

Bid to Welsh Government for Gwent Social Housing providers Domestic Abuse Project by participating housing providers: Bron Afon Community Housing, Charter Housing, Melin Homes, Monmouthshire Housing, Newport City Homes, Caerphilly CBC, Derwen, and Tai Calon

We are currently approaching the remaining RSL's who have some housing in the area to get involved.

As a group of social housing providers working in the Gwent area we have come together to tackle the issue of domestic abuse. We have become more aware in recent years of the role we can play in combating Domestic Abuse and supporting our tenants and employees affected by this and who disclose to us.

We know from our own data and information from organisations such as Womens Aid that a disproportionate number of Women who report abuse live in social housing. W.A. tells us that about 90% of the people they support are in rented, largely social, housing. We are also aware that it is not just women who are victims of DA.

Within the partner social landlords well over 1,000 cases of DA were picked up in 2013/14 ranging from 150 to 700 per RSL. Most of these were picked up through the Gwent Police DACC protocol. Interestingly this far exceeds numbers reported by RSL's outside Gwent as far as we are aware. In a brief straw poll the highest number of cases among tenants of other RSL's in 2013/14 was 30.

This means we are in a good position in the Gwent area to do some detailed work on DA linked to the DACC and identify how social landlords can respond more effectively in tackling this issue.

Through the range of landlord services that we deliver alongside tenant involvement and community engagement activities, we have developed a close relationship with our tenants and their families. Surveys show the level of trust and satisfaction our tenants have not only with our services, but with the way staff interact, respond and keep people informed. This enables us to use this relationship to identify people at risk of DA and to persuade those who may be reluctant to act, even after disclosure that we can support them in engaging with specialist agencies, the police etc.

Whilst we all have a range of policies and practices for tackling DA this varies quite considerably. Some organisations have developed some quite innovative initiatives which could be shared. In a lot of social landlords though DA is still only picked up and dealt with through anti-social behaviour breaches, which risks the victim of DA being further vilified as a perpetrator of nuisance.

We have learned a great deal from the work done by the Gwent Pathways project and in discussion with that project have identified that together we can be more proactive and more consistent in our approach. We want to share some of this innovation, as well as good practice in procedures, so that all social housing tenants in Gwent suffering Domestic Abuse get a more effective service.

There is also a huge amount of learning that we can draw on from specialist organisations such as Women's Aid, L A's other social landlords in Wales and across the UK such as Peabody.

We would like to develop a Toolkit for tackling and preventing Domestic Abuse in Gwent that we can use and would hope would be replicable across the housing sector in Wales. To achieve this we would need to:

- Align our policies and procedures in responding to tenant victims of Domestic Abuse and to ensure that it is picked up in all relevant housing management and maintenance policies.
- Learn how our response to tenants disclosing DA can inform how we support victims of DA in our workforce

- Liaise with the Gwent local authorities to remove any current inconsistencies and achieve common criteria for all common housing registers and housing waiting lists to allow for speedy moves for victims of Domestic Abuse who cannot remain in their current location.
- Examine action regarding target hardening and preventative measures and work with Gwent Police, the MARAC and Care and Repair Agencies in Gwent to align what is currently a range of responses. This would include the potential to share and effectively monitor the use and return of safety and security equipment e.g. CCTV, alarms and other monitoring facilities. Including identifying consistent procedures and policies for sharing evidence to support criminal or civil cases, as necessary.
- Enhance our relationships with expert agencies such as Womens Aid, Llamau, the Survivors Trust, BAWSO, HAFAN Cymru, Barnardo's, and New Pathways, the Police, Health professionals and child protection agencies to ensure quick responses when tenants disclose to us. Identify issues for more effective joint work through MARAC and DACC which currently involves many different staff and is not an effective use of knowledge and resources.
- Establish Domestic Abuse awareness training that is tailored specifically to housing staff to enable them to be able to identify warning signs, respond effectively and know when and how to bring in experts.
- *Establish what housing providers can do support work on child sexual exploitation where they are working with young people.*
- Share data to enable us to better prevent and support victims and respond to perpetrators.
- Research best practice and identify what could be replicated in the region including shared projects to prevent DA especially among young people e.g. awareness and education on how to identify and avoid potentially abusive relationships, projects and activities for education and awareness among young men to break the cycle where they have grown up in households where abuse was prevalent.
- Achieve White Ribbon status for engaging men in speaking out against Domestic Abuse

We are therefore requesting funding to appoint someone to undertake this work, develop the Toolkit, train key staff to implement the Toolkit and establish a framework to monitor the impact of the initiative e.g. we will monitor the baseline and ongoing disclosure rates (and to whom).

See Outputs and Outcomes below. We anticipate that this would be an 8 month project from recruitment to implementation of the Toolkit within social landlords.

Projects Costs

Project officer salary for 8 months plus on costs (NI and overheads), travel/mileage,	£17,770 NI Central charge Travel Total = 7,900
Associated project costs e.g. publication of findings/evaluation	£1,000
Total project cost	£26,670
Contribution from partners	16,000
Funding requested	10,670

Outputs:

- Toolkit/Model that can be replicated across Wales and contribute to WG strategy to combat DA
- Social landlords Operational practice and policies aligned
- DA awareness training tailored to housing staff
- Joint training for managers to ensure consistent implementation
- Process for data sharing to measure impact of toolkit/shared approach
- Cost benefit analysis across the social landlords to demonstrate to others the business case for this work.
- Review the potential for a housing based IDVA
- The cost of repairs and ASB etc. associated with domestic abuse decreases
- Social landlords in Gwent achieve White Ribbon status
- More accurate data available on the incidence of DA amongst social housing tenants

Outcomes:

- Visibly more effective and coordinated response to disclosure by social landlords, LA's, Police and Specialist providers in Gwent
- Improved information sharing supporting appropriate, effective service delivery and support to tenants experiencing domestic abuse
- Social landlords tenants living in Gwent are more likely to disclose knowing they will get a positive response from their landlord
- Social landlords staff in Gwent are more aware of the issues of DA and know how to help
- Social landlords tenants who need to move are able to do so quickly and safely
- Social landlords tenants experiencing domestic abuse feel safer