



Federation Northern Ireland

The Department for Employment & Learning

A Response to: Pathways to Success:
Establishing an initial broad strategic
direction and supporting cross-
Departmental actions to reduce the
number of young people most at risk
of remaining outside education,
employment or training (NEET)

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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 2010/11 indicate that 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 10/11 indicate that 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 10/11 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 10/11 total 20. Those classed as having a domestic motivation total 7. Therefore, 35% of all murders in Northern Ireland in 10/11 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.

(*Findings from the PSNI Crime Statistics Report 2010/11 N.B. "Adult" defined as aged 18 and over)

(** Women's Aid Federation NI)

7.0. Comments

7.1 Women's Aid Federation NI welcomes the publication of the Department for Employment and Learning's Pathways to Success and the opportunity to comment upon the document on behalf of our ten local groups. The following comments reflect their collective views.

8.0. Strategic Focus

8.1 Our organisation supports the core elements of the strategic approach, specifically a co-ordinated set of actions and resources designed to reduce the numbers of young people aged between 16 and 19 who are not in education, employment or training and who are at most risk of remaining there long term; and the focus on longer term preventative measures for those in other age groups and on designing a mechanism to manage the integration of both sets of measures.

8.2. We agree that what is required to address these issues is a cross Departmental, multi-agency approach, capable of rigorous evaluation, with the Department for Employment and Learning taking the lead, which brings together the key strategic approaches being undertaken by other Departments including the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety and the Department of Education.

8.3. It is therefore a source of considerable disappointment that whilst the DHSSPS's Families Matter strategy is referenced in point 2.5 Pg.8, no specific mention has been made in the consultation document of the cross-Departmental, multi-agency Tackling Violence at Home Strategy designed to address domestic violence in Northern Ireland, jointly lead by DHSSPS and the Department of Justice.

8.4. This is particularly troubling as there appears to be a specific focus within the consultation document, on earlier prevention measures (2.7, Pg.8) and on addressing identifiable barriers to participation. (2.9, Pg.9) The failure to clearly identify domestic violence as a barrier represents, in our opinion, a serious omission.

8.5. Domestic violence is characterised by a process of systematic isolation, providing a context within which the perpetrator can carry out acts of sustained violence and abuse, which can be physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and/or financial in nature.

- 8.6. The Tackling Violence at Home strategic document (2005) estimates that the overall cost of domestic violence to the economy in Northern Ireland could be in excess of £180 million per year. This figure is based on estimates of lost earnings, absenteeism and reduced productivity.
- 8.7. It is impossible to accurately assess the overall number of women in Northern Ireland whose long term careers, academic potential and life chances have been and indeed are currently being severely limited, as a direct result of having experienced domestic violence, either as a witness to the violence and abuse or having sustained it directly at the hands of a perpetrator.
- 8.8. It is estimated that 11,000 children are living with domestic violence in Northern Ireland on a daily basis. PSNI statistics for 2010/11 indicate that 897 children under the age of 18 were the victims of a recorded crime with a domestic motivation in Northern Ireland.
- 8.9. Whilst this figure is in itself deeply disturbing, it is important to note that domestic violence remains a substantially under-reported crime.
- 8.10. It is the professional experience of Women's Aid over more than three decades that many women who use our services report being actively prevented by the perpetrator, from seeking and maintaining employment. Others speak of being unable to continue at College or University as a result of the violence and abuse they have been subjected to.
- 8.11. Whilst responses to witnessing violence and abuse can vary substantially among children and young people, with some continuing to actively and successfully participate and engage in education, training and employment, a substantial number find it impossible to thrive whilst living with a violent, chaotic and disrupted home life.

9.0. Current and Planned Strategic Actions

- 9.1. It is in this context that the absence of any reference to domestic violence and its impact, in the list of major risk categories outlined in point 4.6. (Pg.21) is a source of considerable concern to our organisation.
- 9.2. It is a serious and fundamental error, in our view, to discuss, in the context of those young people not in education, employment and training, issues such as economic disadvantage and homelessness, without acknowledging that 700 families per year are rendered homeless as a direct result of domestic violence and that many young

people in Northern Ireland flee their homes to escape violence and abuse.

- 9.3. Similarly, in the context of those young people who have committed crimes, in evidence to the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety, (Hansard, 18th February 2010) Mr Andrew McQuarrie representing the Youth Justice Agency stated, “Domestic violence and abuse is one of a complex range of risk factors that can be linked to a young person’s likelihood to reoffend. However, research in other jurisdictions highlights a disproportionately high number of young people in the juvenile justice system who live in homes that are characterised by adversity, neglect, physical abuse and domestic violence. Statistics are not readily available on the links between domestic violence and young people who offend in Northern Ireland. However, several themes can be noted from a range of individual cases that have been referred to the Youth Justice Agency.”
- 9.4. We would also contend that underlying issues such as the presence of domestic violence must also be considered with respect to the link between parental economic inactivity and young people being in the NEET category for longer periods of time. (Point 4.7, Pg.21)
- 9.5. Women’s Aid would strongly recommend that any provision of better information for monitoring and tracking individuals must address those who have experienced domestic violence and this should be fully reflected in the exploration of options for cross-Departmental research on the development of a tracking system for young people not in education, employment and training (Pg.23).
- 9.6. In the context of both Planned Interventions and Prevention we would wish to highlight that our organisation is pro-actively engaged in both early years and early stage interventions and would cite our age appropriate, preventative education programmes delivered to both boys and girls, in schools and community settings.
- 9.7. For example, Women’s Aid’s highly regarded “Helping Hands” Programme, delivered at the early years stage, assists young girls and boys to recognise that they have a right to feel safe and that others have a right to feel safe around them and to understand that there is nothing too big or too small that they can’t talk about it.
- 9.8. In this context, the programme also helps young children to identify who they might go to if they had any worries or concerns. The programme is also underpinned by Social Guardian Training, which is designed to ensure that there are key individuals within the community,

such as teachers, who are fully trained to recognise and identify risk factors and to signpost to appropriate support services wherever and whenever necessary. Women's Aid also carries out similar preventative education work with teenagers and young people, which explores healthy relationships.

- 9.9. It is our strongly held opinion that this work is vital both in the context of preventing domestic and sexual violence and in providing support to those who have experienced it but also in identifying other forms of violence and abuse such as bullying, which is identified as a key risk factor for young people in the NEET category, in point 4.6 (Pg.21). It also provides a context of mutual respect and communication which has the potential to produce long-term benefits. It is therefore essential that this important and enormously valuable work is fully supported and resourced.

10.0. Initial Plans for Further Work

- 10.1. In noting the strategy's commitment to working with the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland (2.20, pg.12), it is essential that any attempt to map existing good practice, should identify projects and initiatives currently being carried out by the sector.
- 10.2. Additionally, organisations such as Women's Aid should be consulted and involved in further programmes of research, in the formulation of recommendations as to further specific actions which need to be developed to reduce the numbers of young people who are in the NEET category and the design of an interventions toolkit. (Pg.45)

11.0. Steering and Implementation Mechanism

- 11.1. In the context of the establishment of a delivery mechanism, Women's Aid would welcome more detail on the proposed Steering and Implementation Group (SIG) and associated sub-groups and on the selection of stakeholder representatives and expert input. Our organisation is of the strong opinion that we should be afforded an opportunity to actively participate on and contribute to these bodies going forward. (Pg.47)

For further information about this response contact:

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