



See



Hear



Act

A strategy for children and young people (2019 – 2029)

Produced by

women's aid

Federation Northern Ireland



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See, Hear, Act

A strategy for children and young people (2019 – 2029)

Women's Aid NI Federation Northern Ireland 2019



Children and young people's thoughts on what adults can do to support them and be a social guardian...

Every child is so different (*including siblings*) and each experience is so individual.

Let us open up when we are ready.

Don't put pressure on us to talk about things.

Just be there for us when we need you.

Don't underestimate what we know.

Treat us as an equal, try not to be condescending or talk down to us.

Tell us you believe us and show us you care.

Do what you can to keep us safe.

Listen to us and make us feel you have time.

Children and young people's key messages for other children and young people who are going through domestic violence...

There will always be light at the end of the tunnel, some tunnels are just longer than others.

There are people out there who really want to help you, find them and talk to them.

Things will get easier.

The pain will always end at some point.

It happens to more people than you know. Just because people don't talk about it doesn't mean it's not happening.

You are NOT your parents and there is nothing to say you will turn out like them.

When you are ready, it is good to talk to someone.

Foreword by Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People

“History will judge us by the difference we make in the everyday lives of children” Nelson Mandela

It is an honour to write the foreword for this important strategy as it seeks to fulfil the rights of an, until recently hidden group of children and young people. As NI Commissioner for Children and Young People, I am tasked to safeguard the rights of all children and young people.

Across a number of articles, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child not only establishes the rights that should be enjoyed by children and young people but also makes explicit the responsibilities placed on Government and statutory authorities to realise these rights. These include Article 19 which highlights that all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures should be taken by Government to protect children from all forms of abuse. Article 39 states that Government should take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration where a child has suffered any form of neglect, exploitation or abuse. It notes that this should take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.

One of the successes of Women’s Aid and its previous strategy, Our Place- Safe Space, is that children and young people affected by domestic violence are higher up the agenda than they have been in the past. See, Hear, Act seeks to build on that and has very helpfully identified in some detail how it will meet the NI Government outcomes for children as enshrined in the Children Services Co-operation Act, 2016 and the draft Children and Young People’s Strategy, both of which are implementation mechanisms for the UNCRC.

Led by our Health and Social Care system, Northern Ireland is determined to become a “trauma informed” society by seeking to prevent, identify and address Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). It is now recognised that living in a home where there is domestic violence is an adverse childhood experience that, if not addressed, will have poor outcomes for young people.

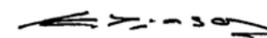
The challenge for all legislation and supporting strategies is to turn words into deeds and outcomes that make a tangible difference to the lives of children and young people. The See, Hear, Act strategy is laying out a road map to realising these rights and aspirations for children and young people who experience domestic violence. It contains the very detail necessary to ensure that these children live in safety and stability.

The See, Hear, Act strategy is not only rooted in and informed by the work that Women’s Aid and their partners have been undertaking with children and young people directly over a number of years, but is also based on the experiences and hopes of children and young people themselves which has been so well portrayed in the See, Hear, Act report, which is where the real story can be found. A story, which begins with the stark reality of children’s lives but ends with their enormous optimism and hope.

I congratulate Women’s Aid Federation NI and all 9 Women’s Aid groups for the magnificent way they respond to the needs and experiences of the children and young people that they serve. It is right that children and young people have a place where they can be safe as they heal and come to terms with what has happened to them and their family. But it is also right that we all work to make sure that these services are never needed in the first place.

This strategy is Women’s Aid’s promise to these children.

Koulla Yiasouma
NI Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY)



A word from the Chief Executive Officer

I feel very proud to introduce this wonderful strategy which has children and young people at the heart. There is often not a great deal of awareness about the work Women's Aid delivers to children and young people, in fact I often feel it is our best kept secret. It is important to note however, Women's Aid has always been committed to being the best we can be for children and young people. This is reflected from our very first ever core aims, developed in 1975, one of which was "to care for and support the emotional needs of the children involved".

As an organisation, we have come a long way since then and our services for children and young people have developed and expanded in terms of types of services offered and geographical spread. We know the huge difference tailored services and trauma informed approaches can have on the life of a child who has lived with domestic violence. I am so proud of the services each of the nine Women's Aid group's deliver to all children and young people who come through the door. Each child will be warmly welcomed, listened to, empowered and most importantly, they will have a safe space where passionate staff are completely committed to meeting their needs.

One of the biggest strengths of working as a collective is the potential and opportunity to share and build upon best practice and that is perhaps one of the most exciting opportunities we look forward to

harnessing over the next ten years. Across our groups, we have exciting programmes and projects such as Teenlink, Voices groups, Transformers and a wide range of other fantastic initiatives including preventative education at primary and post primary levels, which we can share and build upon across all our nine Women's Aid groups.

Whilst we have come a long way there is still much to be done and this strategy sets out our plans to create a movement of change for children and young people affected by domestic violence. For too long, children have been regarded as merely witnesses in domestic abuse situations. We know that is not the case. All domestic violence is underpinned by coercive, controlling behaviour and children repeatedly tell us about the on-going fear and toxic stress they have lived with in the home. We believe the time is right for all society to sit up and listen and to See, Hear and Act for children.

It is opportune to develop this strategy at this time, given the current acknowledgment of ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences). Women's Aid has always recognised domestic violence as having a potential adverse effect on a child's life, so with increasing evidence of this, we believe it is time, not just to label the issue but to address it.

This strategy sets out our commitment to be the best for children and young people,

It is our promise to them. However, for us to live up to this promise we need to see a significant funding investment across all our children's services. There has never been core regional funding to support children affected by domestic violence. This has to change. Every government department has a responsibility to children and young people and we want them all to get on board and work with us to better support children affected by domestic violence – it's the right thing to do!

Sarah Mason
Chief Executive Officer (Interim)
Women's Aid Federation NI



Comments from children and young people about why there is a need for children's and young people's services

It helps to keep us safe, now and in the future.

It's not just adults that go through it, children suffer as well.

No one judges you in Women's Aid.

Young people need support, they need someone to help them through it as well someone who knows the issues and understands their experiences.



It's good to have a safe place to share.

It gives you tools for the future, like how to keep yourself safe and it builds your confidence.

Sometimes our mums are so busy trying to cope with their own worries, it's difficult for them to support us.

It breaks down the stigma about mental health and domestic abuse.

We can all learn from each other.

Sometimes we don't want to worry our mums. We hold it in and try and protect them because they have enough on their plate and that's not good either. It's good to have someone outside the family to support us, someone who isn't involved to talk to.

They help you with your problems.

We know we are all here for each other and we support each other.

They let you tell your story and they listen to your story.

They let you talk about your feelings. Everything is confidential.

Women's Aid helps you to control your emotions like when you feel angry.

We learn how to play nice and not be mean.



You get to help in Women's Aid and do things that will make a difference for other people - like today!

You get to make new friends.

They look after the children and the women too!

It helps you to realise that there are other children and young people in similar situations.

You see that you're not alone.

When I first came to my new house I felt worried because I didn't know this place but when I met all my new friends I felt safe. I was here for some while but now I am happy and safe and so much better!
Thank you
Girl age 8

Thanks for listening



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Supporting documentation:

See, Hear, Act

Book of Children and Young People's Voices

Produced by Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland, February 2018

Section 1

Introduction and background



An informed approach

PSNI statistics show that police respond to a domestic violence incident every 18 minutes of every day¹...children will often be present when these incidents occur. New research² shows that worldwide 1 in 4 children under the age of 5 live with a mother who has been a recent victim of partner violence.

Women's Aid NI has a long and successful history, spanning over 40 years, of meeting the needs of children and young people who experience violence in the home, their needs have been recognised in our core aims from the very beginning. We recognise that most often the best way to support children and young people is to support their mothers/carers through the provision of a range of services, including refuge provision and support in the community. That being said, we also recognise the need for more focused support for children and young people and we have a range of specialist support services and programmes, specifically designed to meet the needs of children and young people who have been affected by domestic violence.

In the year 2017 – 2018, Women's Aid NI provided refuge to 717 women and 485 children. 6,784 children benefited from outreach support provided to their mothers and 6,390 one to one sessions were held with children and young people in refuge, resource centres and in the community. 10 babies were born to women in refuge. These figures are increasing on a yearly

basis as we develop our services for children and young people.

This strategy has been developed by Women's Aid NI to bring about positive change for children and young people. As well as an extensive consultation with children and young people, it has been informed by an open and inclusive process of consultation, with children's services staff (our Women's Aid Children's Champions) and senior management across Women's Aid NI. It has also been based upon the evaluation report from the conference, **See, Hear, Act**, held on 6th and 7th February 2018 in Stranmillis University College Belfast.



The strategy builds upon the successful collaborative and innovative work that has developed as a result of the previous strategy for children and young people, **Our Place – Safe Space**. This has been achieved with funding from Children in Need to promote regional working.

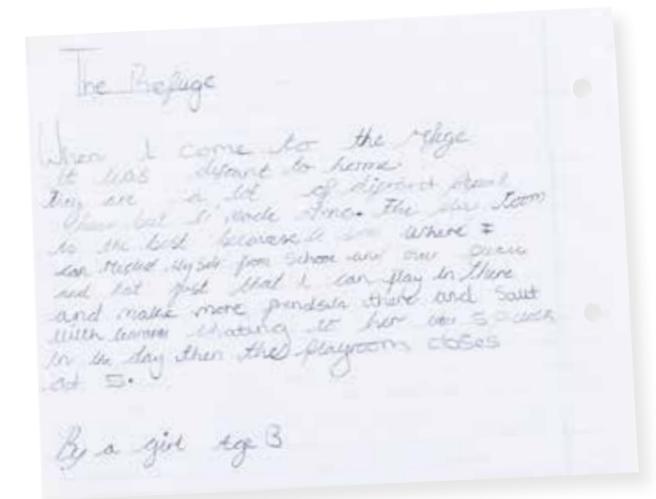
The strategy is based upon a "think regionally, act locally" model and sets out the regional priorities for the next ten-year period, providing a standardised framework for Women's Aid NI to effectively respond to

the needs of children and young people and to be the best it can possibly be for them.

Often the smallest victims of domestic violence are the biggest. Domestic violence is recognised as an adverse childhood experience (ACE). It impacts upon all areas of children and young people's lives, including, health, education, the development of relationships, recreation and social activities with wide ranging effects that will differ for every child/young person. Safe Lives research³ drawing upon 877 cases of children exposed to domestic violence revealed that ¼ children living with high risk DV were under 3 years old. It highlighted that children suffer serious multiple physical and mental health consequences:

- 52% had behavioural problems
- 52% had problems with social development and relationships
- 39% had difficulties in school
- 60% felt responsible for the negative events

Women's Aid NI calls for full recognition of children and young people as equal victims of domestic violence. We want to see a collective strategic response to meet their needs at individual, community, organisation and government levels. Children and young people have a voice and want to be heard ...we believe it is time to **see, hear and act** for all children who are living with domestic abuse.



³CAADA (February 2014) In Plain Sight: Effective help for children exposed to domestic abuse, CAADA 2nd National Policy Report

A strategic approach

Women's Aid NI is committed to being the best we can be for children and young people, we believe they deserve the best. We want to provide a safe place for every child/young person who uses our services, a place where they can get support without stigma. We want to provide high quality services, informed by children and young people that effectively respond to and meet their needs. We want their experience of Women's Aid NI to be positive, supportive and one they will remember for the rest of their lives. We are also committed to creating social change and to empowering and supporting everyone to play their role to make a difference for all children and young people, because our belief is that **everyone can do something**. We understand that we must continuously review our services, in consultation with children, young people and mothers/carers, to ensure we are getting it right.



#SeeHearAct
What will you do?



The key drivers for the development of the See, Hear, Act strategy are as follows:



Participation

Listen to children and young people and embed participation of children and young people fully in the culture and ethos of organisation.



Strategic direction

Present clear direction for future development of services in response to need.



Advocacy

Put children and young people's experiences of domestic violence high on the public agenda. Ensure their voices are heard!



Best practice

Strive for excellence in the development of innovative services, based upon the needs, rights and hopes of children and young people.



Sustainability

Enhance sustainability of current services and enable further capacity building and service expansion.



Improved outcomes

Ensure children and young people experience positive outcomes as a result of Women's Aid NI support services.

A children's rights approach

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Women's Aid NI strongly believes that every child has fundamental human rights, including the right to a life free from violence, and to express their opinions and to have those opinions heard. This strategy fully endorses all rights as contained in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and has been developed upon this foundation, giving full attention to the areas of protection, provision and participation. It deals with the child's specific needs and rights in relation to domestic violence and the promotion of healthy, non-abusive relationships. It seeks to promote articles 12 and 13 that emphasise children and young people's rights to having their voice heard in all decisions affecting them.

Article 12

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views, the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child

Article 13

1. The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.⁴

This strategy provides a clear focus upon these articles and provides an overview of how Women's Aid NI works to implement and embed them in the delivery of children and young people's services.

The Northern Ireland Children and Young People's Strategy

Women's Aid NI welcomes the publication of the **Children and Young People's Strategy 2017-2027**⁵ (Consultation Document) produced by the Northern Ireland Executive, Department of Education. We believe this is a significant development for children and young people in Northern Ireland and has the potential to bring about positive change in terms of policy development, service delivery and cross departmental working. Women's Aid NI fully endorses the proposed aim of the Executives Children and Young People's Strategy.

"To work together to improve the well-being of all children and young people in Northern Ireland - delivering positive long-lasting outcomes."

⁴UNCRC text; <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>

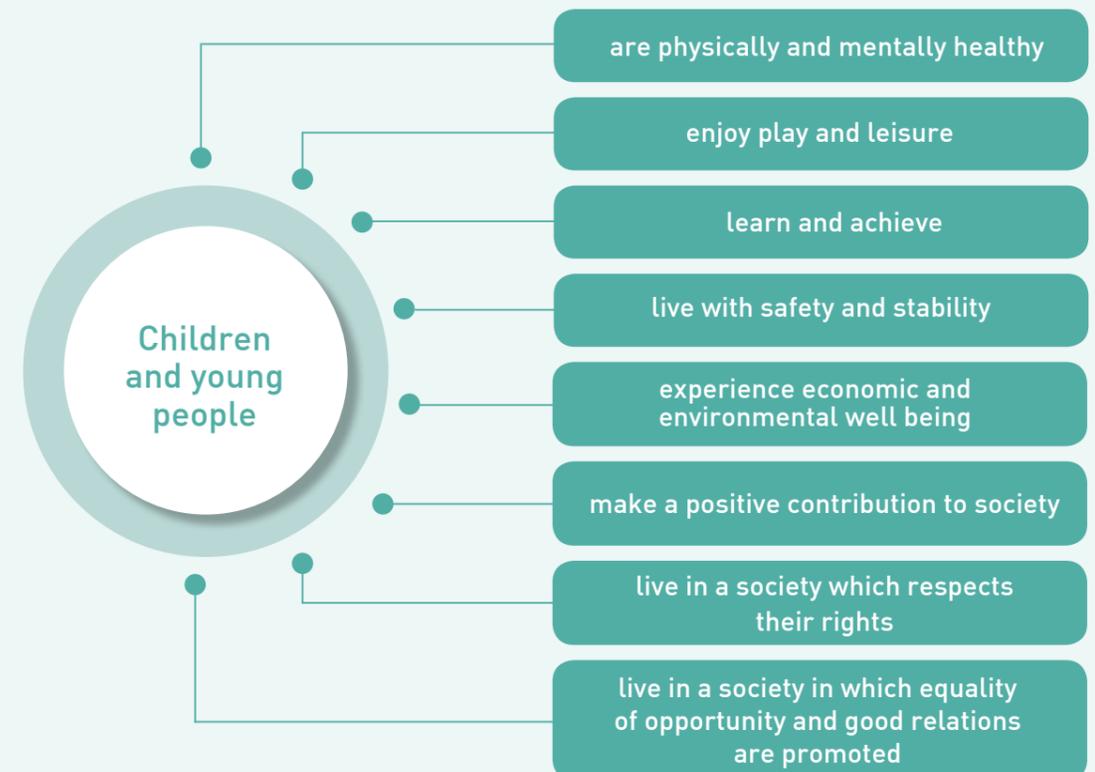
⁵Northern Ireland Executive, Department of Education (December 2016) Children and Young People's Strategy 2017-2027 (Consultation Document) Working together to improve the well being of children and young people living in Northern Ireland, delivering positive, long lasting outcomes



We especially endorse the focus upon working together to improve outcomes for children and young people in Northern Ireland. We are delighted that one of the important drivers for the strategy is the Children's Services Cooperation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015. Women's Aid NI welcomed this Act as perhaps the most significant legislative development relating to children in Northern Ireland for many years.

We believe the ten-year Northern Ireland Children and Young People's Strategy can be the main vehicle to drive forward this legislation, placing obligations on Departments and Agencies to co-operate with each other to improve outcomes for children and young people. Women's Aid NI recognises the role it must play in ensuring the outcomes of this long-term strategy are achieved in the work it does with families on a daily basis. Women's Aid NI is committed to contributing to all of these high-level outcomes and as such, we have benchmarked our vision and plans for the delivery of services to children and young people in relation to these.

The draft government strategy presents a framework of 8 high level outcomes for children and young people as follows:



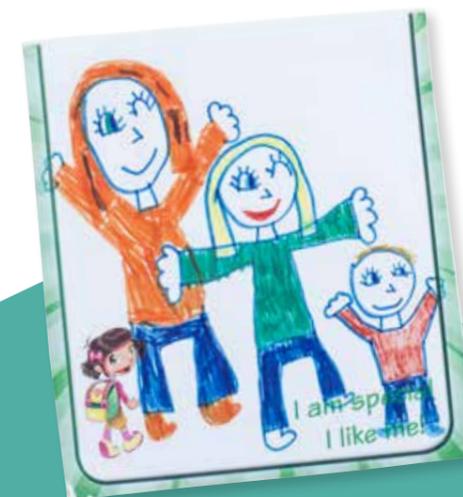
A joined-up approach

Women's Aid NI recognises, to achieve our vision of eliminating domestic violence, a commitment to a shared process across all relevant departments and agencies, is required. Supporting children and young people affected by domestic violence requires an integrated approach, as well as the combined skills, commitment and responsibilities of all government departments, criminal justice agencies, education providers, local domestic violence partnerships and relevant voluntary and statutory organisations. We are committed to working collectively to ensure every child affected by domestic violence has access to support. We want to be part of a wide network of social guardians (key adults in a child's life) who are committed to making a difference and improving outcomes for children.



Comments from children and young people about what they like best about Women's Aid

- * Seeing the staff and spending time with them.
- * Doing crafts and making things.
- * Baking buns.
- * Having peace to do homework and getting help with homework.
- * Talking about things and having fun.
- * Art and making slime.
- * The atmosphere.
- * The people (both the young people that attend and the staff).
- * Being understood and feeling welcomed.
- * Confidentiality.
- * Everyone listens, no one talks over one another, and everyone gets their word.
- * The food - pancakes with nutella! Snacks and hot chocolate.
- * Individual sessions (group is not for everyone).
- * Icebreakers.
- * It's a safe place.
- * Being able to share with others.
- * Valued support and encouragement.
- * Making new friendships.
- * Feels like and made to be like home.
- * Doing Helping Hands.
- * Talking about feelings, talking about safe places and talking about when it is fun to feel scared.
- * Having craic.
- * Talking to our friends, laughing with our friends, playing with our friends.
- * We get toast (lovely).
- * Talking about the different types of abuse and talking about how to keep ourselves safe.
- * I can talk better with my mum now.
- * Learning about OH! OH! Feelings.
- * It gives me a feeling that I am allowed to share.
- * I like that you get to do art and outdoor play time.
- * There's all different things to do, it's not always the same, but it is always fun.
- * It's not all work.
- * I like that I feel safe here.



It's like a second family.

Section 2

Vision, values, outcomes, commitments and actions



Our Vision:

A society where all children and young people are safe, supported and surrounded by social guardians who will listen to them, build their confidence and encourage them to be the best they can be.

Our Values:



Provide

Children & young people with support & guidance, tailored to their age & individual needs



Protect

Children & young people from harm



Listen

And believe what children & young people say



Accept

Children & young people as they are



Involve

Children & young people, where possible, in decisions which impact on their lives



Nurture

Positive family & social relationships



Promote

Children & young people's rights as paramount



Encourage

Children & young people to have fun



Respond

To children & young people equally, as individuals & independent of their parents



Create

An environment that promotes emotional warmth, stimulation & enables children & young people to thrive



Strive

To promote best practice



Build

Resilience to reduce risk and increase safety

Comments from children and young people about what could be better about Women's Aid

I think we should do Helping Hands more often.

I think all children should get a chance to do Helping Hands because it goes through everything you need to know and it helps you to talk about things better.

Awareness raising about drugs and alcohol and internet.

- Teach our mums self-defence.
- Help children with their education.
- Get bigger chains.
- Go on more trips.
- Have weekend activities.

Translate information into different languages.

Have a worldwide Helping Hands Academy.

Women's Aid should have a book club for 4-10 year olds.

Gather inspirational quotes from young people who have been through the services and display them in the room (in nice frames) for other young people to show them there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Have information in places where young people are so they are getting messages about healthy relationships everywhere they go!

Have more posters of Women's Aid in the community and advertise on TV.

Put slides and swings out the back of Women's Aid and astro turf for football.

I don't think it could be any better. I like it the way it is.

- Warn children about the internet.
- Have a phone app for children and young people.
- Have more online information for children and young people's services on the website.

I don't think it could be any better. I like it the way it is.

Have a poster campaign for young people to raise awareness (of healthy relationships, respect and consent).

Have different types of people and organisations come in to speak to the children.

- Everyone could have their own pencil case and doodle pad.
- A more colourful child friendly room - fun scenery that makes you feel happy.
- Have a better outdoor play area with good outdoor play equipment.

- Do more arts and crafts and drama
- Put some of our artwork up around the room
- More promotion on social media
- Help children and young people to be more confident
- Check all the jigsaw puzzles before they get put out

Women's Aid should do more visits to schools.

Do more colouring in, have more colouring in equipment.

Organise the toys in a better way - Have more and better toys.

- Have a suggestion box so we can put ideas and thoughts in it. Maybe outside the room for confidentiality
- Have the group on a Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday, not just Wednesday
- Involve children and young people in fund raising for Women's Aid and other charities

Let the children help to plan the activities to help with their integration.

Have information to take home (so we can look over it and share it with our mums).

There should be a talking room in schools (for children to go and talk about their feelings).

- Women's Aid should visit educational facilities, schools, colleges etc. to talk and to teach.
- Start off each group with an inspirational quote (could be from someone in the group).
- Have different foods, not pizza all the time!

Our role in delivering the NI Strategy for Children and Young People

Government outcomes:

Women's Aid commitments:

Children and young people are physically and mentally healthy

We will provide effective support interventions for children and young people, in refuges, communities and education settings to develop resilience and promote physical and mental health and well-being.

Children and young people enjoy play and leisure

We will encourage all children and young people engaged in our services to participate in a range of age appropriate play, social and recreational activities.

Children and young people learn and achieve

We will work to ensure every child/young person in our service benefits fully from education. Additionally, we will build teachers capacity to be social guardians and to deliver our preventative education programmes in schools.

Children and young people live with safety and stability

We will provide a safe place for all children and young people who use our services and strive continuously, to reduce risk and promote the safety and stability of all families we work with.

Children and young people experience economic and environmental well-being

We will work with families to ensure they have access to information, resources and support necessary to promote their economic and environmental well-being.

Children and young people make a positive contribution to society

We will empower and support children and young people to be active citizens who can challenge social injustice and become champions for change.

Children and young people live in a society, which respects their rights

We will develop our work upon a strong foundation of children's rights as laid out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Additionally, we will be relentless children's rights advocates, working tirelessly to ensure the rights of children and young people who experience domestic violence are understood and addressed.

Children and young people live in a society in which equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted

We will promote healthy, respectful, relationships in all our work and continue to advocate for a society where there is equality of opportunity for all.





High level outcomes, commitments and actions

High-level outcome:

1. Children and young people are physically and mentally healthy

Our commitment

We will provide effective support interventions for children and young people in refuges, communities and education settings to develop resilience and promote physical and mental health and well-being.

What we will do (actions):

- See every child and young person as the unique, special and amazing individual they are and help them to recognise their strengths, talents and capabilities.
- Work continuously, through group and one to one work with children and young people, to promote good mental health, build self-esteem and develop resilience.
- Develop and deliver a range of personal development group programmes for children and young people, to build self-esteem, confidence, promote mental well-being and develop resilience.
- Explore alternative methods to developing resilience and promoting mental well-being in children and young people such as yoga, mindfulness etc.
- Recognise professional limitations and ensure effective referral to external services where specialist support is required (e.g. CAMHS).
- Work in partnership with schools and other agencies to lobby for effective mental health services and highlight the urgent need to reduce waiting lists for services.
- Work in partnership with mothers/carers to build their capacity to promote physical and mental well-being of their children.
- Build clear referral pathways with local GPs and dentists to ensure prompt registration for families who are new to an area and to promote children and young people's physical and mental health.
- Promote healthy routines, including good nutrition and physical exercise across all our services.
- Lobby for the commission and completion of effective Northern Ireland based research into the impact of domestic violence on children and young people's physical and mental health.





High-level outcome:

2. Children and young people enjoy play and leisure

Our commitment

We will encourage all children and young people engaged in our services to participate in a range of age appropriate play, social and recreational activities.

What we will do (actions):

- Encourage children and young people to have fun, relax and enjoy their time in Women's Aid.
- Provide opportunities for children and young people to develop friendships and establish support networks.
- Provide a rolling programme of fun, play and recreational activities, events and celebrations, especially during holiday periods.
- Introduce a range of mediums such as art, drama, music etc. to encourage creativity and develop confidence.
- Ensure playrooms across all refuges and community centres are maintained to the highest standards and used to their full potential.
- Support mothers/carers to engage in play activities with children and young people, to build relationships and re-establish attachments where domestic violence has had an impact.

- Develop outdoor play spaces at refuges and community centres to ensure children and young people can engage in external play and social opportunities.
- Identify opportunities to link in with other organisations and groups (especially across Women's Aid) to extend friendships and develop further opportunities for play and leisure.





High-level outcome:

3. Children and young people learn and achieve

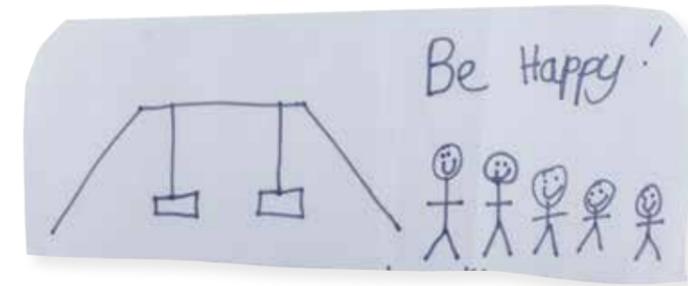
Our commitment

We will work to ensure every child/young person in our service benefits fully from education. Additionally, we will build teachers capacity to be social guardians and to deliver our preventative education programmes in primary schools.

What we will do (actions):

- Promote positive learning for children and young people in all Women's Aid services and activities.
- Support mothers/carers to maintain routines and promote stability for children and young people, especially in relation to education.
- Build robust working partnerships with local schools to ensure prompt school registration for children and young people who are new to a geographical area.
- Provide homework support for all children and young people who need it, in both refuge and community settings.
- Work in partnership with Department of Education to continue to build upon and sustain the success of our preventative education work across NI.
- Build upon the success of our Helping Hands programme in primary schools and continue to expand our network of teachers trained as Social Guardians who are supportive, vigilant and trauma informed.

- Prioritise the development and roll out of a regional, standardised post primary education programme for young people to increase awareness of abuse in relationships, explore issues such as consent and promote healthy behaviours and attitudes.
- Work in partnership with schools, to share information when appropriate and to promote referrals and support provision.
- Explore opportunities for provision of Women's Aid direct support in school settings to pupils who have been identified as victims of domestic violence.
- Advocate and lobby for the introduction and roll out of the Operation Encompass Initiative into schools across NI.



High-level outcome:

4. Children and young people live with safety and stability

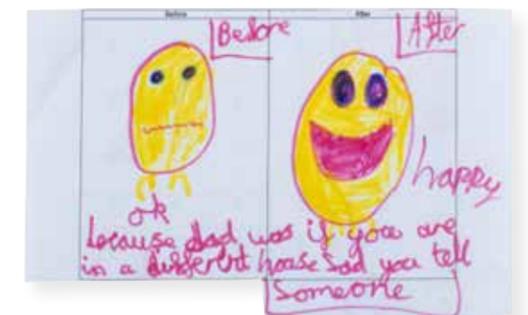
Our commitment

We will provide a safe place for all children and young people who use our services and we strive continuously, to reduce risk and promote the safety and stability of all families we work with.

What we will do (actions):

- Provide safe temporary accommodation for women, children and young people who have experienced (or are at risk of experiencing) domestic violence.
- Provide floating support/outreach services to women, children and young people in the community.
- Support and empower our network of children's champions (Women's Aid Children's Services Staff) and develop regional approaches to share best practice.
- Work to reduce risk through strong partnership working with Health and Social Care Trusts, to develop effective joint protocols in relation to early intervention for families identified as at risk.
- Provide support through MARACs (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) for high-risk victims of domestic violence including women, children and young people.
- Represent children's voices and best interests through attendance at case conferences and core group meetings.

- Encourage children and young people to engage in safety planning, to ensure they are aware of their right to feel safe and have a clear understanding of support networks.
- Work with families to promote supportive relationships, respectful behaviours and safe boundaries.
- Lobby extensively for a comprehensive review of child contact arrangements in Northern Ireland, to include robust risk assessments to safeguard children from harm.
- Promote safe messages, in schools and communities, through our successful preventative education programmes.
- Increase children and young people's awareness of digital safety.
- Deliver comprehensive quality training to all professionals who work with children and young people, to ensure understanding of domestic violence as a safeguarding issue and to build capacity to respond, based upon the premise that everyone can do something.
- Ensure our safeguarding policies and practices are based upon best practice and fully adhered to across all our services.





High-level outcome:

5. Children and young people experience economic and environmental well-being

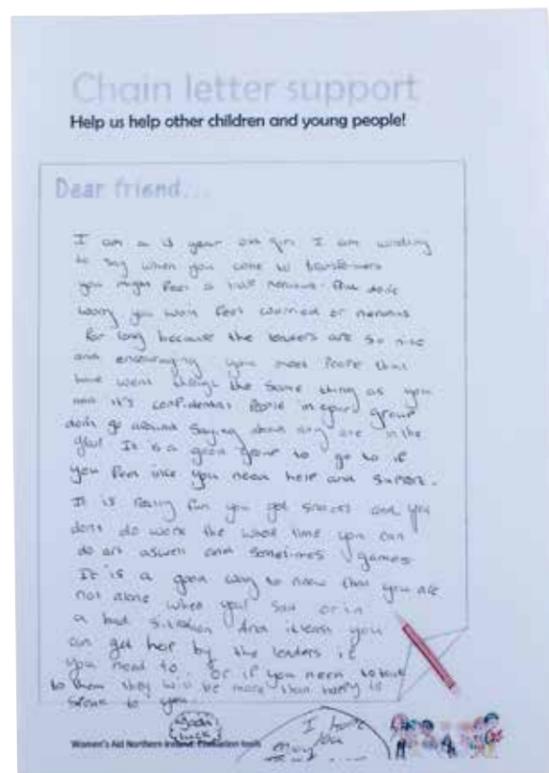
Our commitment

We will work with families to ensure they have access to information, resources and support necessary to promote their economic and environmental well-being.

What we will do (actions):

- Create a warm, welcoming and respectful environment across all our services for women, children and young people.
- Support and empower mothers/carers to access their legal and welfare rights, benefits and entitlements.
- Provide childcare and support to enable mothers/carers to attend appointments such as with Housing Executive, Citizens Advice Bureau etc.
- Provide a range of programmes for mothers/carers such as "Journey to Freedom" and "You and Me, Mum", to develop confidence and self-esteem and to contribute to emotional well-being.
- Support families to secure suitable housing accommodation, to enable them to move on from temporary refuge accommodation.
- Support mothers/carers to sustain employment or further develop careers by providing practical support with children, provision of personal development opportunities etc.

- Provide practical assistance and support to families in need through provision of clothing, food, school uniforms and emergency funds where necessary.
- Build support networks with other agencies such as local Advice Centres to promote economic well-being for families.
- Fundraise locally for donations of toys, baby equipment, supplies, quality clothing and food parcels, especially at times of need e.g. Christmas.



High-level outcome:

6. Children and young people make a positive contribution to society

Our commitment

We will empower and support children and young people to be active citizens who can challenge social injustice and become champions for change.

What we will do (actions):

- Ensure children have a voice in Women's Aid through the implementation of our participation strategy, "Putting Children and Young People at the HEART".
- Secure funding to establish fora of youth champions across Women's Aid NI to empower children and young people to have their say
- Support children and young people to create social change by involving them in the development of creative resources such as films, websites, publications, training programmes etc. for both adult and younger audiences.
- Support children and young people to make a difference for other children and young people, by encouraging them to take on roles such as peer educators.
- Inspire and encourage children and young people to be champions for change by discussing and debating relevant social justice issues in groups and highlighting the role everyone can play in creating social change.

- Encourage children and young people to support other children and young people who use our services through safe and creative ways such as peer mentoring/buddy initiatives and through our wonderful chain letter support initiative.
- Empower young people to respond to government policy and have their voice by facilitating on-going and participative consultation sessions as and when necessary.
- Provide training, volunteering and peer educational opportunities for young people to enable them to contribute positively to society and make a difference.





High-level outcome:

7. Children and young people live in a society, which respects their rights

Our commitment

We will develop our work upon a strong foundation of children’s rights as laid out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Additionally, we will be relentless children’s rights advocates, working tirelessly to ensure the rights of children and young people who experience domestic violence are understood and addressed.

What we will do (actions):

- Develop a regional lobbying strategy, identifying opportunities to promote the rights of children and young people who are affected by domestic violence and to ensure their needs are met.
- Respond to government policy relating to children and young people and ensure responses are developed on a strong foundation of children’s rights.
- Increase children and young people’s understanding of their rights in group work programmes and individual work and promote these rights, visually through posters, artwork etc.
- Engage children in creative projects to develop their understanding of the UNCRC.

- Promote article 12, UNCRC through the implementation of or participation strategy, “Putting Children and Young People at the HEART” and embed a culture of children’s participation across all our services.
- Contribute to the development of a society that values the voice of the child and encourages and promotes compassionate trauma informed approaches.
- Support and empower our staff to be strong advocates for children’s rights, internally and externally in their work with other agencies and professionals.
- Increase awareness of the rights of children and young people who experience domestic violence in all training provision to professionals and empower them to be advocates for children.
- Lobby to ensure the recognition of children’s rights in court proceedings such as contact arrangements and work to ensure their voices are heard.
- Ensure children’s rights are fully embedded, in policies and practices across Women’s Aid NI to create a rights culture and ethos.



High-level outcome:

8. Children and young people live in a society in which equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted

Our commitment

We will promote healthy, respectful, relationships in all our work and continue to advocate for a society where there is equality of opportunity for all.

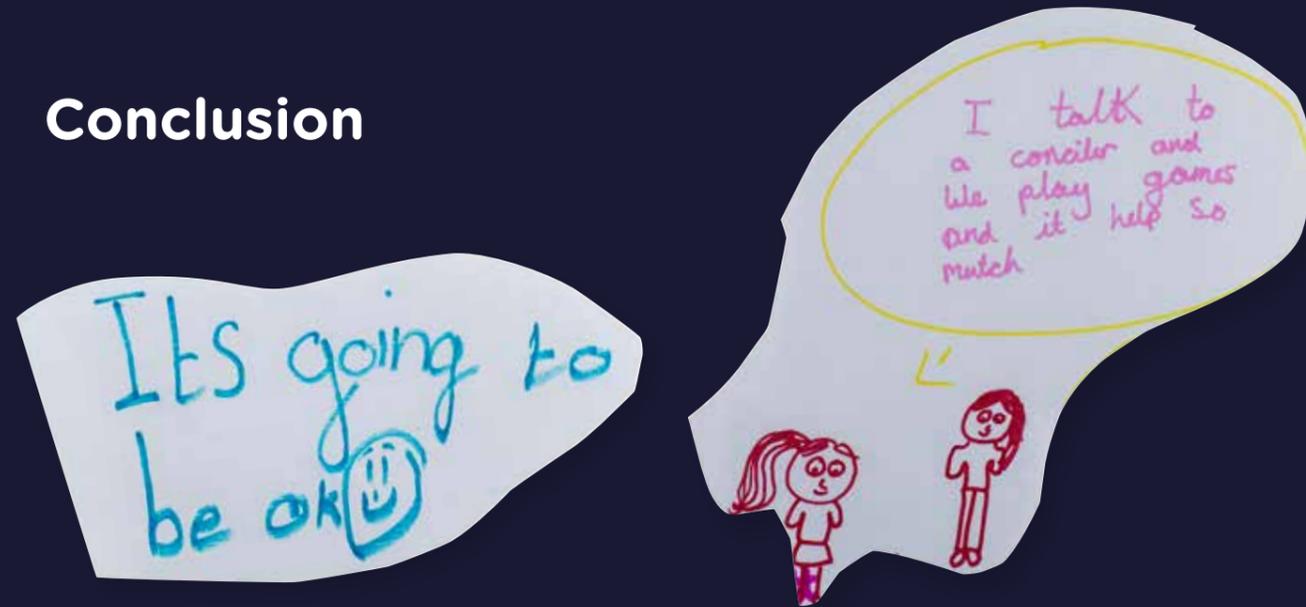
What we will do (actions):

- Review and develop services and resources, to ensure the needs of children and young people from all backgrounds and cultures are met equally.
- Continue to develop and roll out preventative education programmes at primary and post primary level to promote healthy relationships in our society.
- Seek to promote and raise awareness of healthy relationships in all the work we do with children and young people including in our group work programmes.
- Promote respect for different cultures and traditions among the children and young people we work with and provide opportunities for children and young people from different communities to come together.
- Celebrate cultural diversity, recognising the diverse range of culture and lifestyles that are present in Northern Ireland as a positive strength in our society.

- Operate a zero tolerance of all forms of discrimination across all our services.
- Challenge gender inequality through our policy and campaigning work and seek to contribute to a more equal society for our children and young people to grow up in.
- Challenge discrimination against children and young people and promote their fundamental rights at all times.
- Empower and support children and young people to challenge discrimination in safe and appropriate ways and to be change makers, influencing their friends, families and communities through their positive attitudes and promotion of good relations.
- Develop a range of resources for young people, including online resources, information leaflets etc. which will promote healthy relationships and seek to engender values of respect, equality and integrity.
- Ensure all our staff are good role models for children and young people and work within our values and ethos at all times.
- Encourage and engender sensitivity and compassion towards children and young people affected by domestic violence to ensure they are valued as equals, not disadvantaged by their experience but empowered to create positive and fulfilling lives.

Section 3

Conclusion



Driving the strategy forward

The diagram below presents a working model for driving the strategy forward over a ten-year period.



1. External partnership and policy work

- Embeds strategy externally
- Keeps issue high on public agenda
- Ensures children's voices are heard

2. Communication and regional working across Women's Aid in NI

- Implements strategy across Women's Aid NI
- Drives new strategic direction
- Measures performance and promotes best practice

3. Children and young people's participation

- Grounds strategy from children and young people's perspective
- Ensures strategy continues to be based upon need

External partnership and policy work

A regional lobbying strategy will identify external partnerships for representation. Women's Aid NI will identify key individuals to participate in these structures, to ensure the voices of children and young people who experience domestic violence are heard and taken on board. Additionally, Women's Aid NI will respond to all relevant Government policies, to drive forward a coordinated strategic response for children and young people affected by domestic violence and to ensure their voices are heard.

Communication and regional working across Women's Aid in Northern Ireland

Women's Aid NI will work collectively to be the best it can be for children and young people. All Women's Aid groups will work to share learning, promote and roll out best practice and drive forward collaborative working. Progress in relation to this strategy will be monitored and communicated across Women's Aid NI with on-going review opportunities at Regional Information days, Women's Aid forum and Regional Children's Champions meetings.

Children and young people's participation

Participation of children and young people, across Women's Aid NI will be crucial for steering the strategy, ensuring it is based upon the needs of children and young people. Great strides have been made since the previous strategy "Our Place – Safe Space" with the development of a Women's Aid NI participation strategy "Putting Children and Young People at the HEART" and with the establishment of strong youth fora across NI.



Measuring impact

Women's Aid NI will seek to measure the implementation of the strategy and the resulting impact of service provision upon children and young people.

We will:

- Review processes for the collation of statistics in relation to all service provision for children and young people.
- Implement standardised regional approaches to evaluation and consultation, to measure the social impact of services upon children and young people.
- Ensure approaches are creative, participative and effective in capturing children and young people's experiences and voices.
- Continue to engage mothers/carers in on-going evaluation and assessment of children and young people's progress and development.

Conclusion

This strategy has set out Women's Aid NI's vision for (and commitment to) developing and delivering quality, effective trauma informed services for children and young people. It challenges us to be the best that we can be for children and young people, in all areas of service development and delivery. We look forward to harnessing the opportunities presented by the strategy, for improving services, based upon the needs of children and young people and best practice standards. We affirm our commitment to playing our part in making society a safer place for children and young people.

It is important to note, Women's Aid in Northern Ireland is operating under severely restricted funding streams, especially in our work with children and young people. Without the presence of core funding and a regional support and capacity building framework, it is clear to us that many of the outcomes and commitments listed under each strategic theme will be merely aspirational. It is essential that funding is increased to provide support for

children who have been affected by violence in the home so that we can fulfil this strategy and we will lobby intensively for this throughout the period of this strategy.

The strategy provides opportunities to create change for children externally and to ensure their voices are heard. Women's Aid in Northern Ireland believes that meeting the needs of children and young people who are affected by domestic violence is a shared responsibility across society. We welcome the opportunity to work in partnership with all agencies, to promote trauma informed approaches and to ensure the needs of all children and young people affected by domestic violence, are met.

The delivery of this strategy across Northern Ireland has the potential to deliver positive outcomes for families on a daily basis. It will also create opportunities to drive forward and to create real social and strategic change, at a policy and legislative level and to achieve the ultimate outcome for everyone to See, Hear and Act on behalf of all children who experience domestic violence.

REFUGE

- R - Rooms with no tv
- E - Everyone is just the same as me
- F - Families just like ours.
- U - Ugly bruises that will leave scars.
- G - Glad we left home, in refuge now.
- E - Excited about our new home in a...



Our ideas
 can help
 you

letter support
 us help other children and young people!

Dear friend...
 I am 8 year old,
 you are going to like transformers,
 you do art you design your Strike boards
 and monitors and food.
 It is amazing.
 It will help you abt.
 you will make other's Friends.
 I am a Girl.

Women's Aid Northern Ireland, Evaluation tool



- When I am happy
 I smile and
 spread my
 happiness!

We all have
 the right to feel Safe
 all of the time!

- when I am
 angry I punch
 a pillow
 and stamp
 my feet!

Helping
 Hands

I party and
 have fun when
 I am super happy



See



Hear



Act



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