



Submission to the Committee on the Convention for the
Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women

WEN Wales response

June 2012

About WEN Wales

WENWales is a community of organisations and individuals working to advance the rights of women in all spheres of Welsh life. We want to create a fairer society in which women live free from sexism and gender discrimination and enjoy equality in all aspects of their daily lives. The role of WENWales is to facilitate communication between our members; to help them coordinate their work, to work in partnership and to represent women's interests at all levels of government.

Acknowledgements

WEN Wales would like to thank all members and member organisations who contributed to the content of this report.

Including:-

Chwarae Teg

Safer Wales

Soroptimists International Wales (South)

Welsh Women's Aid

Women Making a Difference

CEDAW articles:

Article 1

Discrimination against Women

Article 2 - 4

*Obligations to Eliminate Discrimination;
Development and Advancement of
Women; Acceleration of Equality
between Women and Men
Sex Role Stereotyping and
Prejudice*

Article 6

*Prevention of trafficking in women
and exploitation of women through
prostitution*

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women in politics and public life*

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Equality before the law and civil matters

COMMENTS FROM WALES:

ARTICLES 1-4 Obligations to Eliminate Discrimination

Development and Advancement of Women

Acceleration of Equality between Women and Men

Discrimination against Women

Funding to NGOs

In Wales, the Welsh Government's Advancing Equality Fund, provided funding to three organisations during 2010/11 to promote gender equality. The funding provided represented a quarter of the Advancing Equality Fund's total budget. In addition, the Welsh Government is currently reviewing the representation of gender groups in order for their views and needs to be addressed most effectively in respect of policy and decision making.

Equality Act

The Welsh Government is the first in Great Britain to have introduced specific duties, which came in to force on 6 April 2011.

There are 14 specific duties in Wales (in addition to the general duty). These include a specific duty on gender pay and we expect monitoring and enforcement action on this in 2012-2013

LGBT

The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) population is a 'hard to reach' group, particularly in rural areas. The communities are largely hidden, difficult to locate, difficult to identify and difficult to access by emerging LGBT people seeking support. LGBT people remain a marginalised group of people who still experience hate crime. Prejudice and discrimination continues to exist and there is still a need to tackle homophobia and transphobia in for example schools and other goods and services. There is a paucity of research on the extent of need for older and younger LGBT people, and this needs to be tackled. Over the past decade however, society has experienced radical social change in equality legislation and rights for LGBT people. We need to ensure that these rights have resulted in real change in the lives and experiences of LGBT people.

Recommendations:

The Welsh Government continue to fund research into the needs of LGBT people
Goods and services need to include sexual orientation in anonymous equality monitoring

LGBT young people are kept safe from prejudice and discrimination in schools and homophobia and transphobia is monitored and reported.

www.stonewallcymru.org.uk

WOMEN OFFENDERS

There is not a women's prison in Wales, however, we do not support a women's prison in Wales as we feel this is likely to fill up and potentially increase the women's prison population. Also, due to the lower numbers of women (compared to men) in prison, there would be fewer establishments across Wales. Therefore this will not necessarily make it easier for families to visit women or help with reintegration into their communities. It is notable when looking at prison statistics for women that significant numbers of women are imprisoned for lower level non-violent offences or whilst on remand. Overall we want the imprisonment of women to reduce.

There are disproportionate levels of harm caused by imprisonment to women, particularly in relation to mental and emotional health issues therefore the outcome of imprisonment for women is harsher. In addition, women who have experienced violence, exploitation, power and control are over-represented in the prison population (Identified in the Corston Report). The present criminal justice system does little to address these facts and funding for women centred services are under threat. By eliminating discrimination against women within the criminal justice system we are more likely to have decreased crime committed by women .

“Women have been marginalised within a system largely designed by men for men” (Corston Report, 2007).

Recommendation: Support for accessible community alternatives to custody for women as opposed to incarceration. Support for more appropriate community sentencing options (that are gender-informed) in order to increase likelihood of compliance with the order and ultimately reduce the current inequalities relating to viable community sentencing options. If increased custodial facilities are required then advocate for local, multi-functional custodial centres rather than a

large prison.

A response to women's offending would require action from across Government departments, therefore it is relevant to Welsh Government. Rather than building a women's prison, support for holistic centres providing support to women who offend and/or are at risk of offending would be preferable, enabling gender-informed options for community sentences from the court. For women who do need incarcerating, then smaller more locally based units may prove less harmful.

Although the Criminal Justice System is Central Government responsibility, there are issues arising from discrimination against women within the CJS that has a direct impact upon devolved responsibilities in Wales, including:

- Increased emotional and mental health issues resulting from the harm caused by imprisonment.
- Increased likelihood of losing your home and homelessness due to incarceration
- Increased pressure on Children's Services, Education, Health resulting from children being moved from the family home to another carer (or Corporate Parent) – most women are primary carers thus impacting on their children.

See Prison Reform Trust

(<http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/ProjectsResearch/Women/SmartJusticeforWomen>) on women in Prison AND note no women's prisons in Wales so greater distances away from families for at least some women. The community facilities in Cardiff and Swansea should be increased and replicated elsewhere.

KEY FACTS

- In 2009, over 11,000 women were sent to prison in England and Wales
- In the last decade the women's prison population has **gone up by 33%**. There are currently 4,267 women in prison.
- Almost two-thirds of women are in prison for non-violent offences
- One in four women in prison were in local authority care as a child.
- Over **half the women in prison have suffered domestic violence** and one in three has experienced sexual abuse.
- This increased prison population has not increased public safety. 54% of women leaving prison are re-convicted within one year. For women who have served more than 10 previous custodial sentences **the reoffending rate rises to 90%**.
- 66% of women in prison have dependent children under 18. Each year it is estimated that more than **17,700 children are separated from their mother by imprisonment**.

Many women in prison are affected by mental health problems, drug and alcohol addictions and domestic violence, and many have spent time in care. Most are serving short sentences for non-violent offences. Sending these women to prison is often unnecessary and ineffective in reducing reoffending, and carries a huge cost to women, children and wider society.

Now is a time of great opportunity for reform. There is a broad consensus that community solutions, tailored to women's needs, are generally more effective than prison in reducing women's offending and minimising the cost to society. There is currently no clear government strategy to end the unnecessary imprisonment of women, and many community services face an uncertain financial future.

Recommendation

WG promote the benefit of women-centred community-based provisions to ensure that gender-responsive, holistic strategies are in place to reduce inequalities in CJS and the harm caused resulting from these inequalities.

ARTICLE 5

Sex Roles Stereotyping and Prejudice

Wales has a specific duty regarding gender pay for the public sector. This requires organisations to look wider than pay audits and consider action to address the other causes of the gender pay gap including sex stereotyping. This will include actions required across the education sector

Gender segregation is still prevalent in the private sector and action is limited. The Welsh Government has provided match funding for Chwarae Teg's Agile Nation project. This project includes work with educators to challenge stereotypes and will also undertake research into gendered play.

Women in STEM

The Welsh Government encourages women into science, engineering and construction by providing funding for specific projects, such as "Discover" - a science club for young girls in South Wales, which provides opportunities to take part in activities and industrial visits supported by female role models in technical careers. Chwarae Teg and ContinYou Cymru have received funding from WG to run a project called 'Get on with Science' which will support teachers to engage more girls in Science.

Recommendations

<http://sciencecampaign.org.uk/?p=3959>:The Committee made 22 recommendations to the Welsh Government, including:

- Recruiting and retaining teachers with specialist expertise and better support for those teaching outside their specialism.
- Challenging industry to address gender stereotypes and inequalities among some STEM subjects.
- Ensuring young people have access to independent, informed and timely advice when making choices about STEM subjects and future careers
- Developing more strategic partnerships between schools and employers to provide practical work placements for pupils, teachers and industrialists. Achieving a better alignment between the supply and demand for STEM skills.

ARTICLE 6

The Prevention of Trafficking in Women and Exploitation of Women through Prostitution

Trafficking

In September 2010, the Welsh Government announced the creation of Wales' first anti-human trafficking coordinator, who raises awareness of the problem and organises practical training for professionals on how to identify and intervene in cases of human trafficking. The Coordinator has worked closely with the UKBA and the Welsh Extremist and Counter Terrorist Unit (WECTU) to highlight Human Trafficking Intelligence. "The Right to be Safe" strategy, launched in March 2010, outlines the Welsh Government's commitment to supporting victims of human trafficking and various Ministerial statements have reiterated the aim to create a 'zero tolerance' approach to traffickers and support for victims.

The Welsh Government is also funding the development of an online training resource (which is already available in both England and Scotland) to assist practitioners in safeguarding children in Wales who might have been trafficked. In 2008 it published supporting guidance for practitioners and volunteers working in this area.

The Welsh Government has worked with the London and UK Investigative Agencies, together with the UK Human Trafficking Centre, to assess the threat of risk and harm in Wales relating to trafficking during the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics. The Welsh Government is working with partners across Wales to identify and respond to potential victims.

Prostitution

The Welsh Government funded the "Safer Wales Street Life" project which worked in partnership with local authorities, the National Health Service (NHS) and other agencies to protect children, young people and adults from prostitution, violence, abuse and sexual exploitation and to help change the lives of those involved and affected by sex work, through outreach mentoring, advocacy and access to services. In addition, the Welsh Government issued draft guidance in August 2010 for consultation as a supplementary guide to "Working

Together” to safeguard children and young people from sexual exploitation.

However, violence against sex workers (known to be hugely prevalent, including through Wales-specific research) is a marked omission from the Welsh Government’s violence against women strategy, *The Right to be Safe* (2010).

There has been little research into homicide rates for prostitutes (figures are also likely to be under-reported), Salfati (2009) recognises that women who are street-based sex workers are 12 times more likely to be murdered compared to all women.

“A Review of Effective Practice in Responding to Prostitution” recognises that effective practice includes multi-agency approaches, incorporating sustained and dedicated support with co-ordination from specialist services.

Recommendation

Ask the WG to include violence against sex workers in the development of its VAWG strategy.

Ask WG to recognise the value of long-term support and specialist services to reduce the harm caused from prostitution and enabling exit routes for those women who choose to do so.

Ask WG to support holistic, gender-informed approaches to reduce the harm caused from prostitution and enabling exit routes for those women who choose to do so.

ARTICLE 7

Elimination of discrimination against women in politics and public life **Increasing the number of women in political life**

Following elections to the Welsh Government in 2008, over 46% of the Members were female. At local level, in 2004 22% of councillors were women; by 2008 this had risen to 25%. In addition, the Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government Association have worked in partnership to develop “Step Up Cymru”, a mentoring scheme for under-represented groups. Participants are mentored by local councillors and Assembly Members. The scheme aims to increase involvement in democratic society.

Welsh Government has included a commitment to taking action to increase women’s representation in public appointments. WEN Wales, Sport Wales, Women Making a Difference and the public appointments unit in WG are working with the EHRC on action to address this.

The National Assembly for Wales elections in 2011 returned 35 men and 25 women whilst the cabinet consists of 3 women and 6 men.

The Welsh Government is working with organisations representing minority communities to encourage applications for public appointments. The partnership initiative is assisting interested candidates to better understand the application process. It has been supplemented with an awareness-raising advertising campaign.

Women Making a Difference project hosted by NFWI & OXFAM UK Poverty Programme has offered training to over 500 women from disadvantaged backgrounds including more than 50% from BAME communities across Wales. Many of these women have gone on to be active in their communities & some have stood for election to representative bodies.

International Women’s day

The Welsh Government has continued to provide annual funding to local organisations across Wales to celebrate International Women’s Day. The theme in Wales for 2010 was “Promoting Women into Public and Political Life” the theme for 2011 was “Celebrating 100 years of Women’s Equality”, and the theme for 2012 was ‘Men and women working together to end male violence against women’.

Recommendations

Continue to develop schemes for women's involvement in politics and representation in the National Assembly for Wales and Local Government.

Continue to fund IWD celebrations annually.

Ensure that the review of the Advancing Equality Fund in 2012 continues to support organisations supporting women.

Article 8

International representation and participation

The role of the EU and the UN continues to be of great importance to Wales. Participation in the UKJCW, the EWL and CSW is essential

Recommendation

Continued support from the WG, financial as well as cultural, would help develop input to these structures.

ARTICLE 9

Nationality

The Welsh Government in March 2010 published “Understanding Wales” which contains information relevant to migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and their families entering Wales. The pack aims to ensure that people who live and work in Wales are made aware of their rights and responsibilities and are also provided with information on where they can obtain help and advice if they encounter problems, helping them to settle into their new communities.

Implementation of gender guidelines

The Welsh Government supports a range of measures under its “Refugee Inclusion Strategy”. The overall aim of the Inclusion Strategy is to support and enable refugees to rebuild their lives in Wales and make a full contribution to society.

Recommendations

Refugees and asylum seekers are still treated unfavourably in many respects, including financial support. This needs to be addressed urgently. The report ‘Not Gone but Forgotten’ from the British Red Cross (<http://www.redcross.org.uk/About-us/Our-advocacy-work/~media/BritishRedCross/Documents/About%20us/Not%20gone%20but%20forgotten%20destitution%20report.ashx>) applies across the UK, including Wales. The WG should support its recommendations, through its links with the Home Office which still has the responsibility for this area of work:

1. The adoption of the principle that destitution should not be an outcome of the asylum system.
2. Additional support for all destitute refused asylum seekers with dependent children.
3. An end-to-end asylum support structure, including permission to work, until the applicant is either removed or granted leave to remain.
4. An entitlement to healthcare throughout the asylum process until removal or granted leave to remain.

ARTICLE 10

Elimination of discrimination against women in the field of education

Education

The Welsh Government is making provision for early education in Wales. “Flying Start” is targeted at 0 to 3 year olds in the most disadvantaged communities in Wales. It brings together education, childcare, health and social services and combines the voluntary, private and statutory sectors to improve the prospects of children from these communities. For children aged between 3 and 7 years, Wales has a “Foundation Phase”, which enables children to develop the ability to challenge stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination related to culture, gender or disability.

Welsh Government funded WI programme “Get Cooking” teaches women to prepare nutritious meals and “Get Cooking in the Dark” project is for women with visual impairment

Equality in primary and secondary education

In Wales, personal and social development, well-being and cultural diversity are a core element of the “Foundation Phase”. Children learn about themselves and their relationships within and beyond their family. Children are taught about Welsh and other cultures within Welsh society, as well as concepts of fairness and justice, and are encouraged to think about respect and the feelings of others. The revised Personal and Social Education framework for 7 to 19 year olds in Wales provides teaching on health and emotional well-being.

In Wales during 2009/10, girls outperformed boys in achieving level 1 and 2 at Key Stage 4 (GCSEs). Girls achieved 92.0% compared to 87.3% of boys at level 1, with girls achieving 68.9% compared to 58.7% of boys at level 2 (a difference of 4.7% and 10.2%).¹

Equality in vocational education and FE

In Wales during 2008/09, women accounted for 51.5% of full-time learners compared to 48.5% male. Women accounted for 59.4% of part-time learners compared to 40.6% male.

FE providers in Wales are currently developing equality objectives and action plans for meeting the Equality Act 2010: public Sector Duties. These plans take steps to address the barriers and issues for learners with protected characteristics.

Equality in HE

UCAS figures show that in 2010 women accounted for 57% of students accepted onto degree courses and 65% of these women were mature students. HE providers in Wales are currently developing equality objectives and action plans for meeting the Equality Act 2010: public Sector Duties. These plans take steps to address the barriers and issues for learners with protected characteristics.

In Wales, extra help is also available for disadvantaged students in the form of targeted grants, which are also available to part-time students and some postgraduate students.

Recommendation

That FE and HE equality objectives be monitored to ensure continued equality of access for women from all backgrounds.

That monitoring data continue to be collected, published and analysed to continually improve practices that enable equality for women from all communities.

That Education in primary school be monitored for stereotyping in vocational choices in schools to encourage girls and boys into non-traditional areas

ARTICLE 11

Elimination of discrimination against women in the field of employment

Gender pay gap

Based on Median Hourly Earnings, the gender pay gap in Wales stands at 19%.

The gender pay gap in Wales is smaller than in other parts of the UK. This is mostly a result of relatively low wages for men. As above comments re the pay duty EHRC continue to promote How Fair is Wales annually. The the impact of cuts and benefits reform in Westminster is expected to have a greater impact on women in Wales who are more dependent on the public sector than elsewhere in the UK.

Childcare

In February 2011, the Welsh Government launched its Childcare policy statement, “Nurturing Children, Supporting Families”, which sets out the priorities for childcare in Wales and actions which the Welsh Government intends to undertake to secure improvements in childcare and the reporting procedure for delivering the commitments.

The Welsh Government’s Flying Start programme provides free quality part-time childcare for 2-3 year olds. In November 2011 the Deputy Minister for Children announced that this provision would be doubled

Recommendations

Ensure gender dis-aggregated data is collected so that women’s economic development can be measured correctly

Take steps to reduce stereotyping in education and careers advice, raising awareness of the cause and effect of the gender pay gap and encouraging girls to take up non-traditional routes

Provide tailored support for women’s enterprise

Ensure provision of quality, affordable childcare

Continue to promote flexible working and work-life balance to employers

Consider roll out of gender pay audits for listed companies

Parental leave

That the Welsh Government monitor and work with the Equality and Human Rights Commission to ensure enforcement of the specific duties in Wales in respect of gender pay

That the Welsh Government monitor childcare provision in Wales and include a childcare provision strategy in the economic renewal programme for Wales

ARTICLE 12

Elimination of discrimination against women in the field of health

Welsh Government has introduced strategies 'together for health' and 'Fairer health outcomes for all'. They have established Public Health Wales as a National resource for NHS Wales with key responsibilities for tackling health inequalities and prevention programmes

Work is currently being undertaken under the PSED to see how gender sensitive this work is.

Screening

UK: Under the NHS Breast Screening Programme, breast screening is offered every three years for all women in England aged 50 and over. Currently, women aged between 50 to 70 years are invited routinely and women over the age of 70 can request free three-yearly screening. The programme is currently being extended to women aged 47 to 49 and 71 to 73. Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales offer similar services including mobile screening units.

Wales: Cervical Screening for Wales invites women aged between 20 and 65 years who live in Wales for a free cervical screening every three years. In 2010, Wales commenced a three year £15 million programme of commissioning advanced equipment used to screen women in Wales for breast cancer.

Alcohol and drug misuse

In Wales during 2008 the Welsh Government published "Working Together to Reduce Harm", a ten year substance misuse strategy which sets out a clear national agenda for tackling and reducing the harms associated with substance misuse in Wales.

Recommendations

Support a **fully independent** review of Breast Screening, commissioned by the DoH in Westminster, ensuring that people with vested interests are not included in the panel. See the debate in peer reviewed journals such as the BMJ - <http://www.bmj.com/rapid-response/2011/11/03/proposed-review-breast-screening-will-not-be-independent-without-nice>. NICE should be the body to conduct this review.

Support the introduction of a minimum price per unit of alcohol; the available evidence shows that 50p/unit would be more effective in reducing the harm from alcohol than the 40p/unit currently being considered at Westminster. The WG should advocate for this both with the Home Office and other relevant departments and external bodies.

ARTICLE 13

Elimination of discrimination against women in economic, social & cultural life

Changes to social welfare system and access to family benefits

Cuts watch Cymru is undertaking a review of the impact of changes in Wales through the Bevan Foundation. WEN Wales is working with them to understand better the impact on women and will be feeding the finding in to WG Ministers and officials

Welsh Government is committed to improving advice services in Wales. This commitment is published in their equality objectives

Recommendation

That the Welsh Government monitor and measure the impact of changes to the welfare, advice and family benefits system on women in Wales.

ARTICLE 14

Elimination of discrimination against rural women

Women are more likely than men to rely on public transport. Poor transport links in rural Wales creates a barrier to economic engagement for women. Research from the Wales Rural Observatory shows that 50% of rural communities do not have bus services in operation at peak times.

71.3% of women in rural Wales live in poverty compared with 41.8% of men (Moles, 2007).

Rural areas have the lowest income levels in Wales. Research from Wales Rural Observatory found that only 52% of those living in low-income households were in full-time employment.

Rural transport

The Welsh Government continues to fund the “Bwcabus Scheme”, which enables passengers to book bus rides directly from their homes in rural areas to connect with conventional bus and train services in Wales. In addition, an element of the Welsh Government’s transport strategy “One Wales: Connecting the nation” focuses on removing barriers to enable disabled people to access the Welsh transport network. It does this by, for example, providing nearly £4 million to services such as a community transport concessionary fares scheme across Wales, providing free travel to severely disabled people and operating a concessionary fares rail pilot scheme in certain parts of Wales for people aged 60 or over and disabled people of all ages. In addition, the Welsh Government is working to improve and modernise the Blue Badge Scheme, with changes due to come into force during summer 2011.

Recommendation

That the Welsh Government fulfil the requirements of the public sector equality duty in Wales by measuring the impact of changes to public transport and the subsequent impact on rural women in particular

ARTICLE 15

Equality before the law and civil matters

Following the referendum in 2011 the WG has law-making powers. Any substantive changes in the law will need to be consulted upon widely, with education of both the public and law enforcement agencies on the implications for the people of Wales.

Recommendations

Judicial training

Magistrates, police and others involved in the law and its enforcement will need to be brought up to speed on all the changes brought about through this new process.

Increasing the diversity of judicial appointments

The opportunity to apply for judicial appointments should be publicised widely to all communities within Wales.

ARTICLE 16

Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations

Cohabitation

The MoJ and the Welsh Government are considering published research on the impact of the Family Law (Scotland) Act 2006 which contains provisions which are similar in many respects to those which the Law Commission recommends.

Forced marriage

The Welsh Government, in response to the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection Act) 2007, launched a three year plan in 2008 to take forward work to deal with forced marriage and honour-based violence (HBV). As part of the plan, a Forced Marriage Sub-Group was set up and is responsible for coordinating the work. In addition, South Wales Police has been funded to provide „training for trainers“ on forced marriage which is to be disseminated across public sector organisations such as the police force, education establishments and social services. ‘The Right to be Safe’ violence against women strategy includes actions on forced marriage and ‘honour’-based violence.

VAW

In Wales in 2010 the Welsh Government published “The Right to be Safe”, a six year integrated, cross-Government strategy for tackling all forms of VAW. The Strategy is supported by a three-year implementation plan. The Strategy’s priorities are:

- Prevention and raising awareness of violence against women and domestic abuse
- Providing support for victims and children
- Improving the response of criminal justice agencies
- Improving the response of health services and other agencies

In 2010/11, the Welsh Government revenue and capital allocated budget for VAW stood at £4.7m. In 2010/11, the Welsh Government provided £2.7m of capital funding for frontline VAW projects, including the All Wales Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Helpline.

The Welsh Government runs regular public awareness campaigns to tackle VAW and to challenge the negative attitudes towards women which perpetuate VAW. These are developed in partnership with the expert VAW third sector.

In 2011, the First Minister announced that the Welsh Government's Legislative Programme will include a Domestic Abuse (Wales) Bill, expected in late 2013, which will place a statutory duty on relevant public bodies to have a VAW strategy in place locally, and which will include elements of prevention, protection and support. It is our understanding that the Minister has confirmed that this Bill will cover ALL forms of VAW. A task and finish group has been set up with relevant Welsh Government officials, academics and Welsh Women's Aid to drive the Bill forward and provide legislative recommendations for its content.

Rape and sexual offending

As stated above, in 2010 the Welsh Government published "The Right to be Safe", a six year integrated, cross-Government strategy for tackling all forms of VAW, including rape and sexual violence. The Strategy is supported by a three-year implementation plan.

The Welsh Government provides financial support for the All Wales Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Helpline (recently broadened to include sexual violence – previously it was called the Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline).

The Welsh Government runs regular public awareness campaigns to tackle VAW and to challenge the negative attitudes towards women which perpetuate VAW. These are developed in partnership with the expert VAW third sector. This included a campaign in 2010/11 called 'Stop Blame', which focused on challenging victim-blaming culture around rape and sexual violence. The campaign website attracted visitors from 78 countries.

We understand that the forthcoming Domestic Abuse (Wales) Bill will also include sexual violence and rape – focusing necessarily on prevention and support, as the criminal justice system covers England and Wales and is a reserved matter for the UK Government. In terms of offending, then, this is not a devolved legislative

matter and the England legislation also covers Wales.

FGM

The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (the 2003 Act) covers England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

In Wales, the Welsh Government's Violence Against Women & Domestic Abuse Working Group has a sub-group – „Forced Marriage and HBV Sub-Group' which leads on issues around forced marriage, FGM and HBV. Working with BME organisations, Welsh Women's Aid, the National Public Health Service, the Legal Services Commission, New Pathways, the CPS and the Police Service, in 2008 the sub-group developed a three year action plan to take forward work in Wales to deal with forced marriage and HBV. This included advice on how to best coordinate the work with four main objectives:

- coordination of a network of services;
- improvement of capacity of education, social service and health professionals working in the community;
- improvement of partnership working between statutory agencies to provide holistic support to victims of forced marriage; and
- an increase in the early identification of and intervention with victims of forced marriage.

During this period, awareness of these issues has increased across Wales, and a planning day was held to take forward these issues over the next three years.

Recommendations

For the WG to accept and implement the 3year action plan to take forward work in Wales

Support the move to criminalise Forced Marriage as per the Westminster Government proposals – see Home Affairs Committee report - <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/home-affairs-committee/news/110517-forced-marriage-report/>.