



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Safer Communities for All - An Update on Chapter 7 of the Programme for Government**

DATE **19 July 2013**

BY **Lesley Griffiths AM, Minister for Local Government and Government Business**

I wish to update Members on progress in delivering Chapter 7 of our Programme for Government, which gave Community Safety a high priority for this Government term.

One of our top five commitments under the Programme for Government, was to introduce an additional 500 Community Support Officers. I am pleased to report we are on target to reach this deadline much earlier than originally anticipated. 480 CSOs have been recruited with the remainder due to be recruited by September 2013. This is an example of multi-agency working at its best. The Welsh Government, working in partnership with the four Welsh police forces, has introduced an additional resource which is making a real difference to the lives of the people of Wales.

In Autumn 2012, we published a Green Paper consultation which considered what more could be done for those at risk of entering or who are in the Youth Justice system. I am working with the Deputy Minister for Social Services, to investigate if the elements of legislation for this group of young people could be incorporated into the Social Services and Well-being Bill. A further welcome outcome of this work will be a new Welsh Government and Youth Justice Board Strategy.

We are working on legislation aimed at tackling all forms of violence against women following the White Paper consultation earlier this year. The Bill will be introduced next Spring and aims to strengthen services by supporting frontline practitioners to deliver the full spectrum of relevant interventions in a more consistent way and to an agreed quality standard.

The implementation of the 10,000 Safer Lives project is paving the way for the Bill. The project is improving the multi-agency response provided to victims of domestic abuse. The gaps in services for victims identified by the 10,000 Safer Lives project have been echoed in the engagement work undertaken for the White Paper proposals.

To inform future funding decisions and to maximise the effectiveness and impact of grant funding, we are carrying out an independent review of domestic abuse funding. This review will assess the existing evidence base underpinning types of service provision to examine their effectiveness. This review will report in the Autumn.

Addressing human trafficking remains a priority. Stephen Chapman was appointed as Wales' second Anti Human Trafficking Co-ordinator in November 2012, the only role of its type in the UK. We recognise the key to eradicating trafficking lies in partnership-working at local, national and international levels and this role clearly facilitates this approach. We are also working with partners to improve the evidence base to provide clarity on the scale of this heinous crime and to show Wales is hostile to human trafficking.

Helping people to recover from the harms of substance misuse continues to be a priority for the Welsh Government. Our Substance Misuse Delivery Plan 2013-15, launched in February, sets out the actions we will be taking over the next three years to achieve this. Actions include reviewing our confidential enquiries process into drug related deaths, issuing guidance to improve access to substance misuse treatment for veterans, publication of a new recovery framework and continuing to push for the devolution of alcohol licensing to Welsh Ministers.

Funding and responsibility for delivery of the Drug Intervention Programme moved from the Welsh Government to Police and Crime Commissioners across Wales in April 2013.

I am grateful to the Commissioners for being receptive to ideas which will enhance and expand this programme to the mutual benefit of those who use it and the wider community who will benefit from fewer people using illicit drugs.

We continue to work effectively in partnership with the emergency services and other responder agencies in Wales to strengthen our ability to respond promptly and effectively to emergencies. Over the last year, we have witnessed incidents of flooding and severe winter weather in Wales, which have shown the importance of having an effective, co-ordinated response to emergencies. We remain committed to strengthening and improving this capability by learning from experience.

I am pleased the Welsh Government investment of over £3 million annually to support community fire safety activities across Wales is seeing reductions in incidents and injuries and providing positive impacts in our communities. In particular, Home Fire Safety Checks are supporting vulnerable people in their own homes.

There is also an element of work on Road Safety in Chapter 7 which now lies with my colleague the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport. She has indicated she will update Members of progress on these points in due course.

Due to funding cuts announced by the UK Government in March, in addition to those announced in last year's Autumn Statement, along with the recent Comprehensive Spending Review, mean the financial landscape is bleak. Local Authorities, Fire Authorities and Police Forces are facing the very real prospect of significantly smaller budgets, at a

time when demand on our public services is increasing. It is vital we share a common and realistic view of the unprecedented financial outlook for public services in Wales and work together to meet this challenge and to make Wales safer.

It is also important we work closely with Home Office, Ministry of Justice, Police and Crime Commissioners and Youth Justice Board on non-devolved crime and justice issues. Work has also been undertaken on the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill and the forthcoming Probation and Youth Custody reforms.

This work is vital to ensure any UK Government policies and legislation fit within the devolved context and the competence of the National Assembly for Wales is understood and respected. The recent announcement that a new prison to be built by the Ministry of Justice will be located in North Wales, is a clear example of how partnership working with Local Authorities and the UK Government can provide very real benefits.

Working collaboratively and with the common goal of doing the best for the people of Wales in mind, we can and are making Wales a safer place to live.