



Federation Northern Ireland

RESPONSE TO

The Department of Justice Consultation

Arrangements for Notification of Sex Offenders from Jurisdictions Outside the UK

May 2010

Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland
129 University Street
BELFAST BT7 1HP

Tel: 02890 249041

Fax: 02890 239296

General Email: info@womensaidni.org

Website: www.womensaidni.org

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 (2008 - 2009)

- 12 refuges with 300 bed spaces, playrooms and facilities.
- 1058 women and 890 children sought refuge.
- 15 resource centres for women seeking information and support; group work and training.
- 2,814 women and 2,753 children accessed the Floating Support service enabling women to access support whilst remaining in their own homes and communities.

- 2,753 children and young people accessed protection and support services.
- Move-on houses for women and children leaving refuges.
- In 2008/09 the 24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline open to anyone affected by domestic violence, managed 27,663 calls. This represented an increase of 14% on 2007/08
- Volunteers are a core part of the Helpline team: throughout the year they contributed a total of 3,268 hours to the service, an average of 9 hours per day, 365 days of the year

3.1. Additional Women's Aid Statistical Data

- During the last 10 years Women's Aid across Northern Ireland gave refuge to 12,579 women and 12,748 children and young people
- During the last 14 years Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland managed 212,215 calls to the 24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline

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 (2954), arson (2002) 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 in Northern Ireland in the period 2008/09, 23 attempted rapes and 1,134 crimes classified as sexual assault/sexual activity.

(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 Arrangements for Notification of Sex Offenders from Jurisdictions outside the UK and the opportunity to comment upon it on behalf of our members. The following comments reflect their collective views.

5. Comments:

- Women’s Aid supports the very real and pressing need to require sex offenders from jurisdictions outside the UK to register upon entry to Northern Ireland.
- We fully support the proposal that sex offenders from all EU member states should be subject to the same notification arrangements on arrival in Northern Ireland.

- We are of the strong opinion that the process of registration should not be delayed but should instead be undertaken immediately upon entry to Northern Ireland.
- Women's Aid is concerned that the three day window for registering, presents a potentially very serious risk for offending to take place during this time period.
- We welcome the cross-border co-operation between the PSNI and AGS in respect of notifying in writing persons upon conviction, release from prison or annual notification, of their obligations to notify the police should they intend to stay in either jurisdiction for a period more than 3 days. (Pg.10)
- However, we would welcome greater detail as to how the new policy will be communicated to law enforcement officials and other key stakeholders in jurisdictions outside the UK and Ireland and how the system will be monitored.
- This is particularly important as its success would appear to be predicated on offender awareness and effective communication between law enforcement officials and jurisdictions.

For further information about this response please contact:

Gillian Clifford
Policy & Information Worker
Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland
129 University Street
BELFAST BT7 1HP
Tel: 028 9024 9041

info@womensaidni.org

Website: www.womensaidni.org

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