



## **AGENDA ITEM: 11**

### **NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY EXECUTIVE PANEL**

**24 October 2016**

#### **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, DOMESTIC ABUSE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE (WALES) ACT 2015**

**Report by Ruth Simmons, Assistant Chief Fire Officer**

#### **Purpose of Report**

- 1 To highlight to the Executive Panel the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 and the requirements for North Wales Fire and Rescue Service.

#### **Background**

- 2 On 29 April 2015, the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Bill received Royal Assent and became an Act. The legislation aims to improve the public sector response in Wales to such abuse and violence and was subject to rigorous scrutiny through the legislative process.
- 3 The fire and rescue services in Wales have been designated as relevant authorities and, as such, must comply with the Act.
- 4 The Act will, amongst other things:
  - Improve arrangements to promote awareness of, and prevent, protect and support victims of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence
  - Introduce a needs-based approach to developing strategies which will ensure strong strategic direction and strengthened accountability

- Ensure strategic level ownership, through the appointment of a ministerial adviser who will have a role in advising Welsh ministers and improving joint working amongst agencies across this sector
- Improve consistency, quality and join-up of service provision in Wales.

## **Information**

- 5 Alongside the Act a number of supporting policies are being or have already been developed. These include:
  - National Training Framework for Wales on violence against women and other forms of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence
  - Healthy Relationships programme in schools.
- 6 The Act and supporting strategies, policies or framework documents have all required consultation and the most recent of these has been a consultation on the National Strategy on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence - a framework for delivery 2016 – 2021.
- 7 The National Training Framework on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence is statutory guidance under section 15 of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 and section 60 of the Government of Wales Act 2006.
- 8 This training framework introduces the concept of "Ask and Act": A process of targeted enquiry across the Welsh public service in relation to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. There is a need for all public sector staff members who engage with communities to ask the appropriate questions and take the appropriate action if they feel that someone that they encounter is a victim of domestic abuse or sexual violence.
- 9 Relevant authorities must prepare a training plan for staff which must be submitted to the Welsh Ministers by the 31 March 2017 and published on our website within 12 weeks of this date.

- 10 There are six groupings for training requirements included in the framework depending upon the type of work undertaken and likely contact with victims of domestic abuse or sexual violence. Those who provide direct support to victims will receive a more in depth level of training than those who only have occasional contact.
- 11 NWFRS staff will fall into one of the first two categories:
  - Group 1 - Participants will have heightened awareness of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence
  - Group 2 - Recognise signs and symptoms, respond appropriately to unprompted disclosure, ask appropriate questions and respond to answers.
- 12 There is a requirement for NWFRS to cascade group 1 level training to staff within the following timeframes:
  - 50% of staff must be trained by March 2017
  - 100% of staff must be trained by March 2018.
- 13 The group 1 training is to be delivered via e-learning and the packages are currently in the process of being made available to all staff in both English and Welsh.
- 14 The modules will be one of the mandatory modules in the operational training planner in quarter 3 between October and December 2016 and prior to release, the need for this training will be publicised to encourage all other members of staff to undertake this training.
- 15 The higher level group 2 training will be delivered to community based staff. This will be designed and delivered by Welsh Government endorsed trainers via regional consortia.

## **Recommendation**

- 16 Note the requirements of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 and in particular the training requirements for staff as laid down in the National Training Framework on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.