



Federation Northern Ireland

RESPONSE TO

NIO Consultation Local Partnership Working on Policing & Community Safety: A Way Forward

May 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 supporting women in their own home.
- 2,767 children and young people accessed protection and support services.
- Move-on houses for women and children leaving refuges.

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 consultation on Local Partnership Working on Policing and Community Safety: A Way Forward and the opportunity to comment upon it on behalf of our members, many of whom are representatives on Community Safety Partnerships and District Policing Partnerships across Northern Ireland.

Comments:

Women’s Aid representatives would wish to highlight a number of issues which, it is felt, should be addressed in advance of the establishment of an integrated partnership between CSPs and DPPs. We would also wish to preface our comments by expressing our concern at the timing of the consultation, in light of the proposed devolution of policing and justice in Northern Ireland. We are of the general opinion that this matter would be best dealt with in the context of devolution, when a Minister of Justice has been appointed. It would appear somewhat pre-emptive to move towards an integrated structure which may subsequently be rejected.

We acknowledge however, that there is a need for issues to be addressed in light of the Review of Public Administration and in particular the creation of new councils in 2011. Similarly we recognise the potential that integrated partnerships may afford, for greater cohesion and a more streamlined operational structure.

- It is our view that there are areas in Northern Ireland which may represent examples of best practice in respect of effective partnership working.
- These areas should be identified and best practice should be consolidated and standardised across Northern Ireland.
- Examples of best practice include the integration of the management structure, in which the CSP Manager is line managed by the DPP manager, in the same location.
- This affords the potential for additional savings in administration costs.
- Regular updating of action plans between the CSP and DPP.
- Coordination, consultation and integration of action plans and strategic planning.
- Partnership working on community initiatives, projects and media campaigns.
- Women's Aid representatives have however identified a number of constraints to more effective integration of work plans and practices.
- These include the separate governing bodies responsible for the CSPs and DPPs, coupled with differing roles and functions within the respective bodies.
- In addition there are legislative, funding and budgetary issues that constrain effective integration.
- There is currently no legislative underpinning to CSPs, for example.
- We note that the consultation document acknowledges that, "There is a degree of overlap between the functions of DPPs and CSPs, notably around engagement with local communities and the identification of local priorities. There is also public confusion about the respective roles of two district-level partnerships." (Pg.6)
- Given the nature of the work carried out by Women's Aid, we question whether the projects currently funded by CSP will sit comfortably within the new proposed structures.
- In particular, the small funding resources which many voluntary sector groups avail of, including many Women's Aid groups, may not fit within

policing plans and their stipulated outcomes, e.g. a reduction in reported crime.

- This would run contrary to one of the key objectives of our organisation, namely works toward *increasing* the level of reporting of domestic violence.
- CSPs have larger and broader themes to plan programmes under.
- Whilst a number of CSPs and DPPs already work closely together, the consultation document does not give any clear guidance as to how CSPs without this type of close working relationship, would be expected to change so radically in such a short period of time and what processes could be put in place to facilitate this.
- The approval by the NIO Community Safety Unit, of CSP working plans for the next two years, until 31st March 2011, somewhat limits the extent to which CSPs and DPP will be able to work together on joint projects going forward.
- Similarly we have concerns in of respect membership, accountability and resources.
- In respect of accountability, the monitoring function must be maintained however there is a lack of detail on the role of the monitoring board.
- It would also appear from the model in Annex C, that lines of accountability are somewhat diverse.
- To ensure effective working and reporting practices and to avoid confusion, it is suggested that this structure should be much more clear and concise.
- There also appears to be some duplication of roles and responsibilities.
- The model in Annex C appears to suggest that the monitoring board will duplicate the work of the Community Safety Unit (CSU) by monitoring the work of the delivery group.
- Women's Aid representatives consider it essential that community based initiatives designed to address crime in local areas, should be managed at a local level.
- Greater consideration should therefore be given to the mechanisms for maintaining accountability at a local level.

- We would request greater clarity in respect of the term “Regional HQ” contained in the model on Page 33 (Annex C).
- Consideration should also be given to the possibility of an independent body undertaking the oversight function.
- The membership of an integrated partnership should reflect a representative cross-section of the community and include members from the voluntary, community and statutory sectors as well as elected representatives.
- In turn, the position of chair of the proposed amalgamated partnership should similarly be open to members from the voluntary, community and statutory sectors, as well as elected representatives.
- The issue of financial remittance in respect of DPP and CSP members must be addressed in the context of any integration proposals.
- We support the view that the practice of remunerating DPP members but not CSP members is iniquitous and not consistent with the principle partnership working.
- We are also concerned that beyond the proposal to amalgamate the posts of DPP Manager and CSP Manager, there is no clarity as to how expenditure on administration will be reduced.

For further information about this response contact:

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