# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **International Men’s Day** |
| **DATE** | **22 November 2024** |
| **BY** | **Jane Hutt MS, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip** |

On November 19, we celebrated International Men’s Day and the positive value men bring to the world, their families and communities to highlight positive role models and raise awareness of men’s well-being. The theme for 2024 is “**Positive Male Role Models**”.

**Men’s well-being**

Tragically, men continue to represent the most vulnerable group to suicide. Suicide rates for men are three times higher than for women. Multiple factors can lead to these tragic events and, as part of the development of our new Suicide and Self-harm Prevention Strategy we are taking a cross-governmental and multi-agency approach to build on the work already done to offer support to those who are most vulnerable.  Suicide is preventable and never inevitable.

The consultation on the draft Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Suicide and Self-Harm Strategy consultation has now concluded and will inform the final strategy and delivery plan which will be published early in the new year. In 2022, we introduced **Real Time Suspected Suicide Surveillance** (RTSSS) in Wales to provide information to help partners to target prevention, ensure support is made available, and to respond when needed. The first annual report was published on 11 January 2024.

Men’s Sheds Cymru is one of the organisations that Welsh government support who are promote connection, conversation and creation to improve wellbeing, reduce loneliness and social isolation. Many people are already able to access the many fantastic resources available within our communities or can turn to their friends and family for help and advice. However, this can be difficult for some, and this is where Social Prescribing, sometimes called community referrals, can link individuals with non-clinical activities within their community to help improve their health and wellbeing. We launched the National Framework for Social Prescribing in December 2023. The National Framework for Social Prescribing sets out a shared understanding of social prescribing and provides guidance for commissioners and service providers.

We have worked with Public Health Wales to develop **Hapus, the National Conversation on Mental Wellbeing**, a nationwide campaign which aims to encourage people to prioritise their mental wellbeing and motivate them to act by engaging with wellbeing-promoting behaviours, activities and assets in their community. Hapus encourages people to reflect on what helps them feel good and aims to inspire the population to try out other activities known to promote mental wellbeing.

We support the Safer Wales Dyn Project which protects and supports all males, including gay, heterosexual, bisexual and transgender men who have experienced domestic abuse in Wales. The Dyn Project works to enhance safety and increase well-being through a collaborative approach with partners across Wales and we welcome the UK Government’s Employment Rights Bill and its support for family friendly rights, including changes to paternity leave, parental leave and bereavement leave. These new reforms could see many more employees benefit from changes including dads and partners who previously would not have qualified for paternity leave.

**Positive role models**

The Welsh Government’s 2022-2026 VAWDASV strategy has prioritised early intervention and prevention as part of a robust whole-system approach where men are provided with positive role modelling, trustworthy advice, and importantly, partnership working at every level to prevent violence from happening in the first place.

The White Ribbon Accreditation is a global initiative to end male violence against women. It calls on boys and men to take action to make a difference. The Welsh Government successfully renewed its accreditation in March 2023 to demonstrate a clear commitment and leadership to this campaign. The Welsh Government was and remains the only UK Government administration to achieve White Ribbon accreditation. We want our communities to call out inappropriate behaviours and offer support, including empowering men to engage with other men and boys to call out abusive and sexist behaviour among their friends, colleagues and communities to promote a culture of equality and respect. We invite all men across Wales to become **White Ribbon Ambassadors**.

We recognise the importance of positive role models in young people’s lives and in July 2023 Welsh Government launched the Sound campaign. The overarching objectives of the campaign were:

* Increase male awareness of early ‘red flag’ VAWDASV behaviours.
* Increase male participation in conversations around healthy relationships to challenge harmful behaviours and attitudes towards women.
* Increase male understanding around the levels of harm associated with all forms of violence against women.

One key piece of behavioural insight for Sound was ‘men listen to men’. Pairing this with current trends in influencer engagement meant it was imperative to use high-profile male role models within the campaign.

**Positive male role models** can play a large role in raising awareness of societal issues and countering extreme and harmful attitudes and behaviours, through social media.

Using influencers as positive role models from Welsh sports teams, Welsh musicians, and popular entertainment streams like reality television has generated a really positive response.

* Ben Davies, Joe Morrell and David Brooks from The Football Association of Wales got together for a locker room chat around positive masculinity, and what men can do to help women feel safe in public, this content was released to tie in with Wales’ Euro Qualifiers and White Ribbon Day.
* Ellis Jenkins, Theo Cabango and Teddy Williams from Cardiff Rugby discussed healthy relationships, male role models and how to take constructive advice from friends and peers.
* Welsh band Chroma caught up with Sound before heading out on tour with the Foo Fighters to discuss their experiences of misogyny in the music industry.
* Love Islander Connagh Howard visited his Welsh medium secondary school to chat to students about relationships.
* Andrew Jenkins from BBC’s The Traitors and his son Morgan discussed the impact of intergenerational trauma on developing healthy relationships.

It is also important to ensure influencers used are both celebrity / high profile individuals but also community influencers who already hold positions of trust and value in their respective relationships with young men. The use of community connector role models where existing in person relationships exist has been one of the most successful elements of the campaign to date, driving measurable change in the individuals they have worked with.

Zhivago (Vago) Greaux is a Project Manager within the Lloyds Banking group. He also holds the position of Boxing Coach at St. Joseph's Amateur Boxing Club, where he had his first interactions with Sound. As a result of his consistent engagement, Vago is now independently running sessions with up to 500 employees of Lloyd’s banking group nationally about the campaign. Vago is a role model for positive masculinity, as well as extolling the values of the campaign upon hundreds of young men who are members of St Josephs.