

Russell George MS
Chair, Health and Social Care
Committee
By email only

From: Martyn Jones JP DL, Wales
Committee Interim Chair

Our ref: 20240307George

Thursday 07 March 2024

Dear Russell George

Violence against women and girls

I am writing to bring your attention to our comprehensive report, published today, analysing the UK and Welsh Governments' performance upholding the Istanbul Convention. In particular, we would like to highlight some of its recommendations relevant to the Welsh Government. We have published [our analysis of the Istanbul Convention](#) on our website.

The Istanbul Convention

As you know, the UK Government ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence ('the Istanbul Convention') in July 2022. We welcomed this important step. As such, the UK and Welsh Governments are now bound by international law to protect women and girls from violence. This includes prevention activities, prosecuting those responsible, and safeguarding survivors.

Our report has been submitted to support the Council of Europe experts on violence against women and girls' ('GREVIO') own evaluation of the

implementation of the Convention.

As an A-status National Human Rights Institution, we have provided our independent analysis on compliance with the Convention, and recommendations for change, to support GREVIO's assessment, including by meeting with the experts in January 2024. We are pleased to share our report with you today, which reflects this programme of work.

Based on our analysis, we welcome both governments' ambitious targets to improve women and girls' safety, and their focus on driving improvements. However, there still work to do to make these targets a reality for women and girls. We outline some of our recommendations here.

Measuring progress

To facilitate improvements on women and girls' safety, we recommend that the Welsh Government publish new indicators to measure progress implementing its current Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence strategy without delay. As the Welsh Government did not publish any comprehensive information on progress against its 2019 indicators, we consider it a priority that the Welsh Government adopts a greater focus on delivery and transparency.

Access to domestic abuse refuges

Our work has also highlighted the need to ensure the accessibility of domestic abuse refuges for disabled women. In 2021/22, just 1.1% of refuge vacancies listed on the UK-wide database were suitable for a woman with limited mobility.

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Just 0.9% could provide wheelchair accessible space. We welcome the Welsh Government's recent decision to offer grant funding for ensuring services are accessible. We consider that it should ensure data is published annually on progress to improve accessibility.

Protection for migrant victims of violence

Migrant victims of violence are in need of further protection to ensure their right to equal treatment under the Istanbul Convention is upheld. Those with no recourse to public funds do not currently have equal access to support services, for example. We welcome the Welsh Government funding the pilot Migrant Victim of Abuse Support Fund. We urge them to share findings from the pilot when they are available, as well as to ensure longer-term support to meet the needs of migrant victims with no recourse to public funds.

We would be happy to meet to discuss these issues further, and invite you to consider our report, and its recommendations for change, carefully.

Yours sincerely,



Martyn Jones JP DL

Wales Committee Interim Chair

Equality and Human Rights Commission |

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