

# National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, 2010-2014

## Final Review and Proposals for New Strategy

### Introduction

- ✓ Please complete the questions below which relate to your area of work or experience.
- ✓ Be specific in your answers referring to particular actions under the National Strategy and to data, evaluations and reviews where possible.
- ✓ A key section of the questionnaire asks you to say what you can do under the next strategy. Actions need to be feasible, do-able and ambitious. Any wish lists under this heading should be labelled as such.
- ✓ The questions are purposefully open-ended. Please be as specific and as comprehensive as possible in your answers.
- ✓ Please remember specific developments or actions in relation to vulnerable or high risk groups, including Travellers, people with a disability, older people, migrants, young people, pregnant women and those involved with substance abuse.
- ✓ Do not expect to fill in each and every subheading; the subheadings are meant to prompt your memory.
- ✓ It is better to spend time developing the comment than agonising over which subheading it should go under.
- ✓ Do not get lost with all the subheadings; there are basically five questions:
  - 1. What was good about the strategy?**
  - 2. What was not good?**
  - 3. Have you any evidence either way?**
  - 4. What do you want to do in the next strategy?**
  - 5. What should others do?**
- ✓ Your submission will be published on the Cosc website with the final review.

**Name of organisations: Dublin RCC, Galway RCC, Sexual Violence Centre Cork, Athlone/Midlands RCC, Tipperary RCC and Counselling Centre, Kilkenny RC and Counselling Centre.**

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## **Positive developments ....**

**As a result of actions under the current Strategy what, if any, positive developments have occurred in relation to domestic, sexual or gender-based violence under the following headings:**

### **1.1 Victims' experience of state services**

- We know that in the context of sexual violence, according to research carried out by Dr. Paul O'Mahony et al, *Different Systems Similar Outcomes*, that the reporting rates for sexual offences have gone up which may indicate that victims have more confidence in the Gardai who are usually their first point of contact after a rape or a sexual assault has taken place.
- There are two new Sexual Assault Treatment Units in Mullingar and Galway.
- National Guidelines for SATUs developed and are currently being revised.
- The new Criminal Justice Building affords improved facilities for victims of sexual crimes.
- MOU devised and agreed with the office of the DPP and a number of frontline services encourages victims to stay engaged with the CJS.
- Access to schools via the development of *BodyRight* has had beneficial affects for young people in improving their awareness in relation to all the issues that arise in the context of sexual violence

### **1.2 Victims' experience of voluntary sector services**

- Marked rise in the use of the national 24 hour helpline due to the annual awareness raising campaign funded by Cosc.
- Increase in the use of frontline counselling services
- Due to increased collaboration between frontline service agencies the services to victims have become more streamlined. Referral pathways are clearer.

### **1.3 Accountability of perpetrators**

- The development of pre-release assessment and post release supervision are both very welcome developments.

- The development of training in relations to sex offender risk assessment - An Garda Siochana and the Probation Service

#### 1.4 Awareness and attitudes

- Due to the financial funding provided by Cosc to NGOs to deliver awareness raising campaigns, has meant that the value for money was in most cases doubled and sometimes trebled, and enabled messages to be delivered in a timely, appropriate and creative manner across a range for media outlets to include TV, Radio, Outdoor, Digital, Social Media etc.
- The evaluations of these campaigns showed an increase in the services uptake.
- Attitudes have a long shelf life and the increase in the length of time the messaging was available helped to increase the possibility of attitudinal change.

#### 1.5 Prevention

- The ongoing commitment from Cosc to invest in programmes for second and third level education in relation to sexual violence has been very positive.
- BodyRight totally funded by Cosc, has received very positive feedback.
- The continual support by Cosc of collaboration between teachers, USI and Youthreach to name but a few, to increase awareness has been very positive overall to prevention of sexual violence.
- The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act, was enacted in December 2012.
- SORAM (Sexual Offender Risk Assessment and Management) has been rolled out nationally.
- The BBL(Building Better Lives) Programme was developed and is being delivered on an ongoing basis in Arbour Hill.

#### 1.6 Policy making or service planning

- Cosc supported frontline services developing and delivering their information leaflets in a user friendly format ie RCCs, Irish College of GPs funded to revise their guide for General Practice on DV and SV etc.
- Gardai developed Policy on Domestic and Sexual Violence
- The HSE developed their policy on DV and SV
- Progress has been made on the delivery of a New Sexual Offences Bill to be published at the end of 2014.

#### 1.7 Research or data collection

- Supported the delivery of Research via USI on sexual violence called Say It
  - Supported Research on Separate Legal Representation that was presented at the Conference *Rape Law - Victims on Trial?*
  - The Victims Charter and Guide to the CJS was published in 2010.
  - RCNI were supported in developing a Data Collection System for RCC frontline services.
- 1.8 Structures or processes to support the strategy (consultation, meetings, six monthly review reports etc.)  
Feedback was invited for the 6 month review reports.
- 1.9 **Outside the Strategy** what, if any, have been the positive developments in relation to domestic, sexual or gender-based violence, generally or under any of the categories above, in the period 2010-2014?  
Cosc supported the conference *Rape Law: Victims on Trial?* which was held in Dublin Castle in January 2011.

## Undesirable developments ....

**As a result of actions or inaction under the current Strategy what, if any, undesirable developments have occurred in relation to domestic, sexual or gender-based violence under the following headings:**

- 2.1 Victims' experience of state services  
Victims have felt further traumatised and victimised by inappropriate responses by: the Judiciary in relation:
- to sentencing, suspended sentences for rape,
  - compensation awarded in lieu of a custodial sentence
  - in appropriate comments on victim impact reports,
  - delays particularly in relation to the CCA.

Delays between reporting and getting to court whereby victims fall out of the system as a result and perpetrators escape sanction

Lack of on-going liaising between Gardai and victims in the period between reporting the crime and getting to court

Victims of sexual violence suffer further trauma because the DPP does not give any reason when their case is not progressed to court.

- 2.2** Victims' experience of voluntary sector services
- Cut backs to grants to the voluntary and community sector has meant that the front line services have to be reduced at a time when we are encouraging more people to come forward to avail of the services.
  - Waiting times to access services have increased.
- 2.3** Accountability of perpetrators  
Research confirms that Ireland has the highest attritions rates in rape and sexual assault of 12 European Countries.
- 2.4** Awareness and attitudes
- Easy access to victims by perpetrators via the internet has meant that the new media has created new problems which are more difficult to detect in particular the grooming of young people.
  - Pornography can desensitise individuals and lead to abusive, inappropriate and violent behaviour.
  - Prostitution has come indoors due to the use of the internet and is increasingly linked to human trafficking including the trafficking of both women and children.
- 2.5** Prevention  
Concerns have been expressed by those delivering perpetrator programmes when it has been discovered that some of the participants of these programmes have used and abused what they have learned to further abuse their victims.
- 2.6** Policy making or service planning
- 2.7** Research or data collection
- There is a huge gap developing in research because SAVI 2 has yet to be delivered. Not having the comparative empirical research to inform policy going forward is a big handicap to delivering appropriate services.
  - Data collection is not research. However it is important to have data collecting systems that match to deliver the national snapshots.
- 2.8** Structures or processes to support the strategy (consultation, meetings, six monthly review reports etc.)  
N/A
- 2.9** **Outside the Strategy** what undesirable developments, if any, have occurred in relation to domestic, sexual or gender-based violence, generally or under any of the categories above, in the period 2010-2014?

It is becoming increasingly evident that Education and Training needs to be provided on an on-going basis for all actors in the criminal justice

system, who are dealing with sexual violence from: Gardai, to Solicitors, to Prosecutors, Barristers, Judges and that special courts for crimes of rape and sexual violence be developed.

## The Evidence .....

- 3.1 What actions did you take to evaluate or review the impact of any of the actions under the National Strategy? Please forward copies of any relevant publications or documents.

DRCC provides Cosc with its annual report and statistics every year. We also provide evaluations of all the funded programmes by Cosc and delivered by DRCC, to include *BodyRight* and the Awareness Raising Campaigns and the Handbook for Interpreters working in the area of sexual violence.

- 3.2 Are you aware of evaluations or reviews by others of the impact of any actions under the Strategy? Please forward copies of any relevant publications or documents, or contact details of those who undertook the evaluation.

## What can be done better in the future?

### By you .....

What specific actions is your organisation proposing to undertake in the context of a new national strategy on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, in the period 2015-2019, under any of the following categories.

- 4.1 State services for victims

- Continue to lobby government and ensure that the European Directive on the Rights of Victims is implemented.
- Support and ensure the other statutory agencies ie the HSE, Tusla, the Department of Education and the Department of Justice develop strategies of their own on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence that cascades from the National Strategy as devised by Cosc.

- 4.2 Voluntary sector services for victims

DRCC would like to see RCC frontline services work more closely together to ensure that we offer streamline professional services to the victims of rape, sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse.

- 4.3 Accountability of perpetrators

- That more community preventative programmes for perpetrators be developed and supported.
- That sentencing guidance is adhered to.
- That the 25% automatic remission is linked to perpetrators attendance at preventative programmes in prison.

#### 4.4 Awareness and attitudes

That DRCC continues to develop awareness raising programmes with its sister agencies and that Cosc continue to support these programmes.

#### 4.5 Prevention

Continue to develop and deliver programmes for schools and 3<sup>rd</sup> level institutions – as well as youth reach and USI.

#### 4.6 Policy making or service planning

Feeding into the policies that are being developed by Tusla to include child protection, child welfare and well being , inter agency co-operation, quality of standards etc.

#### 4.7 Research or data collection

DRCC has its own data collection system which can be developed to include other agencies if required.

#### 4.8 Structures or processes to support the strategy (consultation, meetings, six monthly review reports etc.)

DRCC will participate in any meeting when required.

#### 5. What specific actions is your organisation proposing to undertake for victims generally which will also apply to victims of domestic, sexual or gender-based violence, in the period 2015-2019, under any of the above categories?

The DRCC is proposing to co-ordinate SAVI 2 with RCSI with an all of Government support. We would envisage that this would mean working closely with Cosc for the duration of the research as part of the Steering Group that would be needed to manage the research.

## By others ....

What other specific actions should be undertaken in the context of a new national strategy on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, 2015-2019, under any of the following categories?

Who should undertake these actions?

Please also state, with your reasons, if you believe that there should be no further action by anyone under any heading.

#### 6.1 State services for victims

- Further supports to ensure that the victims of rape and sexual assault stay the course of the CJS.
  - That research be delivered on the working and composition of Juries.
- 6.2 Voluntary sector services for victims  
That funding for services for victims of domestic, sexual and gender based violence continues to be appropriately funded and that there is a moratorium on cutting funding in this sector.
- 6.3 Accountability of perpetrators
- 6.4 Awareness and attitudes
- 6.5 Prevention
- 6.6 Policy making or service planning
- 6.7 Research or data collection
- 6.8 Structures or processes to support the strategy (consultation, meetings, six monthly review reports etc.)
- 7.1 What specific actions should be undertaken for victims generally which will also apply to victims of domestic, sexual or gender-based violence, in the period 2015-19, under any of the above categories?
- 7.2 Who should undertake the actions mentioned above?

## **And finally ....**

8. Please make additional comments, if any, here.
- We would like to see that Cosc support the Turn off the Red Light programme and the proposed legislation to criminalise the buying of sex.
  - That the trafficking of women and children to Ireland is acknowledged and that further research is funded to ensure that the agencies supporting these victims have the support of government to deliver the services to the victims.
  - That the work that is needed to ratify the Istanbul Convention is delivered.
  - That Cosc support the proposed Sexual Offences Bill which brings all sexual offences under one Act.

- That the NSC on Violence Against Women meetings are restored to 4 meetings per year and that the Regional Advisory Committees are reinstated.
- There may be some way of linking in with the new Children Services Committees which are being set up under Tusla. It might be possible to have a VAW aspect/element to them, or time allocated at their meetings to VAW, as so many of the same people attend the CSCs as would have attended the RACs. The Chair of the CSCs could nominate a person in each region to feed back to the NSC on VaW meetings.