



Federation Northern Ireland

RESPONSE TO

Draft Northern Ireland Children's Services Plan 2008-2011 Consultation

September 2008

Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland
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24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline - 0800 917 1414

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.

Women's Aid services across Northern Ireland include:

- 12 refuges with 300 bed spaces, playrooms and facilities.
- 1104 women and 902 children sought refuge in 2006 - 2007
- 12 resource centres for women seeking information and support; group work and training.
- 24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline 0800 917 1414
- Move-on houses for women and children leaving refuges.
- Floating Support for women staying at home.
- Training on domestic violence and related issues.
- Inter-agency work across Northern Ireland.
- Young Person's Development Project.

The following response is based on consultation with Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland and our ten local Women's Aid groups. The term Women's Aid refers to the Federation and the local groups.

Women's Aid welcomes the publication of this consultation on the Draft Northern Ireland Children's Services Plan 2008–2011 and the opportunity to comment upon it.

1. **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Domestic violence is one form of 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”.
- Women are not passive victims of domestic violence. With support women have the capacity to cope with and survive the violence and abuse they experience.
- Domestic Violence is a crime. PSNI statistics for 2007/08 indicate that there were more recorded crimes with a domestic motivation (9,283) than the combined total of all the following crimes (9,254). These include all recorded sexual offences (1,822), robbery (607), armed robbery (444), hijacking (92), theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle (3,336), arson (2,244) dangerous driving (513), handling stolen goods (191) and offences under anti-terrorism legislation (5).

2. **Core Work of Women’s Aid**

The core work of Women’s Aid in Northern Ireland, including the Federation and local Women’s Aid groups is:

- To provide refuge accommodation to women and their children.
- 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 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.



DRAFT NORTHERN IRELAND CHILDREN'S SERVICES PLAN 2008-2011. CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE.

As Chairs of the four Area Children and Young People's Committees we would very much value your response to this draft Northern Ireland Children's Services Plan 2008-2011.

This is the first Children's Services Plan for the whole of Northern Ireland, and is being presented by the four Area Committees jointly. We see this as a framework plan, to be used to inform regional and local planning for children and young people. It does not include all our knowledge on needs, nor all our intentions for the planning process for the years 2008-2011.

We would be very grateful for feedback on the following questions and any other information that you wish to provide.

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Organisation

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CHAPTER 1

This sets out the foundations we believe are necessary for effective planning and commissioning.

- 1) Is this chapter clear? Yes
- 2) Are you happy with the overall structure and content of this chapter? No
- 3) If not, please provide suggestions for improvement

Women's Aid is concerned that the figure of 3.5million (pg.11) earmarked by the DHSSPS for family support services, does not adequately fund this vital provision. In addition, we are concerned that no figures have been outlined for the provision of additional services proposed in the document. Priorities must be costed and adequately funded.

Chapter 2

The purpose of this chapter is to provide guidance for local and regional Children's Services Planning groups as well as individual agencies on:-

- A core set of indicators for each of the outcomes set out in '*Our Children and Young People: our Pledge*'.
- Priority areas for action regarding each outcome.

4) Are these the right indicators to show how each outcome is progressing?

Yes

We would be grateful if, in particular, you could consider

a) Whether there are better indicators to reflect rights, and

b) Whether there are qualitative measures or processes that you could suggest which would capture the feedback from children, young people and families.

Please see our comments below on Statistics.

Chapter 3

This chapter sets out

- a) Indicators by which to measure progress for specific groups of vulnerable children and young people. These will be used alongside the indicators in Chapter 2
- b) Strategic drivers across agencies
- c) Regional themes for 2008-11.
- d) Local Area Children and Young People's Committee Actions for 2008-09

5) We would be grateful if, in particular, you could consider

a) Are these the right indicators for each group of children and, in particular, are there better indicators which could reflect rights, and qualitative measures or processes which would capture the feedback from children, young people and families?

No

b) Are there are other strategic drivers that are not included?

Yes

c) The regional themes and local priorities identified for each specific group – are these right or are there others that should be included?

Yes

d) The actions which will be taken forward in 2008-09 in your area – are these the right ones or are there others that should be included?

Yes, in respect of the Eastern Area.

If you answered no to any of the questions above please use the space below provide suggestions for improvement

GENERAL

- In respect Black and Ethnic Minority Children (Pg.25), it is essential to highlight children with limited or no recourse to public funds. Specifically in the section entitled, “Experiencing Economic & Environmental Wellbeing,” we recommend the inclusion of the Key Indicator, “Numbers of Children living in households with limited or no access to public funds.”
- In addition, under “Living in a society which respects their rights,” Women’s Aid queries the use of the term “Refugee” and suggests that the use of the phrase, “Children with insecure immigration status,” would be more appropriate.
- In respect of Children Affected by Domestic Violence (Pg.33), Women’s Aid recommends the inclusion of the following Strategic Developments: Safeguarding Board NI, SSI and “Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge – a ten year strategy for children and young people in Northern Ireland 2006-2016” (OFMDFM)
- Under Key Indicators, “Enjoy Learning and Achieving,” (Pg.33) we recommend amending the first indicator to read, “Number of a schools that have child protection policies that recognise Domestic Violence.”
- Also in respect of Children Affected by Domestic Violence (Pg.33) Women’s Aid “No Fear Package” should be changed to “Heading for Healthy Relationships.” Women’s Aid publications, “You and Me Mum” and “Helping Hands,” should also be mentioned.
- Women’s Aid queries the indicator “Number of Non Molestation Orders” under the category “Living in Safety and Stability” as this statistic gives no indication of the number of children behind the statistic.
- Women’s Aid publication, “Transformers” should also be highlighted under “Living in Safety and Stability.” (Pg.33)

- We also query how the statistic of the “% of children on CPR where DV is a feature in the registration,” will be collected?
- Women’s Aid recommends that the indicator, “Number of Children in Women’s Aid refuges at point in year,” should read, “Number of children in Women’s Aid refuges each year.” In addition, we query whether this statistic will include the children of women who could not be accommodated in refuges?
- We recommend the inclusion of the indicator, “Number of children accommodated by Women’s Aid refuges, reached through outreach, accessed by floating support or unable to be accommodated, in a year.”
- The category, “Experiencing economic and Environmental well being,” should include the statement, “Number of children whose families are in receipt of benefits or who have limited or no recourse to public funds.”
- Under “Contributing positively to community and society,” we recommend the inclusion of the indicator, “Number of children engaged in programmes supporting rights and responsibilities e.g. Women’s Aid, “Helping Hands.” Also, “Number of children and young people being consulted around DV services.”
- Under “Priority themes to be addressed regionally 2008-2011” (Pg.34) Prevention: Point two should read, “Training on domestic violence included within child protection training for teachers and allied education professionals.”
- In respect of the statement, “Regional guidelines should be developed for schools,” Women’s Aid seeks clarification, as the organisation has already published guidelines in this regard.
- Support: To include, “Understanding the needs of children in Northern Ireland.”
- The regional roll-out of MARAC
- The statement, “The regional commissioning of training should be addressed for all professional groups. *In line with the Regional Training Strategy.*”
- The statement, “Review of training currently ongoing within *all agencies.*”

- Protection and Justice: To include, Men Overcoming Domestic Violence (MODV/Intervention Domestic Abuse Programme IDAP programmes to be available *and* to incorporate support of children (both Court and non-Court mandated.)
- Regional guidance/procedures Guardian ad Litem, *Social Workers, Court Children's Officers and family Group Conference Facilitators.*
- Women's Aid publications, "Protective Behaviours" and "Helping Hands" should both be mentioned under "Safeguarding." (Pg.43)
- The category of "Safeguarding" should also include the number of unallocated cases.

Do you have any other comments about the plan in general?

- Women's Aid welcomes the publication of the Draft Children's Services Plan 2008-2011. We are however concerned that the regional provision of services has the potential to create a "postcode lottery" in respect of service provision.
- We strongly believe that clarification is necessary on who should be the lead body on the vital issue of children affected by Domestic Violence. In particular, should precedence be given to the Regional Steering Group or Children's Services Planning?
- We also note that many of the issues outlined cut across each other, for example Domestic Violence and Homelessness. This further illustrates the position of Women's Aid that there should be an integrated strategy in Northern Ireland to tackle Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women.
- It is our view that there must be cross-departmental and multi-agency sign up and adequate funding provision, if the proposals are to be delivered successfully.
- Women's Aid must have involvement in the proposed Gateway Teams for the purpose of consultation and resilience building.
- Women's Aid is also concerned by the absence of CPS planners on the Regional Steering Sub-Groups and believes this represents a serious omission

Thank you for taking the time to respond please return your comments to your local CSP Planner:-

<p>John Duffy Children's Services Planner Eastern ACYPC 12 – 22 Linenhall Street BELFAST BT2 8BT 028 9055973 email:jduffy@ehssb.n-i.nhs.uk</p>	<p>Anne Hardy Children's Services Planner Northern ACYPC County Hall 182 Galgorm Road BALLYMENA BT42 1QB 028 2531 1208 email:anne.hardy@nhssb.n- i.nhs.uk</p>	<p>Ann Godfrey Children's Services Planner Southern ACYPC Tower Hill ARMAGH BT61 9DR 028 3741 4616 email:anngo@shssb.n-i.nhs.uk</p>	<p>Gerry Conway Children's Services Planner Western ACYPC 15 Gransha Park LONDONDERRY BT47 6TG 028 71860086 email:gerry.conway@whssb.n- i.nhs.uk</p>
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