



ConsultationResponse

FROM THE RSPCA IN WALES

Welsh Women's Aid Consultation Good Practice on delivering Whole Education Approaches to preventing violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual Violence May 2015

The following responses were submitted via a SurveyMonkey form to Welsh Women's Aid consultation concerning good practice on the delivery of whole education approaches to preventing violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. It was submitted in May 2015.

8. PLEASE INDICATE WHICH OF THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN CRIME TYPES YOUR ORGANISATION/EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION'S PROGRAMMES CURRENTLY COVER.

The RSPCA seeks to provide supports to victims of all forms of domestic abuse through its PetRetreat scheme. This arranges foster care for the pets of those fleeing abusive situations. The scheme enables many individuals to escape abusive relationships, thanks to the knowledge that their pets are being kept in a safe environment, and that they will be reunited at an appropriate time. Approximately 43 percent of households in Wales own at least one animal; and where domestic abuse does occur the presence of pets is common. In seeking to tackle domestic abuse, and ensure the delivery of a Whole Education approach on prevention, it is important, that those within the sector have knowledge, understanding and consideration of the role that pets may have, or be experiencing, within a particular abusive setting. Including information of available resources – such as pet fostering schemes – within educational frameworks could, directly or indirectly, assist victims in gaining the additional support they need to flee abusive situations.

19. WOULD YOU LIKE TO ADD ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS?

The RSPCA has experienced how family pets are often used as a tool to manipulate and control victims; often preventing vulnerable individuals or families from fleeing abusive relationships. Pets, as such, are often utilised by perpetrators as a form of coercive control to inhibit a victim's freedom; and often become victims of abuse themselves. Shockingly, a Paws for Kids survey noted that 66 percent of abusers had threatened to harm pets, whilst 94 percent had said it would have been easier to leave abusive situations had pet fostering services been available. Thus, as part of a Whole Education approach, we would strongly recommend that any Good Practice guide clearly acknowledges this issue. Schools, and institutions of Further and Higher Education, as well as other such bodies, are well-placed

to increase awareness of the role that pets may have within abusive settings. They could do this by, for example, outlining the availability of schemes, such as PetRetreat; and noting how perpetrators can manipulate the existence of pets as a tool for coercive control. It is important people understand the potential role of pets when seeking to recognise signs of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence at all levels. Ultimately, whether directly or indirectly, ensuring this could play a role in empowering many individuals to gain the confidence to leave an abusive relationship. We would be very happy to support Welsh Women's Aid wherever possible in constructing wording for any Guide in relation to pets. Additional information on the RSPCA's work in this area, including as part of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 Act, can be found at: <http://politicalanimal.org.uk/topics/wales/domestic-abuse/>. Anonymised case studies can also be made available, if that was of benefit.