



Report of the cross-party stakeholder event at the Senedd on 20 November 2018 to mark White Ribbon Day

Mair Stephens, Chair of NFWI-Wales and **Joyce Watson AM, Assembly Member for Mid and West Wales**, welcomed stakeholders to the cross-party stakeholder event.

Joyce Watson AM highlighted that this year, there had been 100 UK female deaths as a consequence of domestic abuse.

Mair Stephens spoke about the commitment of the WI to ending violence against women through the Not in my Name campaign and highlighted some of the early mandates of the WI to address domestic violence.

She said that it was encouraging to note that more and more public bodies were achieving the White Ribbon UK accreditation status in recognition of their commitment in involving men in speaking out and challenging male violence against women and girls. However she noted that the pace of progress had been slow and much further action, and at a faster pace, was needed if we were to achieve a society where women were treated equally to men and consequently a society where women were free from the fear of violence and abuse.



Lynda, a New Pathways past service user, shared her difficult and moving story of sexual violence. She said that she wanted to help raise awareness surrounding the stigma and shame relating to sexual violence and to help survivors, like herself, to have a voice and the strength to come forward.

Alun Michael, Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales, stated that it was positive to see white ribbons being displayed on fire engines and police cars. He said that victims and survivors needed to be protected sufficiently and that this remained a central principle. There was a need to find ways of challenging behaviours and that initiatives must have the safety of victims as a priority.

Alun Michael said that the South Wales Police examined critically how it operated and how it could do things better. He highlighted positive developments seen through the Women's Pathfinder in supporting women offenders to deal with underlying issues. He emphasised the need to move to a needs-led response and to connect the dots in creating joined-up policies and



interventions. The need of victims needed to be considered and perpetrator behaviour addressed. He noted that the embedding of IRIS in the work of health boards had made a big difference to the work of GPs. Speaking about some of the challenges ahead, Alun Michael said that more action was needed to address under-reporting and victim blaming.

Jackie Stamp, Chief Executive of New Pathways, explained that New Pathways provided a range of specialist counselling and advocacy services for women, men, children and young people who had been affected by rape or sexual abuse. The services were accessed by 5,000 people a year of which 80% of adult referrals were women.

In terms of the causes and consequences of sexual violence, Jackie stated that it was very complex and multi-faceted. She continued that there were no boundaries and it could affect anyone. One in 5 women would experience sexual assault some time in their life. She noted that, according to the British Crime Survey, 510,000 women in the UK last year experienced sexual assault. Up to March 2017, there had been a 24% rise in Wales.



Jackie acknowledged that there was a lot of work being done by the police and public bodies. Focusing on what we could do, Jackie said that there was a need to concentrate on and talk about sexual violence. She highlighted the need to target young children and to talk to children at home so that they feel comfortable talking about sexual violence. She continued that we could raise awareness and focus on prevention by, for example, targeting the student population and senior schools.

To conclude, she noted that many victims don't report abuse but still need support. We need to support people who come forward and those who haven't come forward.

Lucy Raffety, Series Producer and Simon Harper, Executive Producer of the BBC drama Casualty told stakeholders about the story line of the rape of a successful female doctor and the response they had received to the storyline. Lucy Raffety said that the storyline of the doctor raped by a fellow doctor was ongoing for 8 weeks and aimed to educate and highlight the grey area of consent. Simon Harper explained that the storyline focused on an important issue as a nation and successfully covered a dark topic

demonstrating that anyone can experience sexual violence. It showed a survivor's story and portrayed the victim discovering a strength she didn't have. The perpetrator, Simon Harper explained, genuinely didn't think he had done anything wrong. The storyline, he said, was impactful but carefully staged with the audience warned about the content. He noted that there had been an overwhelming response on Twitter but that it was shocking that we had to drive home the message 'No means no'.



Discussion

In light of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, delegates commented that education on VAW needed to be built into the curriculum and asked what was being done in schools to tackle gender stereotyping.

In the absence of the Leader of the House, Christine Grimshaw from the Welsh Government's Violence Against Women and Domestic Abuse Team responded that Hafan Cymru was funded to deliver a programme in schools. The Welsh Government's

communications campaign, This is Me, focused on gender stereotyping. The police went into school to educate on issues such as domestic abuse and substance misuse.

Julie James AM, Leader of the House, highlighted the devastating effects of VAW noting that 85,000 women were raped in the UK every year. She said that events such as this provided a mechanism to talk about the issues, raise awareness and stand in solidarity against such violence. The Leader of the House spoke about the Welsh Government's commitment to addressing gender stereotyping and making sure that people fulfilled their potential. She highlighted the Welsh Government's This is Me campaign. She noted that the White Ribbon was a visible statement and it was positive to see the symbol being displayed on fire engines. She highlighted some of the Government's initiatives to address VAW including the Live Fear Free Helpline, the Dyn Cymru Helpline, the focus on improving public sector response, developing a sustainable funding model, and the National Training Framework which had trained 135,000 professionals across Wales. She emphasised that what was most important was ensuring that the voice of survivors was at the centre of policy and that we learned from lived experiences. She reiterated the ambition to make Wales the safest place in Europe and to provide a world class service.



White Ribbon Keyring Competition

The winner and runners-up of our White Ribbon keyring competition were also announced by Mair Stephens. Congratulations to **Jennifer Poole, Freystrop and District WI**, Pembrokeshire Federation who was announced winner. The 2 runners-up were **Marian Martin, Panteg WI**, Gwent Federation and **Margaret Gould, Stepney WI**, Sir Gâr/Carmarthenshire Federation. Marian and Margaret, who were present at the Senedd, were presented with a certificate by Joyce Watson AM and Julie James AM, Leader of the House.

