



Federation Northern Ireland

Consultation Response to

Draft Northern Ireland Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014

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Core Work of Women's Aid: Background Information & Statistics

1.0 Introduction

Women's Aid is the lead voluntary organisation in Northern Ireland addressing domestic violence and providing services for women and children. We recognise domestic violence as one form of violence against women. Women's Aid seeks to challenge attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate domestic violence and, through our work, promote healthy and non-abusive relationships.

2.0 Core work of Women's Aid

The core work of Women's Aid in Northern Ireland, including Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland and the 10 local Women's Aid groups is:

- To provide refuge accommodation to women and their children suffering mental, physical or sexual abuse within the home.
- To run the 24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline.
- To provide a range of support services to enable women who are leaving a violent situation to rebuild their lives and the lives of their children.
- To provide a range of support services to children and young people who have experienced domestic violence.
- To run preventative education programmes in schools and other settings.
- To educate and inform the public, media, police, courts, social services and other agencies of the impact and effects of domestic violence.
- To advise and support all relevant agencies in the development of domestic violence policies, protocols and service delivery.
- To work in partnership with all relevant agencies to ensure a joined up response to domestic violence.

Throughout this consultation response, the term "Women's Aid" is used to reflect the overall Women's Aid movement in Northern Ireland, which is made up of ten local Women's Aid groups and Women's Aid Federation. The ten local Women's Aid groups are all members of Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland. Each Women's Aid group offers a range of specialist services to women, children and young people who have experienced domestic violence.

3.0 Women's Aid statistics (2010- 2011)

- 12 refuges with 300 bed spaces, playrooms and facilities.
- 1,058 women and 754 children sought refuge.
- 15 resource centres for women seeking information and support; group work and training.
- 3,450 women and 3,739 children accessed the Floating Support service enabling women to access support whilst remaining in their own homes and communities.
- Move-on houses for women and children leaving refuges.
- The 24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline, open to anyone affected by domestic violence, managed 38,296 calls.

4.0 Additional Women's Aid statistical data

- Since 1999, Women's Aid across Northern Ireland gave refuge to 14,714 women and 14,356 children and young people.
- During the last 16 years Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland managed 282,860 calls to the 24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline.

5.0 Statistics: Domestic violence & violence against women

- Domestic violence is a violation of Article 5 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights – that “no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”.
- The joint NIO, DHSSPS Strategy “Tackling Violence at Home” estimates that the cost of domestic violence in Northern Ireland, including the potential loss of economic output, could amount to £180 million each year.
- UNICEF research released in 2006, showing per capita incidence, indicates that there are up to 32,000 children and young people living with domestic violence in Northern Ireland.
- Where the gender of the victim was known, 75% of adult victims of domestic crimes recorded by the PSNI in 2009/10 were female.¹
- Over 30% of all domestic violence starts during pregnancy.²

¹ Findings from the PSNI Crime Statistics Report 2010/11 N.B. “Adult” defined as aged 18 and over

² Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland

6.0 Domestic violence: Crime statistics

- Domestic violence is a crime. PSNI statistics for 2010/11 indicate there were more recorded crimes with a domestic motivation (9,546) than the combined total of all the following crimes (9,471). These include all recorded sexual offences (2,120), robbery (622), armed robbery (562), hijacking (122), theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle (2719), arson (1884) dangerous driving (699), handling stolen goods (194) and offences under anti-terrorism legislation (19).
- PSNI Statistics for 2010/11 indicate they responded to a domestic incident every 23 minutes of every day of the year.
- The total of 9,546 crimes with a domestic motivation in 2010/11 represents an average of approximately 1 domestic crime every 60 minutes in Northern Ireland.
- The number of all recorded offences of murder in Northern Ireland in 2010/11 total 20. Those classed as having a domestic motivation total 7. Therefore, 35% of all murders in Northern Ireland in 2010/11 had a domestic motivation.
- There were 550 rapes (including attempted Rapes) in Northern Ireland in the period 2010/11.

(Source: PSNI Statistics 2010/11)

- Official sources (NISOSMC) estimate that up to 80% of sex crimes are not reported.
- Violence against Women is not limited to domestic violence, it includes amongst other crimes murder, rape, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, trafficking, sexual stalking and sexual harassment.

7.0 Children and domestic violence

UNICEF research released in 2006, showing per capita incidence, indicates that there are up to 32,000 children and young people living with domestic violence in Northern Ireland. Statistics for MARACs (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences) in Northern Ireland show that between January 2010 and April 2011, 1759 domestic violence cases were discussed. This included a total of 2518 children.

Children and young people will experience domestic violence in many ways and every experience will be different. A study by Hughes (1992³) of families, who had experienced domestic violence, showed that 90% of children were in the same or next room when the violence was occurring. Studies by Leighton (1989)⁴ showed that 68% of children from families where there was a history of domestic violence were witnesses. The Hidden Victims Study⁵ of 108 mothers attending NCH family centres who had experienced domestic violence showed that 90% of children were aware of the violence, 75% had witnessed violence, 10% had witnessed sexual violence, 99% of children had seen their mothers crying or upset as a result of the violence and more than half of the women (52%) said their children had seen the resulting injuries. The Hidden Victims Study also showed that more than a quarter (27%) of the children involved had been hit or physically abused by the violent partner.

Domestic violence has adverse effects on children and young people and can be traumatic. It can impact upon all areas of life, including, health, education, the development of relationships, recreation and social activities. The effects of domestic violence on children are wide ranging and will differ for each child. A wealth of research has identified domestic violence as an underlying theme behind social issues such as, school dropout and exclusion, youth homelessness and young people engaging in risk taking behaviour. Children and young people have varying levels of resilience and all agencies that come into contact with children and young people who experience domestic violence, have a responsibility to build upon this resilience.

Women's Aid has a long and successful history of working with children and young people who experience domestic violence. As the lead agency addressing domestic violence in Northern Ireland, Women's Aid wishes to draw attention to its recent progressive developments for children and young people who are affected by domestic violence as follows:

- The forthcoming publication and launch of "Our Place – Safe Space" a five year strategy, developed by Women's Aid for children and young people who are affected by domestic violence. This strategy is accompanied by a directory of Women's Aid Services for Children and Young People who are (or may be at risk of) experiencing domestic violence. It is also monitored by a robust and comprehensive performance measurement framework to measure progress against strategic areas, aims and objectives.
- The development and delivery by Women's Aid, of "Developing Social Guardians" training to teachers and other professionals across

³ Holder, R et al (1994) *Suffering in Silence? Children and Young People who witness Domestic Violence*, Hammersmith and Fulham, Domestic Violence Forum: London.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ National Children's Homes, Action for Children (1994), *The Hidden Victims, Children and Domestic Violence*, NHC: London.

Northern Ireland as part of an innovative pilot project delivered in partnership with the Department of Education.

- The extensive review and subsequent reprint of preventative education packages including, “Helping Hands” and “Heading for Healthy Relationships”.
- Women’s Aid’s innovative approach to preventative education work utilising the above education packages is recognised and included in the Tackling Violence at Home action plan.

“Helping Hands” is a preventative programme for primary school aged children at key stage two and three. This programme aims to:

- Develop children’s levels of self esteem and confidence.
- Enable children to explore and express feelings.
- Inform children of the right to feel safe at all times.
- Increase children’s ability in safety planning.
- Empower children to identify their own personal support network.
- Explore how choice of behaviour can affect the feelings of others.
- Identify healthy ways to manage conflict.

“Heading for Healthy Relationships” is a preventative programme for post primary schools to enable young people to explore the differences between healthy, unhealthy and abusive relationships. It encourages young people to gain a greater understanding of rights within a relationship and to fully comprehend the issues of equality and respect.

8.0 Consultation response

- 8.1 Women’s Aid welcomes the establishment of the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership and the subsequent publication of the draft Northern Ireland Children and Young People’s Plan.
- 8.2 Women’s Aid also welcomes and appreciates the opportunity to comment upon the draft Northern Ireland Children and Young People’s Plan on behalf of our ten local groups. As part of this response process, a consultation session was facilitated with Women’s Aid groups across Northern Ireland. The following comments reflect their collective views.

- 8.3 This opportunity has come at a significant and strategic time for Women's Aid as it is about to launch a five year strategy for children and young people (2012-2017) "Our Place - Safe Space". This strategy has been developed by Women's Aid, to demonstrate a strategic and innovative vision for children and young people who experience (or may be at risk of experiencing) domestic violence. The strategy presents a new approach for Women's Aid across Northern Ireland. It represents a move to the creation of a single regional children and young people's strategy, to drive forward service provision and development over a five year period. It is based upon a "think regionally, act locally" model and sets out the regional priorities for the period, providing a standardised framework for Women's Aid, to respond to the strategic priorities identified, on a local and regional level.

9.0 The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership

- 9.1 Women's Aid welcomes the establishment of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) with a responsibility for integrated planning.

- 9.2 Women's Aid utterly welcomes the intention for the CYPSP to be cross sectoral:

"Together, we form a cross sectoral strategic partnership consisting of leadership of all statutory agencies concerned with children's lives, and regional representation of the community/voluntary sectors and Black and Minority Ethnic Sector. Pg 4

- 9.3 Women's Aid would however, strongly question the extent to which the partnership is fully representative of all key agencies that have responsibility for improving outcomes for children and young people in Northern Ireland. We note with serious concern, the lack of representation of domestic and sexual violence against children at this most strategic level. As the key provider of services for children and young people experiencing domestic and sexual violence over the last thirty years, we strongly believe Women's Aid should have a seat on this partnership.

- 9.4 Further to this, Women's Aid would welcome clarification in relation to how the CYPSP will link strategically with the Tackling Violence at Home, Regional Strategic Steering Group, in particular the Children and Young People's sub group, as there is not, that we can see, a direct link in terms of joint representation. We strongly believe this link must be established and will be crucial and the successful implementation of the plan. We would, therefore welcome clarification of plans or processes which will

ensure proactive partnership working and information sharing between these two groups.

- 9.5 Women's Aid welcomes the incorporation of children's rights into integrated planning through the promotion of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- 9.6 Women's Aid welcomes the endorsement of the "Whole Child Model" and has also endorsed this model in the directory of services recently published to accompany the Women's Aid five year strategy for children and young people "Our Place - Safe Space".
- 9.7 We note the funding challenges outlined on page 10. This is also reiterated on page 26 in relation to early intervention:

...given the widely recognised relatively greater need for early intervention services in Northern Ireland, in relation to its history of conflict, which has raised need and the long standing documented under-investment in terms of statutory provision for children and young people.

Women's Aid strongly believes that adequate funding streams must be put in place to ensure the effective implementation of this plan.

Difficulties are currently experienced across the children's sector in relation to sustainability of services for all children and young people. Across Women's Aid sustaining the vital services delivered to children and young people in both refuge and community settings has become increasingly difficult. It is important to note that this work has been developed and delivered over the years in the absence of core funding. Women's Aid across Northern Ireland has sustained and developed service delivery, within a myriad of funding arrangements, the majority of which have been short term.

Sustainability for services has increasingly become a major priority for all Women's Aid groups. This has been particularly evident this year with the withdrawal of the children's fund.

- 9.8 While the plan states that each agency within CYPSP has its own key strategies, at agency level, which need to be taken into account, Women's Aid strongly believes that the strategies of other agencies in relation to children and young people also need to be taken into account as strategic drivers.
- 9.9 The Women's Aid five year strategy for children and young people "Our Place - Safe Space" presents an innovative approach to working with children and young people who are (or may be at risk of) experiencing domestic and sexual violence. Women's Aid is of the strong opinion that "Our Place - Safe Space" needs to be taken into account in the overall planning processes. This strategy has been mapped against the six high

level outcomes and has been benchmarked against other key strategies currently in place at a government level.

- 9.10 In section 1.10, *Other Strategy Drivers*, Women's Aid would like to see the following Government strategies included:

Tackling Violence at Home-A Strategy for Addressing Domestic Violence and abuse in Northern Ireland, 2005.

Tackling Sexual Violence and Abuse-A Regional Strategy 2008-2013, Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety 2008.

10.0 The Children and Young People's Plan

- 10.1 Women's Aid welcomes the approach taken to set out how integrated planning and commissioning arrangements, will be put into place to secure improvements in the 6 high level outcomes for children and young people (as set out in the Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People). Women's Aid has also developed its five year strategy for children and young people "Our Place - Safe Space" using this approach.
- 10.2 While Women's Aid understands and appreciates the need for a wider remit for the Children and Young People's Plan, we are concerned that some of the detail included in the previous Children's Services Planning process has been lost or diluted in both the current plan and the established structures for implementation.
- 10.3 In particular, we are concerned that some of the vulnerable groups of children and young people may be overlooked in the move to a wider remit. Previous plans identified specific groups of children and young people, including children and young people who experience domestic violence and presented clear actions and strategic priorities for each. Women's Aid is concerned that this clarity of focus and strategic attention presented in previous plans is missing in the current plan. We believe this to be a serious omission for many of these vulnerable groups.
- 10.4 We believe there is a serious absence of domestic and sexual violence, as a key issue affecting children and young people across Northern Ireland, in the main content of the plan. Domestic violence is mentioned only once and sexual violence is not referred to at all. Both should be core themes throughout the plan and cutting across all high level outcomes. This, we believe, is a critical flaw and due to this, and other concerns highlighted in our response, we cannot endorse the plan in its current format.
- 10.5 While we understand that greater detail will be provided in the action plans submitted by other structures established, we also have concerns that domestic and sexual violence is not adequately represented as a

common theme across all of these, in particular the regional sub groups. This is further explored in section 11.3.

11.0 Outcomes based planning

11.1 Women's Aid welcomes the implementation of The Northern Ireland Children and Young People's Plan at three levels, i.e.:

- Northern Ireland wide
- Health and Social Care Trusts
- Locality level

11.2 Women's Aid welcomes the development of Northern Ireland wide sub groups to address the needs of specific groups of children and young people and key issues.

11.3 Women's Aid is however seriously concerned that at present, there is not a sub group representing the needs of children and young people who are (or may be at risk of) experiencing domestic and sexual violence. Children and young people who experience domestic and sexual violence have been included in previous plans along with other vulnerable groups such as Black and Minority Ethnic Children, Children and Young People with Disability etc. While other vulnerable groups, specified in previous plans are represented in established sub groups, we are concerned; there is a serious lack of representation of domestic and sexual violence as a key issue in the sub group structures.

11.4 Women's Aid is of the strong opinion that there should be a specific sub group established to represent children, young people and domestic and sexual violence, to ensure the needs and experiences of these children and young people are represented in the overall NI wide plan.

11.5 Women's Aid welcomes the identification of four strategic themes to inform the core work of the CYPSP i.e.:

- Early Intervention
- Advising Government
- Integration of Planning
- Optimisation of Resources

11.6 Women's Aid welcomes a strategic focus on early intervention. Early intervention is a key strategic driver in the Women's Aid five year strategy for children and young people, "Our Place – Safe Space" and is reflected across all areas of service provision, in particular in the area of prevention work in schools and community settings. Women's Aid welcomes the pursuit of a Northern Ireland status as an early intervention region.

- 11.7 Women's Aid welcomes the establishment of an Advising Government Sub Group to lobby for a more integrated approach to children and young people across Government Departments.
- 11.8 Women's Aid welcomes the integration of separate planning processes and the minimisation of duplication of effort. Women's Aid welcomes the opportunities to be involved in processes at local and regional levels, to integrate planning and optimise resources. We do however question the development of action plans at operation levels such as Regional Sub Groups and Outcomes groups prior to the finalised production of the overall Children and Young People's Plan.
- 11.9 Women's Aid welcomes opportunities for representation in planning structures, including Outcomes Groups and Locality Groups. Women's Aid groups across Northern Ireland are currently represented at various levels including, Outcomes Groups, Locality Planning Groups and Family Support Hubs.
- 11.10 Women's Aid wishes to reiterate concerns about a lack of representation of domestic and sexual violence as a key issue affecting children and young people, at a strategic level through the CYPSP and once again, seek Women's Aid representation on this partnership.

12.0 Outcomes and key information on outcomes

- 12.1 Women's Aid commends the work which has already been undertaken in measuring outcomes for children and young people.
- 12.2 Women's Aid welcomes the inclusion of children affected by domestic violence as a key indicator in the delivery of the high level outcome "Living in safety and with stability".
- 12.3 Women's Aid would, however, wish to highlight that domestic violence is an issue which impacts upon all areas of children's lives and therefore cuts across all six high level outcomes presented in the overall NI Children and Young People's strategy.
- 12.4 We feel it is unacceptable that domestic and sexual violence is not presented in **all boxes** as an issue which can impact negatively in all areas of a child or young person's life.
- 12.5 "Our Place - Safe Space" Women's Aid's five year children and young people's strategy and the accompanying performance measurement system highlights how domestic violence and the services provided by Women's Aid stretch across all six high level outcomes. This is highlighted in the tables provided below.

Healthy

- Provide positive support interventions for children and young people which has the potential to have a positive impact upon the physical health and emotional well being of children and young people who are victims of domestic and sexual violence.

Enjoying, learning and achieving

- Encourage positive learning for children and young people in all aspects of service delivery.
- Provide positive interventions to enable children and young people to participate fully in education.
- Support mothers to enrol children in local schools as a priority, to ensure continuity, routine and ongoing education provision.
- Provide successful education programmes in both primary and post primary schools including "Helping Hands" and "Heading for Healthy Relationships" to promote self esteem, healthy relationships and awareness of rights.
- Provide a rolling programme of fun play and recreational activities, events and celebrations.

Experiencing economic and environmental well being

- Provide practical support to mothers who have experienced domestic violence, to improve their economic and environmental well being. This may include, housing support, advice relating to benefits etc.
- Provide a range of programmes for mothers such as "Journey to Freedom" and "You and Me, Mum", to develop confidence and self esteem and to contribute to emotional well being.
- Creation of a positive family environment for women, children and young people.

Contributing positively to community and society

- Encourage children and young people to participate creatively in service development and delivery through youth forums and models of consultation.
- Actively work in partnership with a range of agencies to ensure the voices of children and young people are heard.
- Promote positive social change and improved outcomes for children and young people who experience domestic and sexual violence.
- Provide training and peer educational opportunities for young people to enable them to contribute positively to society.

Living in safety and with stability

- Provide safe accommodation for women, children and young people who experience domestic and sexual violence.
- Provide Floating Support/outreach services to women, children and young people in the community.
- Provide role of Women's Safety Workers to support partners and ex partners and their children of men attending PBNI, IDAP perpetrator programmes.
- Provide support through MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) for high risk victims of domestic violence including women children and young people.
- Encourage children and young people to engage in safety planning through protective behaviours programmes.
- Work directly with mothers, children and young people to support them in creating a safe environment.
- Promote safe messages in schools and communities through education packages such as "Helping Hands" and "Heading for Healthy Relationships"

Living in a society which respects their rights

- Women's Aid is fully committed to this outcome, as a recurring theme, which stretches across all areas of work including, support provision, group work, partnership working and prevention work in schools and communities. Women's Aid is also committed to acting as an advocate for children's rights.

- 12.6 Women's Aid has developed a robust performance measurement system to accompany the five year children and young people's strategy "Our Place- Safe Space". This system, based upon the six high level outcomes, identifies a range of key performance indicators (KPIs) which demonstrate how Women's Aid can deliver across all six high level outcomes.
- 12.7 Women's Aid believes that views from children and young people should stand alone in the boxes presented (i.e. separate from views of parents and communities) if true participation is to be reflected.
- 12.8 We would also wish to draw attention to child contact as a serious issue that requires robust guidelines and monitoring. Contact, where domestic violence is present, can be extremely dangerous and contradicts the best interest's principle as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- 12.9 Women's Aid welcomes and commends efforts and plans to ensure the participation of children and young people as outlined in appendix 2.

While we welcome the plans which have been proposed, we would like to stress the need to protect children and young people who are vulnerable within this overall participation process. We therefore welcome the addition of this to the bulleted list provided on pg 41.

- 12.10 We believe consultation processes with children and young people who experience domestic and sexual violence are crucial and therefore seek establishment and inclusion of domestic violence theme based groups of young people in the development of participation plans.
- 12.11 While we understand the importance of including parents in planning processes, we strongly believe there is a need to put in place, effective safety and protection mechanisms to ensure the safety of children and young people.
- 12.12 Extensive research shows that children and young people are most at risk in their own home and often, it is parents who are the perpetrators of abuse. We therefore strongly advocate the completion of Access NI and additional checks to ensure participating parents are not subject to non molestation or protective orders.

13.0 Early intervention

- 13.1. Women's Aid welcomes the establishment of an Early Intervention Sub Group to take forward the actions on early intervention, oversee work on Family Support Hub development and an evaluation framework of early intervention across Northern Ireland. We anticipate a high presence of domestic violence at this level and as such, would like to see a specific mention of this in this section of the plan.
- 13.2. Women's Aid strongly believes that early intervention is crucial in relation to addressing domestic violence and supporting families. Women's Aid therefore welcomes opportunities for representation on both the Early Intervention Sub Group and the Family Support Hubs.
- 13.3. Women's Aid strongly believes that adequate funding streams must be in place to ensure effective referrals and service provision at this level. Given the serious lack of core funding and subsequent reduction in services for children and young people across Women's Aid, we would like to express our concerns about the capacity across Women's Aid to cope with the level of referrals anticipated through the Family Support Hubs. An investment in funding at this early intervention level will provide a range of long term benefits and high levels of social change for society. Given the estimated costs of domestic violence to Northern Ireland at £180 million, this crucial investment in early intervention will ultimately result in a substantial reduction in government spending in this area.

14.0 Concluding comments

- 14.1 Women's Aid would like to reiterate our serious concern that there is little reference in the plan to children and young people affected by domestic and sexual violence. There is no reference to sexual violence at all. We feel this is a serious omission and cannot, as such, endorse the plan in its current format.
- 14.2 Women's Aid is seriously concerned by the notable absence of domestic and sexual violence representation at The Children and Young People's Strategic Group. As the lead agency addressing domestic and sexual violence across Northern Ireland, Women's Aid therefore seeks representation on this partnership.
- 14.3 Women's Aid strongly recommends the establishment of a sub group with a specific remit for children and young people affected by domestic and sexual violence to ensure a clear focus on integrated planning in relation to this issue. Women's Aid welcomes opportunities to work collectively with other key agencies to progress this.
- 14.4 Women's Aid believes in the need for an integrated and holistic approach to meeting the needs of all children and young people affected by domestic and sexual violence. We therefore seek clarification on how the Children and Young People's Strategic Steering Group will link strategically to the Tackling Violence at Home Regional Strategic Steering group, in particular, the Children and Young People's subgroup.
- 14.5 Women's Aid strongly believes that adequate funding provision is crucial if the Northern Ireland Children and Young People's Plan is to be delivered successfully.
- 14.6 Women's Aid appreciates the opportunity to respond to the draft Children and Young People's Plan. We seek immediate consideration of the points we have made. We also welcome clarification in relation to how they will be considered in the review of structures and in the production of the finalised plan.

15.0 Contact details

For further information about this response please contact:

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24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline - 0800 917 1414
Open to anyone affected by domestic violence