

## **Minister launches new strategy to ensure that all women and children have 'The Right to be Safe'**

Social Justice and Local Government Minister Carl Sargeant visited Llanelli Women's Aid today (Thursday 25 March) to launch 'The Right to be Safe' Violence against women strategy.

Figures show that more than one in four women in England and Wales (4.8 million) has experienced at least one incident of domestic abuse and approximately 80,000 women experience rape or attempted rape in the UK each year.

It is the long term aim of the Welsh Assembly Government to end violence against women. The new integrated strategy and implementation plan will address all forms of violence against women in Wales including rape and sexual assault, domestic abuse, honour based violence, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

The Right to be Safe Strategy will ensure that the Welsh Assembly Government tackles a culture of acceptance of violence against women whether this occurs in the home, in the community or for cultural reasons. The Welsh Assembly Government will work with local government, criminal justice agencies and, on reserved matters, with the UK Government to challenge attitudes and improve the response that victims in Wales receive.

The strategy includes a number of initiatives and additional funding of £1 million is being made available to deliver these, taking the total budget to £4.4 million for 2010. Key priorities include:

- Expanding the services offered by the Wales Domestic Abuse helpline to also support victims of sexual violence
- A new project to tackle prostitution and trafficking in North Wales
- Increasing funding so that all One-Stop Shops in Wales receive support
- Developing a national training strategy to ensure that professionals in all sectors recognise and know how to deal with violence against women and the potential impact on children
- Continuing to fund on going publicity campaigns focused on challenging attitudes
- Consulting on the inclusion of issues relating to violence against women in the Personal and Social Education Framework
- A stronger focus on forced marriage, honour based violence and female genital mutilation issues including training, expanding existing education programmes, and publicity
- Providing financial training for key staff working in refuges and independent domestic abuse advisors to enable them to offer well informed financial advice to victims

- Working with NUS Cymru to develop a multi-media campaign on personal safety for students on campus settings
- Working with British Transport Police to improve the protection available to women on rail transport and railway stations.

Speaking at the launch Carl Sargeant said: “I believe The Right to be Safe strategy provides us with a real opportunity to address these enduring social problems which affect so many. The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to tackling this persistent form of inequality for women as well as underpinning our commitment to all victims of domestic abuse.

“We have come along way in tackling violence against women but I recognise more needs to be done and by working with our partners we will make women and their children safer. This is a big challenge and our new strategy sets out what we intend to do over the next six years to address this ongoing problem.”

**Notes:**

The All Wales National Domestic Abuse Freephone 24/7 helpline: 0808 80 10 800

'The Right to be Safe' Strategy: