

POLICY BRIEFING:

TRANSFORMING APPROACHES TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, DOMESTIC ABUSE, AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE (VAWDASV)

Key points

- VAWDASV is a national emergency that costs the economy at least £66 billion per year.
- The Arts and Humanities can help us to understand what matters to survivors, ensuring we respond to genuine needs.
- Research can help us understand what interventions work, ensuring we design effective and cost-efficient practice and policy.



Trais yn Erbyn Menywod,
Cam-drin Domestig a Thrais Rhywiol
RHWDWAITH YMCHWIL CYMRU

Violence Against Women,
Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence
RESEARCH NETWORK WALES

University of
South Wales
Prifysgol
De Cymru



SCHOOL OF
ADVANCED STUDY
UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON



Wales Arts & Humanities Alliance



Wales Innovation
Network
Rhwydwaith
Arloesi Cymru



CYMEITHAS DDYSGEDIG CYMRU
THE LEARNED SOCIETY OF WALES

THE COST OF VAWDASV

VAWDASV is one of the most pressing challenges we face as a society, inexorably damaging lives now and for future generations as well as costing the UK over **£66 billion per annum**.¹ The lifetime cost of sexual violence and abuse committed in 2024 alone in England and Wales will be over £400 billion.² VAWDASV still accounts for 18% of all reported crimes in England and Wales.³ We have a social, moral, legal, and financial obligation to work towards the elimination of VAWDASV. **Every £1 spent on specialist services should save the public purse at least £9.**⁴

Wales was the first of the UK nations to enact laws that place a responsibility on us all to work to prevent VAWDASV with the 'Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015'.⁵ But more needs to be done.

For policy and practice to be genuinely effective, we need to listen to survivors and use their stories to understand what makes a real difference in preventing violence and protecting and supporting survivors. **Arts and Humanities research has a pivotal role to play in hearing from survivors and gathering robust evidence and data.**

FINDINGS

There is no agreed benchmark for what constitutes good or effective VAWDASV prevention or interventions, which leads to misunderstandings, difficulties evaluating, inconsistent commissioning, and confusion about how to implement prevention programmes. University of South Wales' research has revealed the key components of efficacy in relation to VAWDASV.⁶ There are currently significant gaps in evidence around VAWDASV. Survivors face barriers when reporting their experiences and accessing support leading to a substantial gap in the data around VAWDASV and what works to reduce it. Work from the University of South Wales has revealed the research priorities of the sector.⁷

- Support and prevention for children and young people
- Broadening awareness of VAWDASV beyond the sector
- What works in policy and practice
- Understanding the impacts of VAWDASV and needs of survivors
- How to ensure needs led and sustainable provision across Wales
- How to financially sustain the sector
- What works for perpetrator early intervention and prevention and behaviour change
- What works for police and criminal justice responses to VAWDASV
- Understanding the root causes of VAWDASV and the complex and intersecting needs of survivors
- How to address the socio-economic factors that contribute to VAWDASV
- How to protect against post-separation abuse

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

VAWDASV policy and practice must be informed by robust evidence. Understanding people's direct experience of VAWDASV is central to addressing knowledge gaps and can only be achieved through Arts and Humanities research, with a particular need for research that amplifies and learns from stories and direct experience.

Arts and Humanities research can lead to innovative solutions and needs-led provision. Creative interventions and storytelling enable us to think beyond what has happened and imagine new and better futures.

Investment in Arts and Humanities research results in people living healthier, happier lives, breaks the cycle of violence, and reduces the burden of VAWDASV on the public purse. A world without VAWDASV would be better for everyone and we must commit to doing all we can to end the epidemic of violence and harm.

THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES

Data on impact case studies⁸ submitted by Welsh universities to the UK Research Excellence Framework assessment show that:

- Welsh Arts and Humanities research has an "exceptional effect on society, the economy, and culture". Over 50% of Arts and Humanities research was classed as having world-leading impact – higher than any other subject area in Wales, and higher than the UK average for Arts and Humanities.⁸
- Welsh Arts and Humanities researchers are collaborating with partners outside of the university. The Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences were the most likely to engage with non-academic partners.
- Welsh Arts and Humanities research is focused on Wales. The Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences were the most likely to conduct research that is directly relevant to Wales.

¹ The economic and social costs of domestic abuse, January 2019, [The economic and social costs of domestic abuse](#).

² Lifetime cost of sexual violence revealed | Rape Crisis England & Wales

³ Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Threat Risk Assessment , May 2023, [violence-against-women-and-girls---strategic-threat-risk-assessment-2023.pdf](#)

⁴ Investing to Save, 2023, [Investing to save: The economic case for funding specialist domestic abuse support](#).

⁵ Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015

⁶ Welsh Government Position Statement – Efficacy of Perpetrator Interventions <https://pure.southwales.ac.uk/en/projects/welsh-government-position-statement-efficacy-of-perpetrator-inter/>

⁷ Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Research Network Wales: Setting the Research Priorities for Wales, September 2022, [GCM_VAWDASV_research_priorities_FINAL_SEPTEMBER_2022_English.pdf](#)

⁸ See all data for REF2021 at <https://results2021.ref.ac.uk/impact>.

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