**“It is absolutely essential for us men to begin to question our behaviour which ultimately makes women feel less safe.” – Former Chief Prosecutor and Welsh Government Advisor, Nazir Afzal**

A new campaign calling on the public to challenge assumptions about harassment against women - often wrongly seen as ‘harmless’ - has launched across Wales.

‘Call out only’ aims to highlight how down-played actions like “I ‘only’ wolf-whistled at her” or “I ‘only’ slapped her bum” become much more sinister and the seriousness of the action seen when the word ‘only’ is removed.

Recent ONS statistics show two in three women aged 16 to 34 years experienced at least one form of harassment in the last year, with 44% having experienced catcalls, whistles, unwanted sexual comments or jokes. 29% felt like they were being followed.

The Welsh Government wants to help raise awareness amongst Wales’ different communities of the behaviours associated with different types of harassment and how they make the recipient feel.

They are calling on bystanders - particularly men - to call out inappropriate behaviour when and where safe to do so.

This includes empowering men to call out abusive and sexist behaviour among their male friends and colleagues in a safe way - promoting a culture of equality and respect. Ways this can happen include:

* Arranging to meet the person involved privately to discuss what was said
* Not feeling pressured to laugh along to sexist conversations or ’banter’
* Asking questions like ‘what do you mean by that? What makes you think that?’

One of the Welsh Government’s National Advisers on violence against women, former Chief Prosecutor Nazir Afzal, has spoken about why this new messaging and men taking action is so important. He said:

*“We have spent a lot of time talking about rape and sexual offences and about the '50 shades of violence' against women and girls, but it starts often with the most innocuous comments and with the kind of behaviour that perhaps we haven't considered as men could be making women less safe.*

*“This campaign that says it's not right to say that "I only meant this" and "I only did this." It is absolutely essential for us men to begin to question our behaviour which ultimately makes women feel less safe.*

*“You cannot simply say, "I'm not sexist myself", or "I'm not a misogynist myself". You have got to be anti-sexist, you've got to be anti-misogyny because we ultimately create the environment that enables the more serious behaviour to take place. Think about the impact of what you do and stop it.”*

Earlier this year following a number of horrific instances against women being seen across the UK, Kidwelly RFC’s under 15’s team wanted to take a proactive approach in preventing violence against women. The young Carmarthenshire club decided to ask publically what they could do to positively influence the young men in their area – prompting wide praise across social media.

Team Manager, Julian Lloyd, explained why the boys will also be supporting the ‘Call out only’ campaign. He said:

*"We want to empower our boys to call out misogyny when they see it, stop it at source, before it escalates. We want to create a squad of young men that are empathetic, strong and resilient - young men that are trusted allies to the women in their lives."*

Working with a range of partner organisation to develop the new hard-hitting messaging, the campaign reflects evidence that victims of sexual harassment are disproportionately female and perpetrators disproportionately male.

Minister for Social Justice, Jane Hutt, said:

*“Wales will not be a bystander to sexual harassment, stalking or abuse.*

*“This new campaign is intentionally a very direct and challenging one for the simple reason that all of these behaviours have to be confronted head-on. None of these behaviours are acceptable, none of them are ok. Some will happen in isolation, others can lead to an escalation.*

*“The word ‘only’ is frequently used to explain away and excuse inappropriate behaviour. The word gets used in conversation by men to justify their actions. It gets used by people to dilute women’s genuine fears. Through this campaign we aim to show where this mentality can lead. That’s why we need men to question their own behaviour and, where it’s safe to do so, each other’s behaviour too.”*

The campaign follows a number of commitments set out by the Welsh Government within its Programme for Government and draft Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) National Strategy, which is out for consultation until 1 February 2022.

**END**

\*Case studies are real but names may have been changed.

**Case study one - experiencing street and online harassment - Anna\*, age 17 from Cardiff**

*“I was walking down a busy shopping street in the daytime and a man shouted at me ‘Oi, you’ve got a good body and good clothes, you must have money, give me money’.*

*“He asked where I lived so I walked on but he started following me so I walked faster. I felt scared. He stopped following me when I started running.*

*“Another man then said ‘Oh nice body’ but I carried on. I felt like I just had to get to my sister’s house and I told her when I got there. She asked if I had run. If I had seen a police officer I would have told them.*

*“I told my grandparents about it, they said it was too dangerous walking about and not to go there. Gramps takes me in the car mostly now so I am safe.*

*“I don’t go out much, just meet people online. Sometimes the men ask me for pictures of myself or send me some of them. It seems like they only want one thing.”*

**Case study two – addressing harassment in public – Paul\***

Paul\* shared his experienced on Twitter. He recently attended a gig with his wife, where he encountered a young man harassing a woman.

*“I saw a young lad about 20 or so grabbing the arm and pulling at this young girl of similar age, he was clearly giving her abuse verbally. What I was more concerned about was that his friend was stood right next to him and didn’t say or do anything.*

*“I looked round to see if anyone else or security seen anything but no one seemed to take any action… The lad was saying it’s none of my business. My response to him; I said if I’ve seen it and you’ve done it in front of me, he’d made it my business.*

*“Thankfully a couple behind us who had been witness to this got assistance from venue security who removed the lads from the venue.”*

* [Call Out Only – campaign website](https://gov.wales/call-out-only)
* [Safe to Say Wales website](https://safetosay.wales)
* [Consultation: Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) National Strategy](https://gov.wales/violence-against-women-domestic-abuse-and-sexual-violence-vawdasv-national-strategy)
* [ONS stats: Perceptions of personal safety and experiences of harassment, Great Britain: 2 to 27 June 2021](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/perceptionsofpersonalsafetyandexperiencesofharassmentgreatbritain/2to27june2021)