

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

Final Review and Proposals for New Strategy

Organisation: Probation Service

May 2014

What was good about the strategy?

- The model chosen for the strategy which focused on primary and secondary interventions and identified activities by reference to impact and outcome was in itself a catalyst for increased awareness and understanding, within state agencies, of the dynamics of the problem.
- That increased awareness brought greater clarity in relation to issues of victim safety and its management both within the state agency and on a cross-sectoral basis.
- Service Policies in relation to the management of Domestic and Sexual violence have been developed.
- Cross- sectoral training has been integrated in to training departments which brings greater consistency and complementarity in the delivery of service to victims
- Practice and protocols for the sharing of information between agencies have been reviewed.
- The application of dedicated risk assessment tools to estimate levels of risk and identify strategies to manage those risks ensures that offenders are held accountable and victim interests/safety prioritised.
- Risk management arrangements for convicted sexual violence perpetrators have been significantly strengthened.
- Steps have been taken to ensure greater alignment and integration of custodial and community intervention programmes for convicted sexual violence perpetrators.
- In order to support the timely implementation of activities identified in the strategy, regular consultations took place between the Service representative on the National Steering Committee and key members of staff. This informed the feedback given within the six monthly reviews of the strategy.
- Data on risk levels in relation to both domestic and sexual violence is collated to inform interagency collaboration, the allocation of resources and training needs of staff.

Undesirable developments:

Nil response

Evidence?

- Service policies in place for the management of sexual and domestic violence offenders.
- A national Victim Services team has been established to work with the Victim Service Co-ordinator in delivering on commitments as identified in the Victims Charter and to support the implementation of the European Directive on the rights and needs of victims.
- Cross- sectoral training undertaken with An Garda Siochana and the Health Service Executive

- The Sex Offender Risk Assessment and Management Model (SORAM) is now embedded in all Garda Divisions nationally. The National Soram Office, a co-located unit comprising An Garda Síochána, the Probation Service and the Child and Family Agency supports the local SORAM teams and provides oversight of the management of sex offenders who are subject to SORAM. The Irish Prison Service is also represented at National Steering level in order to support developments for the management of sex offenders' transition from custody to the community. It is planned to also include a representative from the Department of the Environment.

What can be done better in the future by the Probation Service ?

- Further development of victim services which recognise and promote victims rights to be protected, to be supported, to be informed, to understand and to be understood and to have their needs met.
- Ensure that strategies and practice interventions with vulnerable groups such as women offenders, travellers and young people are informed by and aligned with the objectives of the new National Strategy
- Explore the potential to expand evidence based perpetrator programmes which are court mandated.
- Refresher awareness training to ensure that front line staff recognise and understand the dynamics of these forms of violence and provide an effective response to both victims and perpetrators.
- Review the implementation of the “Non Violent Resistance Programme”, a skills based programme which has been delivered in the context of child to parent violence.
- Explore and develop a more integrated approach for the management of data in order to inform and support risk management strategies.
- Review protocols for information sharing to ensure that objectives are being achieved.

By Others:

- The issue of child to parent violence should be explored in the context of the new strategy. This could be progressed by the Child and family Agency and the Probation Service
- All sectors will need to review the requirements under the European Directive on Victims and identify related actions.

Additional comments:

- While clarification in relation to the role and responsibilities of state agencies in responding to issues of domestic, sexual and gender based violence is a positive development, there can be real challenges for shared responsibility in safely and effectively managing sexual violence perpetrators who have serious histories of offending and are high profile
- Awareness raising within an agency and society context is not just a once off event and requires sustained leadership and resources if momentum is to be maintained.