



Federation Northern Ireland

RESPONSE TO DSD SUPPORTING PEOPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

June 2009

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24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline - 0800 917 1414

Core work of Women's Aid: Background information & statistics

1. 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. 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. Women's Aid Statistics (2007 - 2008)

- 12 refuges with 300 bed spaces, playrooms and facilities.
- 1102 women and 896 children sought refuge.
- 15 resource centres for women seeking information and support; group work and training.
- 24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline managed 24,153 calls.
- 2,205 women and 1,831 children accessed the Floating Support service enabling women to access support whilst

- remaining in their own homes and communities.
- 2,767 children and young people accessed protection and support services.
- Move-on houses for women and children leaving refugees.

4. 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”;
- Domestic Violence is a crime. PSNI statistics for 2008/09 indicate that there were more recorded crimes with a domestic motivation (9,211) than the combined total of all the following crimes (9,155). These include all recorded sexual offences (1,943), robbery (650), armed robbery (508), hijacking (125), theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle (2,954), arson (2,002) dangerous driving (746), handling stolen goods (220) and offences under anti-terrorism legislation (7).
- PSNI Statistics for 08/09 indicate that they responded to a domestic incident every 22 minutes of every day of the year.
- The number of all recorded offences of murder in Northern Ireland in 08/09 total 24. Those classed as having a domestic motivation total 7. Therefore, 29.2% of all murders in Northern Ireland in 08/09 had a domestic motivation.
- There were 381 rapes and 23 attempted rapes in Northern Ireland in the period 2008/09.

(Source: PSNI Statistics 2008/09)

- Official sources (NISOSMC) estimate that up to 80% of sex crimes are not reported.
- 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, 76% of adult victims of domestic crimes recorded by the PSNI in 2007/08 were female.*

- Over 30% of all domestic violence starts during pregnancy.**
- 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.

(*NIO Statistics & Research Branch Bulletin 16/2008 “Experience of Domestic Violence: Findings from the 2007/08 Northern Ireland Crime Survey, 2008, pg.2. N.B. “Adult” defined as aged 17 and over)

(** Women’s Aid Federation NI)

Women’s Aid Federation NI welcomes the publication of this Supporting People Policy Evaluation and the opportunity to comment upon it on behalf of our ten groups.

DSD Supporting People Policy evaluation

Questionnaire

The Department for Social Development DSD Housing Division is carrying out a policy evaluation of the Supporting People programme to assess whether the administration of the programme has met its intended policy objective.

The objective of the policy evaluation is to assess whether Northern Ireland Housing Executive’s administration of the Supporting People programme funding has met the Policy’s stated objectives which are;

- A programme that delivers quality of life and promotes Independence,
- Services that are of a high quality, strategically planned, cost effective and complement existing care services,
- Planning and development of services that are needs-led,
- A working partnership of Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Probation boards, Health and Social Services, service providers and housing associations.

The Department is interested in your views in particular what has helped deliver supporting people services and what actions can be taken to improve

We would be happy to receive your responses electronically to the issues outlined below as soon as possible or by the deadline of Friday 8th May 2009 at the very latest.

Please use the title 'DSD Supporting People Policy Evaluation' and send them to Patricia.mcbride@dsdni.gov.uk or post to

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Name: Gillian Clifford

Organisation: Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland

Role: e.g. provider, joint management partner

Provider

Contact details: are you happy for us to follow this up with you if necessary? YES

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From your experiences of the Supporting People programme, and the housing related support services that it funds, please give us your views on the following areas.

Please don't hesitate to contact a member of the project team for advice if anything here is unclear. (See our contact details at the end if we are not immediately available)

The section at the end allows you to add any further comments that you would like to contribute:

a) What has worked well?

Please give examples of improvements for service users where possible.

Our groups have commented on the excellent working relationships they have established with Supporting People. This has allowed them to grow their organisations to meet the needs of service users. Examples include:

- Growth in the numbers of staff,
- The employment of night workers in refuges, giving 24 hour refuge staff cover
- The establishment of a funded Floating Support/Outreach Service to keep those women not in refuge, safe in their own homes and communities
- Improvements in the level of geographical cover, including rural areas
- This has made support services more widely available and accessible to greater numbers of women

In addition, groups have commented that risk assessments have worked well at time of admission, as staff are better able to assess eligibility at the point of admission. Groups were also positive about the clear and documented policies and procedures such as the complaints procedure for service users which is available within the Welcome Pack and assists them to understand the process and what to expect if they have complaints/concerns regarding service delivery.

The QAF process was considered to have provided the impetus to review the quality of all services, including policies, procedures, recording and monitoring. This resulted in a number of key improvements. These included greater user involvement and consultation, better mapping of services provided (including any gaps) and statistical proof of the volume of service provided.

Health and safety monitoring and risk assessments were seen as helping to provide a safe environment (communal and individual room) which meets required standards. Similarly, individual needs assessments and support plans empower service users to fully participate in discussing and implementing practical tasks and obtaining support in the areas they deem necessary and to make progress towards moving on and out into the community.

One of our groups commented on having achieved financial accreditation and felt that the Supporting People Finance Team had been extremely helpful from the outset, which has been vitally important, particularly in the context of submissions and processing of payments.

b) What were the key factors that contributed to these successful outcomes?

For example: partnership working, service user involvement, joint commissioning

Our groups highlighted Support Plans and ongoing Support Plan Reviews as having been an excellent means of ensuring each individual women's needs and risks are identified and addressed with her and regularly reviewed. Having the plan written,

provides something concrete for service users to work towards and to see and experience the success of accomplishing actions, achieving outcomes and achieving goals.

Successful partnership working has led to joint commissioning of new and innovative services. One of our groups identified specifically an initiative which introduced a PSNI/Women's Aid worker, based in a number of Police Districts and jointly funded by Supporting People, PSNI and the Health Trust, One Stop Shops and a scoping study of services designed to identify gaps in service provision and to address those gaps, funded by Supporting People.

Additional praise was given to the improved links with other Supporting People Providers where women experiencing domestic violence hear about our services and can be referred in.

In respect of health and safety monitoring/building risk assessments, service user involvement provides their perspective and highlights areas of concern. Successful outcomes can also be attributed to partnership working to meet health and safety legislation.

c) What has not worked well?

Please give examples of the impact on vulnerable people where possible.

Among the issues identified by our groups was that the total cost of providing refuge does not come from Supporting People. Women's Aid must also negotiate with Housing Benefit (communal areas in refuge) and the Health Trusts (children). The total funding should ideally be streamlined from one source and should not be dependent on whether or not a woman qualifies for Housing Benefit. There is a concern that if a woman who is unable to receive Housing Benefit is asked to pay the refuge rent herself, she may return to the high risk situation from which she came.

Concern was also raised in respect of risk assessments, specifically that if other agencies are not familiar with, or not comfortable with the information sharing process, this can work against potential service users. In addition, files and paperwork can be very time consuming for staff and service users, depending on the issues the service user has to deal with/work through. It was noted by one of our groups that women who feel vulnerable and insecure, can and do feel very intimidated by the file/paperwork and will not address certain issues. They fear that certain information may ultimately be used against them, particularly in the Court process. This can on occasion, put women at a considerable disadvantage in accessing the most appropriate and most valuable services. This fear can hang over a service user for the entire time she uses the service.

d) What changes would you like to see and who should be responsible for making these changes?

The following comments are representative of the views expressed by our groups:

- More face to face contact and dialogue between Supporting People and groups. This could provide a forum for discussion, progress and addressing concerns and would contribute to effective partnership working.
- The introduction of the new outcome framework will better demonstrate the true value of the support provided by Women's Aid, in particular the journey travelled by individual women.
- Streamlining the process of record keeping and reducing the amount of duplication
- Enhancing Floating Support Services, particularly in rural areas of Northern Ireland

e) We are keen to use any case studies that have led to improvements in Supporting People programme delivery – particularly in how these have positively impacted on services users. Please detail these below.

One of our groups identified that women in employment, can access support and group work after hours. This enables them to remain safely in the community and in their workplace.

f) Anything else that you would like to add?

For further information about this response contact:

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