



Federation Northern Ireland

Department for Social Development

Response to: Concordat Between the Voluntary and Community Sector in Northern Ireland

March 2011

Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland

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24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline - 0800 917 1414

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.

3.0 Women's Aid Statistics (2009 - 2010)

- 12 refuges with 300 bed spaces, playrooms and facilities.
- 1077 women and 854 children sought refuge.
- 15 resource centres for women seeking information and support; group work and training.
- 2,938 women and 3,617 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.
- In 2009/10 the 24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline, open to

anyone affected by domestic violence, managed 32,349 calls. This represented an increase of 17% on 2008/09.

4.0 Additional Women's Aid Statistical Data

- Since 1999, Women's Aid across Northern Ireland gave refuge to 13,656 women and 13,602 children and young people.
- During the last 15 years Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland managed 244,564 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.*
- Over 30% of all domestic violence starts during pregnancy. **

6.0 Domestic Violence: Crime Statistics

- Domestic Violence is a crime. PSNI statistics for 2009/10 indicate that there were more recorded crimes with a domestic motivation (9,903) than the combined total of all the following crimes (9,864). These include all recorded sexual offences (1,944), robbery (600), armed robbery (557), hijacking (119), theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle (2975), arson (1980) dangerous driving (865), handling stolen goods (226) and offences under anti-terrorism legislation (7).
- PSNI Statistics for 09/10 indicate that they responded to a domestic incident every 21 minutes of every day of the year.
- The total of 9,903 crimes with a domestic motivation in 09/10 represents an average of approximately 1 domestic crime every 53 minutes in Northern Ireland.

- The number of all recorded offences of murder in Northern Ireland in 09/10 total 18. Those classed as having a domestic motivation total 7. Therefore, 38.9% of all murders in Northern Ireland in 09/10 had a domestic motivation.
- There were 461 rapes (including attempted Rapes) in Northern Ireland in the period 2009/10.

(Source: PSNI Statistics 2009/10)

- 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.

(*Findings from the PSNI Crime Statistics Report 2009/10 N.B. “Adult” defined as aged 17 and over)

(** Women’s Aid Federation NI)

7.0. Comments

7.1 Women’s Aid Federation NI welcomes the publication of the Department for Social Development’s consultation on the Draft Concordat Between the Voluntary and Community Sector in Northern Ireland and the opportunity to comment upon the document on behalf of our ten local groups. The following comments reflect their collective views.

1. Welcome to the Consultation on the Concordat

This survey forms part of the stakeholder consultation process on the Concordat for relationships between Government and the voluntary and community sector. We have identified a number of key questions in relation to this consultation document and would be keen to hear your views.

A six week period for the submission of comments on this consultation document will extend from 13 January 2011 until 23 February 2011. A number of consultation workshops will take place across the country at the end of January and early February – details available on the DSD website at http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/voluntary_and_community.htm

DSD will collate and analyse the consultation responses. Under the Freedom of Information Act all information contained in your response may be subject to disclosure.

Following detailed consultation analysis, it is anticipated that a new Concordat for relationships between Government and the voluntary and community sector will be finalised by mid- March 2011.

If you have any queries on this survey please do not hesitate to contact:

Una Gilmore on 028 9082 9430 or by email at:

Una.Gilmore@dsdni.gov.uk

2. About you

1. Are you responding as?



An individual



On behalf of an organisation

2. Your Name

Gillian Clifford

3. Your organisation (if applicable)

Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland

4. Address

129 University Street

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3. The Approach

The following questions relate to **Section A (page 10)** of the consultation document

1. Is a new framework the right approach?

Yes

If no, what alternative would you suggest? (in no more than 100 words)

In broadly agreeing that the framework represents the right approach, we are concerned that the specific points contained in the agreement are very general. For example, point 9 includes the statement that the Concordat has been developed, “recognising the current economic environment.” It is the opinion of Women’s Aid that this is not sufficiently rigorous. There is a fundamental need for the Concordat to recognise the enormously significant impact on the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland, in respect of funding levels, need, capacity and service provision, resulting from the current programme of cuts. Similarly, the failure to recognise the direct consequences for the voluntary and community sector of the massive reduction in the workforce and services provided by the public sector represents a serious omission.

2. What actions, if any, would you add to the commitments list?

In respect of the commitment programme outlined in Annex 2, we would wish to echo and fully support the statement made in point 2 in respect of the requirement for time bound delivery.

Point 3 (ii) of the list of indicative commitments undertakes to review the terms of reference and membership of the Joint Forum which includes the Voluntary and Community Sector Panel and the Inter-Departmental Group, to reflect this new agreement and emerging public sector structures and responsibilities. Women’s Aid is of the opinion that any review must make a commitment to the on-going consideration of the gender balance on the Joint Forum. We would seek clarification as to what is meant by the phrase contained in point 3 (v), “alternative funding structures between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector.” An explanatory note in respect of the example cited, of grant-in-aid would also be welcome.

Our organisation is extremely disappointed that nothing is mentioned in respect of the need for longer-term funding cycles. We would strongly contend that there is a pressing need for funding commitments with minimum timescales of, for example, 3, 5

or 7 years. This would allow for staff retention and for the potential of projects and initiatives to be fully developed and realised and for assessment and evaluation to take place. Women's Aid agrees with and supports the commitment in point 3 (v) to work together to implement an outcome-focussed approach to funding. However, we would urge that Government is mindful of the imperative for the Community and Voluntary sector to be supported and that there is a recognition that whilst some areas of work such as the 24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline, does broadly fit within an outcome-focussed approach, the nature of the work carried out by the sector as a whole, does not always readily lend itself to new outcome structures. There is also a need to ensure that funding maintains core continuity in respect of service provision.

Point 3 (vii) makes the commitment to, "work together to remove the duplication of services, systems or overheads where this exists." Our organisation would contend that if Government wants to do this resources need to be put in place to facilitate the process.

In respect of point 3 (viii) which gives an undertaking to maximise opportunities for Voluntary and Community Sector participation in procurement processes, Women's Aid would question whether this is opening the door to organisations, such as our own, tendering, at a lower cost, to provide services previously provided by the public sector. We are equally concerned that this commitment may mean that the work carried out by the Voluntary and Community Sector will be open to private sector procurement with no ring-fencing. It is our view that this would have an enormously damaging impact.

We fully support the embedding of Full Cost Recovery as outlined in point 3 (ix). However, we are of the opinion that point 3 (x) which commits to providing opportunities, "for the Voluntary and Community Sector to influence and examine the impact of government policy," is extremely vague. There is a fundamental need for the sector to have full participation and partnership in government bodies. As such, Women's Aid believes that there is considerable merit in exploring existing successful methods of strategic delivery such as Tackling Violence at Home, the Government's strategy to address domestic violence in Northern Ireland, which takes a multi-agency, cross-departmental approach to delivery against agreed action plans.

We would request much greater detail on point 3 (xi) regarding the potential for community asset management and ownership in Northern Ireland and clarity on what is proposed by this. Women's Aid welcomes the stated commitment in point 3 (xii), "to explore and develop processes whereby Concordat non-compliance can be addressed and note with disappointment that this did not happen with the 1998 Compact.

4. Independence of VCS

The following questions relate to **Section B (page 10)** of the consultation document.

1. Does the Concordat go far enough in safeguarding the independence of the voluntary and community sector?

Yes

If no, what changes would be required?

In the context of point 2 of The Agreement and in particular the statement that Government, “recognises and values highly the importance of volunteering and civic participation where individuals contribute actively to the development of their communities and to meeting the needs of others in a way which is complementary and of equal importance to financial investment,” Women’s Aid would wish to stress that at times our work and indeed that of the wider sector, may run contrary to the needs of financial investors and this should not be penalised. There is a fundamental need to ensure the independence of the Voluntary and Community Sector. We would also suggest that the aforementioned statement should also recognise the pillar of the public sector and the key and complementary relationship which exists with the Voluntary and Community Sector.

Our organisation would suggest that an alternative should be found to the use of the term “a *better* civil society” in point 4. It is our opinion that “better” is an inappropriate and subjective term in this context. We would also recommend that in addition to the statement in point 7 that, “There is a need to grow philanthropy, build capacity and capability and help ensure that decision making and policy development is evidence based,” it should be stressed that key services should be maintained.

5. Accountability of VCS

The following questions relate to **Section C (page 10)** of the consultation document.

1. Does the Concordat go far enough in making the voluntary and community sector accountable?

Yes

If no, what changes would be required?

Women's Aid would suggest however that there is a need to provide the sector with the help and resources necessary for mergers, consolidation, capacity building and training.

6. The Agreement and the wider public sector

The following questions relate to **Section D (page 10)** of the consultation document.

The Concordat should be relevant and applicable to the wider voluntary and community sector. However, the level of engagement of individual organisations with the Concordat depends on their relationship with public bodies.

1. Is the Concordat relevant and applicable to the wide range of organisations that make up the voluntary and community sector?

Yes

If no, who is excluded and what would need to change in Concordat to secure their engagement?

Women's Aid is concerned that there may be a danger of smaller organisations slipping under the radar. There is a necessity that the Concordat take cognisance of the needs of these organisation and provide benefit for them.

2. What further steps need to be taken to ensure that the Concordat is adopted and implemented by organisations in the public sector beyond central government, including organisations in the Health, Education and local Government sectors?

Women's Aid would suggest that there is a need for Ministerial Directives to ensure that the Concordat is fully adopted and implemented.

7. Content

The following questions relate to **Section E (page 10)** of the consultation document.

1. Is there anything missing from the Concordat that you would like to see included?

Yes

If yes, please explain below.

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Our organisation is of the opinion that the Concordat should contain a review of the current funding situation. There must be agreement on the key/core work which must be maintained in the long-term. In particular there is a need to address the lack of infrastructure and funding and resources available to groups such as those providing support to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community.

2. Are there sections of the Concordat that could be added to, amended or removed?

If so, please explain below.

There is a need for a training budget, particularly in the context of capacity building. In respect of point 10 of the Agreement which states that the Concordat creates a framework for, "smarter and different funding mechanisms," Women's Aid would seek clarification as to what specifically is meant by this phrase.

8. Equality Implications

The following questions relate to **Section F (page 11)** of the consultation document.

1. Do you believe there are any equality impacts from the Concordat proposals? If so please explain your views.

Women's Aid hopes that there will be positive equality outcomes from the Concordat proposals. We would however stress once again the need to ensure gender balance in any composition of fora or associated bodies going forward. It is also important that the equality impact of the Concordat should be kept under review.

9. Further Comments

Do you have any other comments on the consultation document?

Women's Aid would wish to welcome the publication of the draft concordat, which has been long awaited and would urge that it not be allowed to drift into obscurity and irrelevance but should have the necessary commitment and momentum to become a living document with relevance and practical application to the experience and work of the sector.

For further information about this response contact:

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