly which is supported by Llamau
- Presentation at the regional conference in March 2021 raised awareness across all attendees of the importance of supporting perpetrators in a trauma informed way
- Wider influence has been achieved through membership and cross sharing of information, priorities and best practice with the Welsh Government Perpetrator work stream group and associated task and finish groups
- Phoenix DAS and Barnardos continued working with academics on the evaluation of interventions for although the completion and publication of results has been extended due to the difficult of providing group based support during the pandemic

#### **Strategic Priority 4: Make early intervention and prevention a priority**

Shared oversight by the DHR Planning Group and the MARAC Steering Group

- As with survivor engagement, early intervention and prevention is articulated for each strategic priority throughout the delivery plan and ensures a focus on the whole VAWDASV agenda and all protected characteristics.
- Gwent participated in a DHR Review undertaken by the Universities of Lancaster and Manchester. A website launched in March 2021 details the scope and initial findings of this research, <https://domestichomicide-halt.co.uk>
- MARAC process changes, including a move to online meetings, were embedded throughout this year, with positive feedback from partner agencies. The newly appointed MARAC coordinator enabled a greater understanding of all key stakeholders on the wider picture across Gwent with presentations provided to key agencies including via the Gwent Safeguarding Board and the Health Board Safeguarding Group.
- The DH-APR pilots and Gwent practitioners continued to support the development of the Single Unified Safeguarding Review led by Lianne James at Welsh Government.
- Funding for the IRISi project to be implemented in a number of Neighbourhood Care Networks across the region was agreed with a start date of 2021-22. This will enable early identification and referral via GP practices. This is being enhanced by a greater focus on sharing MARAC information with the associated GP via the Health Board Safeguarding Team

#### **Strategic Priority 5: Relevant professionals are trained to provide effective, timely and appropriate responses to victims**

Overseen by the Gwent VAWDASV Training Sub Group

- Training was halted for the first 2 quarters of last year due to lockdowns. As a region the training sub group and training consortium utilised this time to adapt face to face training to online training maintaining quality and ensuring a focus on risk management and support for those attending
- Ask and Act Group 2 training and some specialist syllabus training was rolled from October 2020 through to end of March 2021. Feedback from the roll out of online training was very positive and is planned to remain online into 2021-2022
- The regional NTF training information for 2020-2021 is as follows;

##### Group 1 – Gwent Numbers

Group 1 this year has seen a keen uptake in comparison to previous years. The effect of COVID-19, working from home and the increased news and media coverage of VAWDASV Survivors in this time have all contributed to an increased in completion.

Relevant Authority	Aneurin Bevin University Health Board	Blaenau Gwent CBC	Caerphilly CBC	Monmouthshire CC	Newport CC	Torfaen CBC
Workforce	13060	3096	7758	3070	6500	3900
Year Total 2020-2021	1520	328	486	284	1426	422

group 1 completed training from roll out to date	13652	2729	4636	3018	4110	4480
As percentage of workforce - those trained from rollout to date	104.53%	88.15%	59.76%	98.31%	71.79%	114.87%

Group 2 and Group 3 – Gwent Numbers

2020-2021 was significantly impact by the pandemic and lockdowns, meaning that Q1 and Q2 were focused of development and research as to the best and safest way to roll out this training on line. We were able to modify training and implement roll out online from October through to end of March.

Part of the impact of this year has meant that focus remained on Group 2 and ensuring the safety and engagement of Staff on this course. Group 3 is planned for 2021-2022.

All delivery across this last year has been online and regionally delivered. The plans for the year ahead remain with the focus on online delivery.

Attendee numbers for Group 2 training below - :

	ABUHB	Blaenau Gwent	Caerphilly	Monmouthshire	Newport	Torfaen	<b>NOTES</b> Not all this training is from Subsidy funding. CCBC and BGCBC both have delivered education in house. ABUHB have solely delivered the Health Ask and Act Package. All training outside of Education and Health date have be delivered on a regional. *non subsidy
<b>Area Totals Attendance Group 2</b>	5	52	59	38	29	23	
<b>Education *</b>	0	11	61	27	0	0	
<b>ABUHB Health package *</b>	1525	-	-	-	-	-	
<b>Overall Totals</b>	1530	63	120	65	29	23	
<b>Gwent Year Total</b>	1830						

Specialist Syllabus

As part of our ongoing commitment to training staff across Gwent on various aspects of VAWDASV we have continued when we could as we could in to fund specialist syllabus training. With partners, we have provided the region with;

Course	Provider	Delivery Days	Attendees
Understanding Domestic Abuse	Hafan Cymru	3	27
Understanding Domestic Abuse, Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference	Llamau	3	37
Understanding Sexual Violence	New Pathways	9	86
<b>Total for 2020-2021</b>			<b>150</b>

This activity was limited to end of Q3 and Q4 due to adaption of training for online delivery. This training is open to the region as a whole and is fully multi agency. RSL's Police and third sectors as well as RA's being able to access and attend the courses. They are always very popular and are often oversubscribed.

***Strategic Priority 6: To provide victims with equal access to appropriately resourced high quality need led strength based gender responsive services.***

Overseen by the Strategic Delivery Group and Gwent VAWDASV Commissioners Group

- The VAWDASV Commissioners Group developed and agreed the Gwent VAWDASV Commissioning Strategy and Framework which was approved by the associated Boards during 2020-21. This was utilised to identify and prioritise additional Capital and revenue funding to increase service provision including dispersed unit accommodation across the region.
- Prioritisation matrix developed to identify and prioritise key areas for funding via all commissioning routes in the region including WG, MoJ and HSG.
- Engagement work undertaken with seldom heard communities with associated report and recommendations to be used during 2021-22 to develop a community of practice in the region aimed at further commissioning and service developed to ensure equal access to high quality provision
- Sustainable funding for high risk services a key priority during 2020-21 and into 2021-22.

## **GLOSSARY**

A&A – Ask and Act

APR – Adult Practice Review

DHR – Domestic Homicide Review

GTC – Gwent Training Consortium

HSG – Housing Support Grant

IDVA – Independent Domestic Violence Advocate

ISVA – Independent Sexual Violence Adviser

LGBTQ+ - Lesbian, Bi-sexual, Gay, Transsexual, Queer

Live Fear Free Helpline – National Advice Help line

LSN – Local Safeguarding Network

MARAC – Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference

MoJ – Ministry of Justice

NTF – National Training Framework

OPCC – Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

PSB – Public Services Board

RA – Relevant Authorities

RSL – Registered Social Landlord

SARC – Sexual Assault Referral Centre

SDG – Strategic Delivery Group

TSG – Training Sub Group

VAWDASV – Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence

WG – Welsh Government