

Research Wales Innovation Fund

Civic Mission and Public Engagement: template for case studies

Institution:	Aberystwyth University Law and Criminology, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Civic Mission Theme (select from drop down list) :	Social enterprise and innovation
Vision for Research and Innovation Pillars (select those that apply):	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Place <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Innovation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaboration
Title of case study / project / initiative:	Transforming the Response to Domestic Abuse in Later Life
Summary description:	
<p>The Dewis Choice Initiative (2015–present) and previous research by Wydall et al., highlighted how older people were denied opportunities to access justice when compared to younger counterparts in cases of domestic abuse (DA) and unintentional harm. The Initiative prioritises informed choice, integrating wellbeing provision and access to a range of justice options (criminal, civil and restorative).</p> <p>Dewis Choice is funded by the National Community Fund and Comic Relief. Globally, it is the first co-produced Initiative designed and implemented by older people (60 years+) and practitioners. The Initiative combines prospective longitudinal research, a dedicated bespoke service and integrates research into practice by providing training and guidance for UK-wide organisation for people aged 60 years and over who experience elder abuse/DA.</p> <p>Adopting an intergenerational approach, the Initiative has collaborated and informed with beneficiaries including, students, older people, LGBT+ groups, safeguarding teams across the UK, Police, NGO's academics, policy-leads and Welsh Government.</p>	

Project / initiative impact:

The longitudinal research informed the design and delivery of UK-wide training. This research-led training has been shared with over 6,000 practitioners across the UK through training and knowledge exchange events. The training includes two short LGBT+ films, webinars, online discussion forums and Practitioner Guidance publication. The Practitioner Guidance provides new insights on wellbeing, safety planning, toolkits, and legal guidance with 2,200 copies disseminated to a range of organisations.

In response to COVID-19, researchers developed bilingual bite-sized online training which has been adopted by Hywel Dda Health Board and Ceredigion County Council as part of their in-house domestic abuse training. Endorsement by the Older People's Commissioner, the training was shared by Public Health Wales with the World Health Organisation as best practice.

With an emphasis on community engagement, the Initiative has consulted with 1700 older people and trained over 380 volunteers.

The ongoing research has provided insights into discriminatory practices, for example responses to: LGBT+ older victim-survivors; male victimisation; familial abuse; co-existence of dementia and domestic abuse.

Testimonials from clients, safeguarding teams, police and policy leads, shows that Dewis Choice has reduced the risk of harm and abuse, and also improved quality of life for 156 older people in Wales.

Future activity:

Significant areas of research and impact including the training have proved to be sustainable as they have been adopted by organisations into their existing services and practices. Future prospective funding will enable Dewis Choice to disseminate research-led training to share good practice internationally. Embedding future research findings into existing practice will enhance the response older victim-survivors receive when help-seeking.

Since the initial award to Dewis Choice, the PI Sarah Wydall has been awarded £813,096 for five further research studies: a Pan UK study 'Transforming the Response to Domestic Abuse in Later Life'; an Examination of the Co-existence of Domestic Abuse and Dementia; Creating Safer Spaces and Building Social Connectivity during COVID-19; Developing Legal Protection and Social Embeddedness; and Transforming the Response to Violence and Abuse in Female Dependent Households in Malaysian Indian Neighbourhoods. Collectively, these research findings will inform any further training related to the Dewis Choice Initiative.

Quote(s) e.g. from external project partner:

'The impact Dewis Choice has had for older people who have experienced abuse and their families is immeasurable. It is my observation that the work and research the project is producing has and will continue to have a profound and ground-breaking impact on the understanding and awareness of the abuse experienced by older people, as well as the development and improvement of the responses and support available to the older people and their families within our communities.'

Natalie Hancock
Mid and West Wales VAWDASV Regional Lead

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How did the activity help support the Well-being of Future Generations Act goals (select those that apply):

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales

The project aligns strongly with the Well-being Act both in its contribution towards the above goals and in its support for the issues that all public bodies must address in relation to sustainable development as laid out in the Act – for example preventing problems occurring or getting worse, integration with the well-being objectives of other public bodies, collaboration to achieve well-being objectives, involvement of those with interests in the objectives and safeguarding long-term well-being while meeting short-term needs. The above goals are met through:

A prosperous Wales – the project addresses domestic abuse which damages individuals, families and communities. Abuse undermines an individual's ability to contribute to society and can add strain to medical, social and other essential services thereby reducing social and economic well-being.

A resilient Wales – As an online resource this training package does not contribute to increased carbon usage. It also supports the social and economic resilience of individuals, families and communities.

A healthier Wales – the training provided by the project will assist practitioners to identify and address abuse thereby supporting this goal to promote a society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and where choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood. The research from Dewis Choice facilitated opportunities for informed choice leading to better outcomes for older people in terms of their recovery and quality of life. The Initiative provides both short-term and long-term help and support for practitioners, victim-survivors and their families.

A more-equal Wales – the project will enable more people to fulfil their potential no matter what their age, background or circumstances. Dewis Choice and the underpinning research on older survivors experiencing domestic abuse by Wydall et al (2012-2020) demonstrates a poverty of service provision and training. The Initiative's research insights demonstrate a range of discriminatory practices that undermines older peoples' human rights. The combined justice and wellbeing approach enables equal entitlement to rights and services, irrespective of age, gender, class, sexuality or disability.

A Wales of cohesive communities – the training provided supports a range of practitioners to ensure that communities, and the individuals within them, are safe and well-connected. Abuse can flourish in contexts of isolation and we must ensure that all citizens, and particularly those who are older and more vulnerable, can access support if they or someone they know is vulnerable to abuse.

A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language - tackling abuse of older people, through both languages, assists in rebuilding confidence and enabling abuse victims to reengage in the arts, sports and recreation. A vibrant culture demands that abuse issues are addressed. In rural areas, in particular, abuse can go unrecognised and undetected leading to isolation and misery.

A globally responsible Wales – the project will contribute to well-being across Wales and has the opportunity to contribute to global well-being if adopted by international partners.