

**Consultation response to**

**Strategic Plan 2013 – 2018**

**Northern Ireland Adult Safeguarding Partnership  
(NIASP)**

**27<sup>th</sup> June 2013**

**Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland**

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**24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline - 0800 917 1414**

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Text **support** to 07797805839

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**CONSULTATION RESPONSE PRO FORMA**  
**Northern Ireland Adult Safeguarding Partnership**  
**Strategic Plan 2013-18**

**Q1. The Strategic Plan sets out 7 themes for the actions necessary to improve services to safeguard adults at risk in Northern Ireland.**

**Do these broad themes reflect what is needed to be done to improve these services?**

Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland welcomes the publication of the NIASP Strategic Plan 2013 – 2018, and the opportunity to comment on it on behalf of our local groups. We support the introduction of this strategy and are committed to working in partnership to ensure that the strategy is fully implemented.

We note that the inter-departmental policy statement on adult safeguarding is due to be published for consultation in 2013 (p 4), and that NIASP acknowledges that definitions may be subject to change as a result of this consultation (p 6). We look forward to the publication of the draft inter-departmental policy statement, and to contributing to this consultation in the future. For this reason we will reserve any comment on those definitions until that consultation process has been completed.

Women's Aid is mainly satisfied that the 7 outlined themes appear to reflect what is required to be done to improve adult safeguarding in Northern Ireland, and to provide a logical framework for carrying this work forward. Our chief concern relates to the linkage between this strategy and the Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse strategies that are currently in the process of merging, to ensure that there is synergy and cohesion between them and that the strategies and accompanying action plans complement each other.

**Q2. Do you consider the themes to be appropriate and relevant?**

Yes, we consider the themes to be both appropriate and relevant. However it will also be important to ensure that the correct actions are identified by partner organisations to take this work forward under the themes, and that sufficient resources are made available to do so.

### **Q3. Are you content with the wording and scope of the themes?**

Women's Aid commends the emphasis placed on working with partner organisations, and the primacy of ensuring that partner organisations "recognise adult safeguarding as part of their core business and have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities" (p 14). To ensure that this happens in practice however, the steps that organisations must take to develop their role in adult safeguarding should be set out more clearly and in greater detail in this strategic plan.

We would question the wording used in the document stating that NIASP will "continually review" NIASP and LASP structures. The phrasing here is vague and potentially either places an onus on NIASP to constantly review its structures, which would be unfeasible, or not to have a committed timeframe to review them at all, which does not commit NIASP to regular review at all. Women's Aid would recommend that the wording is changed to "annually review", in order to provide a reasonable and workable timescale for such reviews.

We note that the strategy also highlights the development of local community-based plans, and the intention to "develop more sophisticated prevention activities which will also... target specific 'hard to reach' groups such as migrant workers or members of black or minority ethnic groups. Whilst we agree with the sentiment, we are concerned that there is no mention of those who are hard to reach as they have no recourse to public funds, or how NIASP will ensure that this protective safety net covers everyone, regardless of immigration status or recourse to public money.

We would also suggest that the wording used on page 16, stating that the referral process will "support whistle blowers", should be strengthened. In our view, more attention should be dedicated to the protection of whistle blowers within this strategy, as their ability to report abuse is key to the protection of vulnerable adults.

### **Q4. Are you content with the actions included within the themes?**

### **Q5. Are there other actions that should be included?**

We are largely content with the actions included within the themes. We have however identified several gaps under the 'Leadership and Partnership Working'

theme, and strongly suggest that additional actions are included to address these gaps.

We suggest that the actions “Work with the Regional Strategic Group on Tackling Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse” and “Work with Local Domestic Violence Partnerships (LDVPs)” are added to the list of actions under the Leadership and Partnership Working theme.

## **Q6. Are you content with the timescales identified in the Implementation Plan?**

There are several timescales that we believe should be amended to ensure that the Implementation Plan is delivered optimally.

- ‘Public Awareness and Prevention’ theme:

We suggest that the timescale for “Develop linkages with other public protection awareness raising campaigns such as Domestic and Sexual Violence, Human Trafficking and Community Safety to ensure that adult safeguarding is an integral part of such programmes” (p 23) should be amended. The timescale ‘By the end of Year 5’ is not specific enough, does not contain a start date for beginning to work on this objective, and is much too long considering the importance of linking with these campaigns. For this Strategic Plan to effectively complement the related work on domestic violence, sexual violence, human trafficking and community safety, these linkages should begin to be cultivated in Year 1, with the aim to have linkages fully established by Year 5.

- ‘The User Experience’ theme:

We would suggest that the objective to “Clarify the interface between adult safeguarding and other public safety strategies such as the Domestic and Sexual Violence Strategies so that the potential for confusion and duplication is minimised” should be carried out as a matter of priority in Year 1, then reviewed in Year 2. It stands to reason that clarification of this kind should be one of the first objectives to be tackled, as it will both minimise duplicated work and facilitate the synergy of adult safeguarding and domestic & sexual violence protection work.

## **Q7. Are there any aspects of the Strategic Plan that you consider could be made clearer or easier to understand?**

We have no additional comments.

## **Equality Screening**

**We have undertaken a screening of the plan in respect of equality and human rights issues.**

**Q8. Are you satisfied with the outcome of this screening exercise?**

**Q9. If you have any additional comments please tell us?**

We have several additional comments to make on the equality screening exercise.

Under section 1.4 on 'Other policies or decisions with a bearing on this policy or decision', we note that the Tackling Violence At Home and Tackling Sexual Violence strategies (pending merger) are absent from this list. Given the link between domestic violence, sexual violence and adult safeguarding, we believe it is important that these strategies are included on this list.

Under section 2.1 on data gathering, there is no mention of evidence gathering relating to domestic violence, although there is mention elsewhere of such data having been gathered and used to inform this consultation. We recommend that any data relating to domestic or sexual violence are listed under this section, both to reflect the importance of domestic and sexual violence-related issues in the field of adult safeguarding and to improve the substance of the equality screening document.

Under section 2.3, within the Gender category, we note that there is mention of domestic violence and how it primarily affects women. However, though this has been identified within the screening document, no further data or information about domestic violence is included here, nor is there any analysis of what equality issues emerge out of this under the Strategy.

In section 2.3, under the Marital Status category, we would query the inclusion of police attending domestic violence incidents under this category alone. Domestic violence incidents are not confined to marital relationships, but in fact occur across the complete spectrum of intimate and familial relationships, including those that have ended.

Under section 2.5 relating to future actions to promote equality of opportunity, we are concerned that there is not sufficient linkage in this section with what is already in place to assist victims and protect vulnerable adults. It is crucial that there is a clear understanding of the expertise already in place to help vulnerable adults such as victims of domestic and sexual violence and how the strategy should fit with these existing mechanisms and work with these experts to promote equality of opportunity. There should be recognition within the equality screening that the Strategy's implementation will involve following best practice that is already in place and working in partnership with expert groups to ensure best equality outcomes.

Finally, we do not believe that this Strategy should be subject to a full EQIA. If the Strategy is adhered to correctly in its implementation, it has the potential to make a very positive equality impact. Any negative equality ramifications would only arise if the Strategy is not fully integrated with the Domestic Violence & Sexual Violence

strategy.

For further information about this response please contact:

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## **Appendix A – Information about Women’s Aid Federation NI & Domestic Violence**

### **About Women’s Aid**

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.

## **Core work of Women's Aid**

The core work of Women's Aid in Northern Ireland, including Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland and 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.

Throughout this consultation response, the term "Women's Aid" is used to reflect the overall Women's Aid movement in Northern Ireland, which is made up of our local Women's Aid groups and Women's Aid Federation. All local Women's Aid groups are members of Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland. Each Women's Aid group offers a range of specialist services to women, children and young people who have experienced domestic violence.

## **Women's Aid statistics (2011-2012)**

- 12 refuges with 300 bed spaces, playrooms and facilities.
- 831 women and 586 children sought refuge.
- 15 resource centres for women seeking information and support; group work and training.
- 3,663 women and 4,152 children accessed the Floating Support service, and a further 1,909 women accessed other Women's Aid outreach services, enabling women to access support whilst remaining in their own homes and communities.
- Move-on houses for women and children leaving refuges.
- The 24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline, open to all women and men affected by domestic violence, managed 43,949 calls.

#### **4.0 Additional Women's Aid statistical data**

- Since 1999, Women's Aid across Northern Ireland gave refuge to 15,545 women and 14,942 children and young people.
- During the last 17 years Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland managed 326,809 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 DOJ, 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 (Source: PSNI Statistics 2011/12)

- Domestic Violence is a crime. PSNI statistics for 2011/12 indicate that there were more recorded crimes with a domestic motivation (10,387) than the combined total of all the following crimes (10,327) – all recorded sexual offences (1,836), shoplifting (6,201) and theft of a motor vehicle (2,290).
- PSNI Statistics for 11/12 indicate that they responded to a domestic incident every 21 minutes of every day of the year.
- The total of 10,387 crimes with a domestic motivation in 11/12 represents an average of approximately 1 domestic crime every 51 minutes in Northern Ireland.
- The number of all recorded offences of murder in Northern Ireland in 11/12 total 16. Those classed as having a domestic motivation total 3. Therefore, 19% of all murders in Northern Ireland in 11/12 had a domestic motivation.
- There were 553 rapes (including attempted Rapes) in Northern Ireland in the period 2011/12.

(Source: PSNI Statistics 2011/12)

- Official sources (NISOSMC) estimate that up to 80% of sex crimes are not reported.