

**Analysis of Submissions for the Final Review of the National  
Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence  
2010-2014**

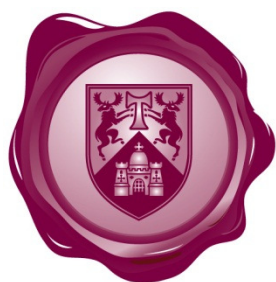
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## Executive summary

The purpose of this study is to provide a textual analysis of questionnaire responses received from major stakeholders about their experiences of the current National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2010-2014 and their views on priorities for the next strategy. Cosc designed and circulated the questionnaire. In all, 34 submissions were received, with roughly an equal breakdown from statutory and non-statutory sectors.

Responses to this pre-designed Cosc questionnaire were analysed using textual analysis. Questionnaires were read and coded thematically using NVivo software. This textual analysis approach involved an interrogation of data to identify emerging patterns. These patterns informed the development of six high level themes which are as follows: leaving situations of violence; cohorts of concern; service provision; legal issues; and, resource concerns. Within each of the high level themes a variety sub-themes are also identified.

As regards theme one, ***leaving situations of violence***, survey respondents reported high anxiety levels amongst victims when deciding whether to leave DSGBV situations with children. Respondents also emphasised the connection between domestic abuse and child abuse which is not adequately recognised and factored into operational responses. The importance of safe and appropriate accommodation was highlighted as crucial in decision to depart from violent situations. The risk of homelessness is a significant issue for many victims. Nation-wide issues around housing stock levels are problematic. Survey respondents also documented the lack of consistency across local authorities in how they assess and provide housing to victims of DSGBV. In addition, the limited powers of local authorities to remove perpetrators from local authority housing was noted, as was the difficulties that exist in moving victims from one local authority's housing list to another. The importance of front-line responses was repeatedly emphasised in the submissions made in the questionnaires. Victims of DSGBV can struggle to engage with the variety of relevant and necessary services which can delay and deter them in leaving violent situations. It is vital that such victims can readily access information on available services in order to facilitate informed decision-making and access. The creation of Tusla is viewed by some respondents as a positive development for victims of domestic violence.

Survey respondents report distinct groups within Irish society who they categorise as being more 'at risk' and vulnerable in the DSGBV setting. These groups, or ***cohorts of concern***, possess characteristics which require understanding in order to provide effective service responses. Respondents have identified the following groups: Travellers and Roma; migrants; individuals involved in prostitution ; people with a disability; young people; women who are pregnant; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual (LGBT); people with a mental illness; older people; and people with an addiction. A number of respondents recommended that these groupings should be specifically accommodated in any future strategic direction that may be taken.

Respondents also emphasised the importance of ***service provision***. Many emphasised the need to enhance co-ordination and partnership between the various statutory organisations working in the sector and between statutory organisations and non-statutory organisations. Strong coordinated networks were viewed as vital to the success of the strategy. Submissions also identified the important strategic role played by Cosc. Adequately trained staff, with an understanding of the phenomenon of DSGBV and existing supports, was also highlighted as a crucial requirement in

ensuring optimal service provision to victims. A number of respondents drew attention to the inequality in the distribution of resources for service provision throughout the country.

The **legal** theme contained many sub themes. It is clear, to begin with, that respondents believe that the legislative framework plays a crucial protective and communicative role. One area of particular concern was the absence of an emergency legal order available to victims of domestic violence outside of court hours. Restrictions on the availability of barring orders including those relating to co-habitation and property ownership was also highlighted. Some respondents also drew attention to the negative effects which the Habitual Residence Condition (HRC) (contained in the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005) may have. Lengthy waiting times for legal aid, the increase in legal aid fees, and restrictions on two people accessing the same legal aid centre were also raised as problematic. Many respondents noted that victims and victim-advocate groups continue to report re-victimisation experiences in the prosecution of sexual and domestic violence related offences. Several respondents highlighted the need for 'faster redress in court'. It was suggested that a specialist DV court should be introduced.

There was a general consensus that custodial sentences in cases involving DSGVB were low. Concern was expressed about a lack of consistency in the response to breaches of DV related orders; the use of 'undertakings' rather than more formal orders; attrition rates; and the lack of court mandated domestic violence perpetrator programmes. The importance of data on custodial sentences was noted, particularly on the rates of custodial sentences for perpetrators who breach orders. The failure to progress the collection of data of this kind under the current strategy was criticised. Many respondents also emphasised the need for a comprehensive training programme for those working within the legal system so as to ensure a better understanding of DV. A number of respondents acknowledged improvements in domestic violence perpetrator programmes funded by Cosc, though it was considered important that such programmes be evaluated and their effectiveness monitored. Several respondents pointed to an improved response by the Gardaí to DSGVB with victims reporting more positive experiences of the Gardaí. This was not however universal, and some respondents also documented inappropriate or inconsistent Garda responses. This was particularly true for certain cohorts including Traveller and Roma women and migrant men. Several respondents were keen to emphasise the positive implications of two new legal instruments, namely the Victims Directive and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention).

Survey respondents commented on the need for **prevention** to be developed from a place of cultural understanding and recognising gendered roles. There was a consensus amongst survey respondents about the need to improve and increase awareness-raising of what constitutes violence, types of violence and supports in response to DSGVB across all sectors and by all agencies. Survey respondents sought greater emphasis and involvement by mainstream services, such as education and health, in improving awareness of the broader population, which requires whole-of-government policies and processes. The profile of DSGVB, it was suggested, needs to move from advertising frontline services to increasing societal awareness about the prevalence and realities of DSGVB. As part of this awareness raising, respondents recommended the need to identify those groups in society who require a tailored approach to attitudinal and behavioural intervention. Groups such as the Traveller and Roma communities would require a tailored approach to effective primary and secondary prevention that has sensitivity to a level of acceptance amongst some members of the Traveller community of violence as well as literacy and language abilities, in the view of Pavee Point. Resources provided by Cosc to raise awareness about domestic violence and availability of services were commended. Respondents also recommended the introduction of a standardised approach to

the collection of data, by both statutory and non-statutory authorities, about sexual and domestic violence incidents. This would provide an evidence-based platform to inform future action.

The most obvious **resource** which is in short supply in the area of DSGBV is monetary funding. Respondents pointed to ‘persistent under-funding and cumulative cuts’ which have impacted on their capacity to respond to increasing demand. The impact of inadequate resourcing on service delivery for victims and in other key areas including awareness raising and education, data collection and analysis, preventative work, best practice guidelines, training, co-ordination, staffing and infrastructure was highlighted in submissions by many stakeholders.

A further resource constraint was the reduction in staffing, creating challenges for the voluntary sector to keep front line services functioning. Within statutory organisations staff reductions meant that experience was lost and more work was required from less people.

This analysis draws out the themes which are contained in the submissions made. The task of this report is to provide an analysis of what organisations said and what they believe. Therefore, it would not be appropriate in the current project for the authors to correct any of the inaccuracies or introduce any other commentary on what was submitted.

A series of high level recommendations based on a comprehensive thematic analysis of responses provided by non-statutory and statutory respondents are provided in chapters 8 and 9 of this report.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

The primary objective of this work is to provide a textual analysis of submissions from major stakeholders about their experiences of the current *National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2010-2014* and their views on priorities for the next strategy. The submissions were a response to a survey designed by Cosc which was circulated to major stakeholders as part of the final review of the *National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2010-2014*.

Submissions were provided to the University of Limerick research team by Cosc and consisted of both statutory and non-statutory organisations which are listed below.

	<b>Non-statutory organisations</b>
1	Adapt House
2	AkiDwA
3	Amen Support Services
4	Ascend Domestic Abuse Service
5	Carlow Rape Crisis Centre
6	Dublin, Galway, Athlone/Midlands Rape Crisis Centres, Tipperary and Kilkenny Rape Crisis and Counselling Centres and Sexual Violence Centre Cork
7	Longford Women's Link
8	MEND Programme and Men's Development Network
9	Mná Feasa Women's Domestic Violence Project
10	Oasis House Women's Refuge
11	Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre
12	Rape Crisis Network Ireland (RCNI)
13	Roscommon Safe Link Ltd
14	Ruhama
15	SAFE Ireland
16	Sonas
17	West Cork Women Against Violence
18	Women's Aid
	<b>Statutory organisations</b>
19	An Garda Síochána
20	Central Statistics Office
21	Civil Law Reform, Dept. of Justice
22	Cosc
23	Department of Children and Families
24	Department of Education and Skills
25	Department of Social Protection
26	Diversity and Equality Law Division
27	HSE
28	HSE Elder Abuse Service

29	National Disability Authority
30	Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions
31	Prisons Service
32	Probation Service
33	SATUs
34	The Courts Service

Fifty three percent of submissions were received from non-statutory organisations and 47 percent from statutory organisations. The respondents were primarily national organisations (71 percent of total submissions) while 21 percent were from regional centres and 3 percent from cities.

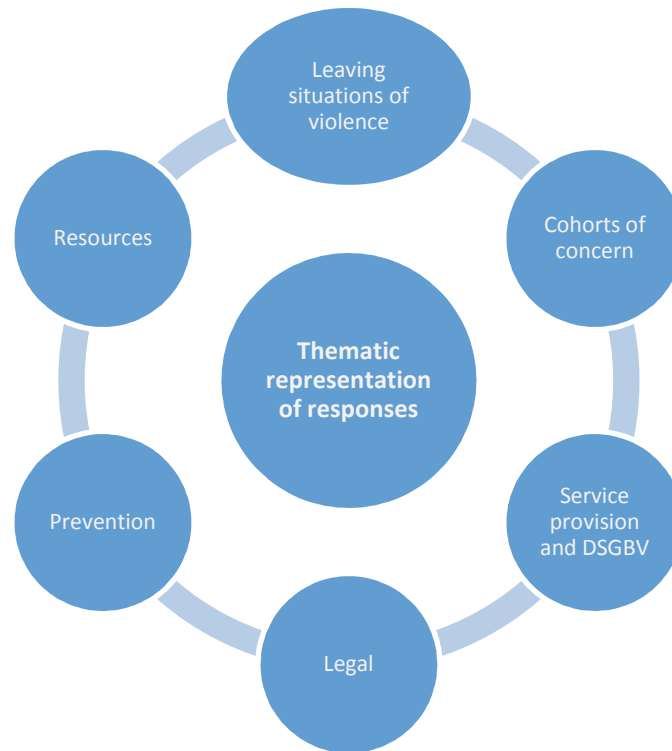
<b>Breakdown of responses received from Non-statutory and Statutory organisations</b>			
	<b>Non-statutory organisation submissions</b>	<b>Statutory organisation submissions</b>	<b>Total</b>
Number	18	16	34
Percentage	53	47	100

## 1.2 Findings Structure

Cosc designed and circulated a questionnaire to major stakeholders to acquire feedback on the *National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2010-2014* and input into the development of the next national strategy. Findings from the submissions received in response to this questionnaire are presented in this report in a thematic structure. An in-depth textual analysis of responses presented six high level themes. Within each of the high level themes a variety sub-themes are also identified. While the themes are covered in different chapters some overlap is present.

Key themes are:

1. Leaving situations of violence
2. Cohorts of concern
3. Service provision and DSGBV
4. Legal
5. Prevention
6. Resources



### 1.3 Methodology

Cosc, the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, which is based in the Department of Justice and Equality, is undertaking a final review of the *National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2010-2014*. As part of this review Cosc produced a draft questionnaire. After Cosc's experience of the mid-term review of the national strategy where a small number of key organisations were engaged in a semi-structured interview, a questionnaire was designed to aid the production of more robust findings for the end-term review of the national strategy. This draft questionnaire was circulated by Cosc to the National Steering Committees for their views on 1 November, 2013. A small number of drafting comments on the questionnaire were received. While there was a formal deadline of 16 December, 2013 for the receipt of views it was possible to submit comments until early March, 2014. The questionnaire was piloted informally among Cosc and the Victims of Crime Office staff who have varying exposure to different elements of Cosc's work. Minor changes, mainly of a presentational nature, were made by Cosc on foot of feedback from the pilot. The questionnaire was circulated by Cosc to almost 100 organisations and individuals seeking feedback on their experiences of the current National Strategy and seeking input for the development of the next iteration of a national policy on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. A copy of the questionnaire is attached at *Appendix 1*.

The task, as outlined by the contracting body, involved;

- Meeting or speaking with Cosc to clarify the scope of this exercise,
- Methodically analysing the text supplied in the draft questionnaires,
- Reporting in a concise manner on themes emerging from the text according to the analysis,
- Discussing and clarifying any points in the report which appear unclear and
- Providing an amended report if necessary.

### **1.3.1 Questionnaire design**

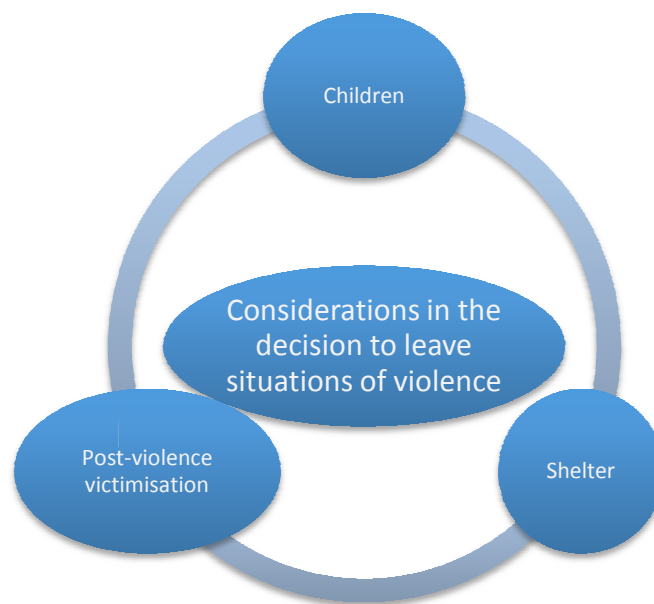
Cosc, the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, designed the questionnaire which was circulated to major stakeholders. Distribution of the survey was determined by Cosc and the University of Limerick research team were forwarded responses to the questionnaire by Cosc staff. A pilot of the questionnaire was undertaken by officials of Cosc.

### **1.3.2 Textual Analysis**

Responses to the pre-designed questionnaire were analysed using textual analysis. This approach involved an interrogation of data to identify emerging patterns. These patterns informed the development of themes and sub-themes to the point of data saturation.

Questionnaires were read and coded thematically using NVivo software. Coding of the questionnaires was carried out by two coders to ensure research validity by creating inter-coder reliability. This measured the level of agreement or correspondence among the coders.

## Chapter Two: Leaving situations of violence



### 2.1 Overview of Theme

Survey respondents indicate a range of factors which impact on an individual's decision to leave a violent situation. These include:

- Children
  - The presence of children and whether children need to be relocated from violent situations; how services respond to children who are accompanying a victim of violence and the effect of violence on children.
- Shelter
  - Shelter as a fundamental requirement for anyone leaving a violent situation and how systemic processes can accommodate this.
- Post-violence victimisation
  - The potential for further victimisation by front line service providers and the system.

### 2.2 Children

A victim's child or children may be an important consideration in a decision to leave a violent situation and may impact on their capacity and ability to leave. Similarly there may be extensive impacts on children who have witnessed or experienced domestic, sexual or gender based violence (DSGBV).

### 2.2.1 Initial departure from DSGBV with children

Survey respondents reported high anxiety levels amongst victims when deciding whether to leave DSGBV situations with children. When a victim of domestic abuse leaves the abuse *“it is probably one of the most dangerous times for her and her children”* (Longford Women’s Link). A component of this anxiety comes from fear of social workers removing children from the victims care and concern has been expressed about increasing levels of child protection referrals and whether this serves *“the best interests of the child or their mother”* (Women’s Aid). Responses indicate that victims have experienced re-traumatisation in the preparation of reports (e.g. Section 20 reports) for judges by some social workers. This trauma can also extend to the organisation of access visits for perpetrator’s and the other parent’s concern about re-abuse of them and/ or children. Further concern has been noted about the availability of appropriate accommodation and the avoidance of emergency accommodation and refuges.

Respondents also refer to systemic policies which are not necessarily in the best interests of children and families. The existence of policies such as the property test for cohabitants applying for a barring order poses questions around prioritising safety of victims and children over property rights.

### 2.2.2 Experiences of services for victims with children

There is a strong call among respondents for a standardised approach and enforcement of guidelines relating to child protection. This includes how child protection referrals and investigations are initially determined and how case files are compiled, for example the approach taken to interviewing a parent who has experienced violence about their situation and their children. Experiences in court have demonstrated inconsistent approaches to accumulating information about children’s well-being in violent situations including requests that are made of child protection social workers by judges. Respondents seek specific training for judges and lawyers around child welfare and child protection issues in violent situations to avoid secondary victimisation. Some respondents feel there needs to be more stringent rules in place about a perpetrator’s access to their children and assessments of children’s safety.

Establishing a clear rationale and methodology for gathering data about the presence of children in violent situations, witnessing violence, and being victims of violence are viewed as having potential to contribute to understanding the effects of DSGBV on children. Such data could then inform the design of early intervention and response services.

A positive improvement was noted in relation to the assistance provided by Gardaí in retrieving children who had been taken by perpetrators and protecting their safety. The development and piloting of child contact centres was also viewed as positive and warrants further roll-out as they provide safe spaces and trained professionals to work with families.

### 2.2.3 Tusla

The creation of Tusla is viewed by some respondents as a positive development for victims of domestic violence and their children particularly given the emotional abuse experienced by children witnessing DSGBV. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs reported the intent of Tusla is to *“drive a shift to prevention and early intervention and to focus on parents and families as the primary*

*agents in promoting the health and welfare of their children.”* However, other respondents have expressed a lack of clarity about the specific policy and operational responsibilities of Tusla and the allocation of funding in the future.

#### 2.2.4 Impact of DSGBV on children

Respondents have discussed the connection between domestic abuse and child abuse which is not adequately recognised and factored into operational responses. Numerous respondents referred to ‘hidden harm’ and the impact of DSGBV on children and family members. The vicarious impact of DSGBV is significant and not as widely addressed as primary abuse. There is a *“lack of understanding of children’s perspectives and this has huge implications for practice”* (Roscommon Safe Link). Dividing policy directives and operational ownership of services between children, young people and adults creates an artificial separation which does not match the reality of DSGBV. Targeting a national policy towards children, teenagers and young adults in the context of DSGBV would widen the impact and potential of prevention work and early intervention.

### 2.3 Shelter

Stable, safe and appropriate accommodation for victims of DSGBV and their children is a central factor in decision-making and influences departure from violent situations. There are potentially two types of accommodation sought by victims of DSGBV, the first being initial emergency accommodation, and secondly, the provision of alternative medium or long term accommodation.

#### 2.3.1 Refuges and homelessness

The *“[r]isk of homelessness and associated access to refuges is a significant issue for victims of domestic violence”* (HSE). For many respondents shelter is a fundamental component in the decision to leave a violent situation and supply is being outweighed by demand. Respondents, it was suggested, require a governmental strategy that will address this either through the next strategy on DSGBV or national strategies on health care, housing or homelessness.

Respondents report regularly not being able to meet the demand for emergency and mainstream accommodation and it was noted by a number of respondents that there are no refuge spaces for male victims of domestic violence. Provision of accommodation, temporary or permanent, and ability to access refuges and homeless services was also reported as being influenced by geographic location with supply appearing to be more limited outside urban centres. Respondents also consider that Ireland’s refuge accommodation is below the recommended European Union (EU) guidelines. It was observed that in situations where refuge services are at capacity a practice of referring victims to homeless services and B&Bs exists and this was not considered to be *“a suitable alternative for women fleeing a violent relationship”* (Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre). It was suggested that where there are no assessment officers available and no emergency hostel beds there needs to be a weekend and out of hours service to meet the needs of those leaving violent situations.

Respondents suggest broadening the definition of homelessness to include victims of domestic violence so their circumstances of homelessness are made explicit. Victims of domestic violence and

their children should be considered as a unique group within the homeless constituency so as to prioritise assistance to them; this needs recognition in the new DSGBV national strategy.

### 2.3.2 Approach to the provision of alternative accommodation

The importance of safe and appropriate accommodation was highlighted in the responses and it was noted that a *“lack of suitable affordable accommodation has been a key contributing factor and in many cases, the decisive one, for women going back to abusive ex-partners or remaining in abusive relationships”* (Sonas). Respondents suggested that a victim of DSGBV should not be forced to leave their home and the broader legislative and statutory response system needs to work to ensure better protection for such victims. It has been reported that for a woman who owns property it is very difficult to *“leave and obtain alternative accommodation for herself and (if relevant) her children without sufficient financial reserves.”* (Mná Feasa Women’s Domestic Violence Project). Concerns were expressed in relation to the information provided to women about their legal rights and instances were reported where women were provided with conflicting legal advice as homeowners on whether to stay or leave their homes.

Another concern related to the shortage of affordable rental properties in Ireland and a disparity between rent allowance provisions and rental market prices; the private sector cannot meet the accommodation deficit for DSGBV situations. These factors were reported as contributing to potential homelessness.

### 2.3.3 Local authorities

Survey respondents refer to a lack of consistency across local authorities in how they assess and provide housing to victims of DSGBV as well as nation-wide issues around housing stock levels. Some local authority staff were complimented on their effort to provide a resolution for DSGBV victims, but this approach appears to occur on a case by case basis.

Survey respondents also report concern at the limited powers of local authorities to remove perpetrators from local authority housing. There is also a procedural barrier to moving women from one local authority’s housing list to another even where added risk is prevalent; *“domestic abuse survivors may have to move from their home county or region in order to maximise their safety and that of their children”* (Longford Women’s Link).

### 2.3.4 Minority groups

The existence of the HRC (Habitual Residence Condition) has a particularly limiting effect on victims trying to leave violent situations because it limits their eligibility to housing and social services. There are requests by respondents to make specific funding available to *“women that may not meet the Habitual Residence Condition, and also independent immigration status that allows [the woman] to stay in Ireland if she so chooses.”* (Ascend Domestic Abuse Service)

Accommodation is a particularly difficult factor to overcome for migrant, Traveller and Roma women due to legislative restrictions and cultural needs. It was suggested that diversity amongst women

should be understood and accounted for in the future development of housing and homelessness services for women leaving violent situations.

## 2.4 Post-violence victimisation

Survey participants have reported re-traumatisation and re-victimisation as a result of contact with some response services both at the time of initial disclosure of violence and whilst navigating the response system.

### 2.4.1 Front-line responses

The impact of front-line State responses for victims of DSGBV, both on the victim themselves and on rates of attrition, was a point repeatedly emphasised by respondents to this study. Safe Ireland noted that *“[w]omen accessing our member services consistently report that they are not taken seriously when they come into contact with the legal system. They are often not believed, their cases are often trivialised... In short, they are living with the reality that domestic violence is not categorised as a crime within our statutes.”* This sentiment is echoed by other organisations who suggest that there has been a failure by frontline services to promote a culture of non-tolerance of domestic violence (DV). Adapt House Limerick note that *“[i]t is the experience of women survivors that frontline staff often do not have the understanding of domestic abuse nor the sensitivity to the traumatic impact of abuse on the victim.”* Examples given in the domestic violence context include inconsistent or inappropriate responses, charges dropped for perpetrators who admit to an assault, acceptance of the claim that the perpetrator was provoked, *“breached orders not being taken seriously; Gardaí refusing to take a statement, being rude or making inappropriate remarks or minimising the abuse by simply ‘having a word with him’”* (Women’s Aid). Significant time delays in response to domestic violence were also reported, delays which are not safe for victims and children, for example, *“waiting times between issue of protection orders and hearing for safety/barring orders”* (Women’s Aid). Interaction with the court system may cause significant distress for women and contribute to high levels of attrition and this is dealt with in more detail in Chapter Five.

Respondents also report that women are deterred from reporting violence because of fear of losing their children. This was noted specifically where Gardaí who were alerted to an assault informed the victim that their intervention would involve a referral to the Children and Family Agency. There is fear associated with referral to social workers and re-victimisation: *“she [the victim] may perceive that she is not deemed to have the capacity to look after her children”* (Oasis House Women’s Refuge).

Some respondents did point to improvements in the frontline experience of victims due in part to increased awareness among service providers including the Gardaí, staff of the court service, probation officers and health professionals and pointed to *“pockets of good practice around the country where the system is cohesive where the courts work with An Garda Síochána and with the local domestic violence service. These are pockets where stereotypes and preconceptions about domestic violence are trumped by solid data-based evidence and where the default position is the physical wellbeing and welfare of the vulnerable until such a time as the issue can be and is resolved.”* (Safe Ireland) The importance of extending this approach throughout the country was highlighted so that every victim has a positive experience within the legal system.

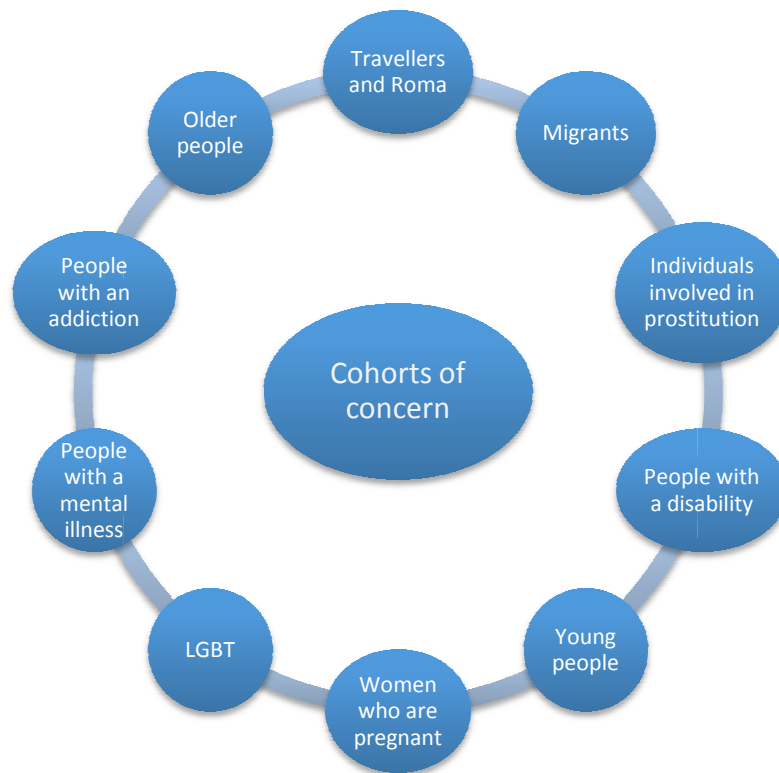
Recognition was given to some improvement of service provision for minority groups but *“Traveller and Roma women continue to avoid accessing services, particularly state services”* (Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre). This lack of trust leads to significant underreporting of DSGBV in these communities.

#### 2.4.2 Access to information about DSGBV

Victims of DSGBV can struggle to engage with the variety of necessary and relevant agencies, which can delay, and at worst, deter victims from leaving a violent situation. It is therefore important that they can access information on available services and respondents noted the benefits arising from the provision of funding to disseminate information and raise awareness. However, supports are currently ad hoc and piecemeal with the nature and quality of the supports available dependent on geographic location and the individual or organisation providing advice to the victim. It was noted that media distributed messaging and advertising has had a positive impact on levels of information about DSGBV but it is still reported that navigating a fragmented response system in a vulnerable state creates further stress. The specific needs of specific cultural groups accessing information due to differences in language and literacy were also noted.

Better mapping of options and supports is required and a broader one-stop-shop of supports should be considered.

## Chapter Three: Cohorts of concern



### 3.1 Overview of theme

Survey respondents report distinct groups within Irish society who they categorise as being more ‘at risk’ and vulnerable in the DSGBV setting. These groups possess characteristics which require understanding in order to provide effective service responses.

Respondents have identified the following groups:

- Travellers and Roma
- Migrants
- Individuals involved in prostitution
- People with a disability
- Young people
- Women who are pregnant
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual (LGBT)
- People with a mental illness
- People with an addiction
- Older people

### 3.2 Traveller and Roma communities

The Traveller and Roma communities in Ireland have been documented as experiencing both individual and institutional discrimination and racism beyond experiences of the non-Traveller and

non-Roma communities. This layer of isolation makes DSGBV more hidden with a higher likelihood of negative experiences when presenting at response services:

*“It is imperative to address anti-Roma and Traveller prejudice and racism in services working in the area of GBV. This work needs to educate services about the human rights context of Traveller and Roma women- the poverty and marginalisation that result from racism and discrimination and their effect on a woman’s ability [to] leave a violent relationship.” (Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre)*

The response of some Gardaí to DSGBV complaints was noted as being slow and inadequate for this cohort:

*“there are reports of inconsistent responses by Gardaí in cases of domestic violence in Traveller sites. These include reluctance and significant delays in responding to calls by Traveller women under violence attack by their partner (up to two hours) and removing the perpetrator from site for [a] few hours to ‘cool off’ before returning the perpetrator back on site.” (Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre).*

The difficulty traveller women experience in accessing suitable accommodation, similar to experiences of accessing some other DSGBV services, has heightened the challenges for Traveller women leaving violent situations: *“Refuge provision has largely focused on communal living. In particular for Traveller women living away from their community, communal living in a refuge, can be extremely difficult and place further stress on a vulnerable family” (Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre).* Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre report through their experiences that some Traveller women access local services and refuges that they have built up trust in, however, there are few Roma women accessing services and supports.

A deficiency of data about use of services by Traveller and Roma women in the statutory and non-statutory sector because information is not collected and/or does not disaggregate by ethnicity was also noted.

A positive development noted by the HSE *“included achieving representation of the Traveller NGO’s at National Level”* and service promotion targeting specific groups which *“moves to ensure greater coherence in promotion of services, specific audience’s targeted e.g. Traveller and Roma women and people with disabilities”.*

A further element to be considered in this context is the acceptance of violence in some instances in Traveller and Roma communities, warranting intervention and prevention strategies.

*“Research by Pavee Point has highlighted alarming findings in relation to the acceptability of GBV among young Travellers.<sup>1</sup> The research shows that young Traveller women can often tolerate rape and sexual violence within marriage and feel that they have no choice in this*

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<sup>1</sup> McGaughey, F. (2011) *A Pavee Perspective- Travellers’ Attitudes to Sexual Relationships and Sex Education*, Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre.

*regard. It also highlights that a certain level of acceptance of violence persists within the community both among men and women, and that violence is often considered as a 'normal' part of a relationship." (Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre)*

A positive observation in this context is improved awareness-raising through information sessions with Traveller projects. Young traveller women are noted as having better awareness of violence potentially due to better levels of literacy and computer skills. However, the provision of information about services and information about DSGBV in an accessible format still need to be addressed given issues of literacy and English language skills.

### 3.3 Migrants

There are many overlaps in the experiences of DSGBV for Traveller, Roma and migrant women. One of the additional concerns mentioned by many survey respondents is the restrictive nature of the Habitual Residence Condition (HRC) which affects migrant women. The HRC imposes specific limitations on women who do not have independent immigration status. The HRC can facilitate abusive situations and reinforce power imbalances.

*"the Habitual Residency Condition is placing unacceptable barriers on women seeking protection and safety. These barriers are leading to increased risk for women and their children who are very vulnerable to further violence from the perpetrator who has exerted and continues to exert severe control and abuse over them." (Women's Aid)*

Many survey respondents are seeking a waiver of the HRC to allow access to social services as well as independent immigration status for the safety and protection of women.

*"While the regulations allow for her to gain similar status, independent of her partner, where there is evidence of domestic abuse, the process in relation to this works very slowly. This can leave her in a very vulnerable situation in the interim e.g. no access to finance, housing etc. This can lead to her having to return to the abusive relationship." (Adapt House Limerick)*

Ireland's cultural profile is more diverse than ever before and with that issues connected to DSGBV have become more apparent e.g. *"forced marriage, genital mutilation and human trafficking"* (HSE). AkiDwa report an increased awareness amongst male migrants about the lack of acceptance of violence in Ireland: *"Migrant men have started becoming more accountable as they do understand now DSGBV which may be a new concept that interfere with cultures in their country of origin..."*. This is happening in conjunction with migrant women changing *"their submissive attitude imposed by "cultures" from countries of origin and have been trying to fight for freedom and equality."* (AkiDwa)

### 3.4 Individuals involved in prostitution

Prostitution, forced prostitution and sexual exploitation has been acknowledged by the European Parliament as a form of violence against women and girls given its highly gendered nature and a number of survey respondents request that this be explicitly included in the next DSGBV strategy.

The provision of wrap-around supports to women working as prostitutes is considered to be crucial because “[t]hey may also face other challenges which can affect their support needs such as drug misuse and mental ill health” (Rhuama). It was also noted that people working in prostitution have often suffered forms of violence prior to entering prostitution which may have led to exploitation and/or grooming. Working within prostitution often exposes people to multiple forms of violence and exploitation:

*“The interplay of push and pull factors is complex and unique to each individual. However, it is clear that both the risk and reality of prostitution for millions of women and girls internationally are closely connected with other forms of gender based violence and can be said to be a direct consequence of gender inequality.”* (Rhuama)

It was also noted that the widespread accessibility of pornography delivers messages which infer sexual availability of women for male gratification without recognition or awareness of interconnectedness to forms of violence.

### 3.5 People with a disability

Women with a disability are reported as experiencing higher levels of all forms of violence than women without a disability. However, the accessibility of services for people with a disability was reported as being problematic, including access to housing which is an added concern for women with a disability or who have children with a disability:

*“...specific groups also face additional barriers when they want to move out of an abusive relationship e.g. access to housing, as do women with a disability or who have children with a disability.”* (Adapt House Limerick)

The lack of training and approach of service providers within the DSGBV sector to this group was also noted:

*“training/ awareness raising could be developed and rolled out nationally and that it be funded under the Cosc Disability Funding Stream. If this is not possible, the NDA recommends that other ways be looked at (e.g. a specific call for tender) to develop such information/training.”* (National Disability Authority)

Recognition is given to the progress by Cosc in including the needs of people with a disability in funding guidelines for organisations providing DSGBV services.

### 3.6 Young people

Young people are a cohort that respondents seek specific targeting due to concerns about the ‘hidden harm’ which may exist due to their exposure to DSGBV. In addition to hidden harm, it was noted that young people may also have been victims of violence themselves and due to their youth may have an added vulnerability to potential exploitation. It was noted that there are particular

services which are not uniformly available for young people, for example care for victims under 14 who have experienced sexual violence may be dependent on geographical location:

*“Care for paediatric victims (<14 years) of sexual violence remains fractured around the country, while there are pockets of excellent care , there are large geographical areas without access to a timely and responsive service, particularly for examination in the acute setting.” (SATUs).*

### 3.7 Women who are pregnant

It was observed that women can become additionally vulnerable to violence during pregnancy and after birth. Public health officials have the potential to identify risk and attempt intervention strategies for women who are pregnant and in violent situations:

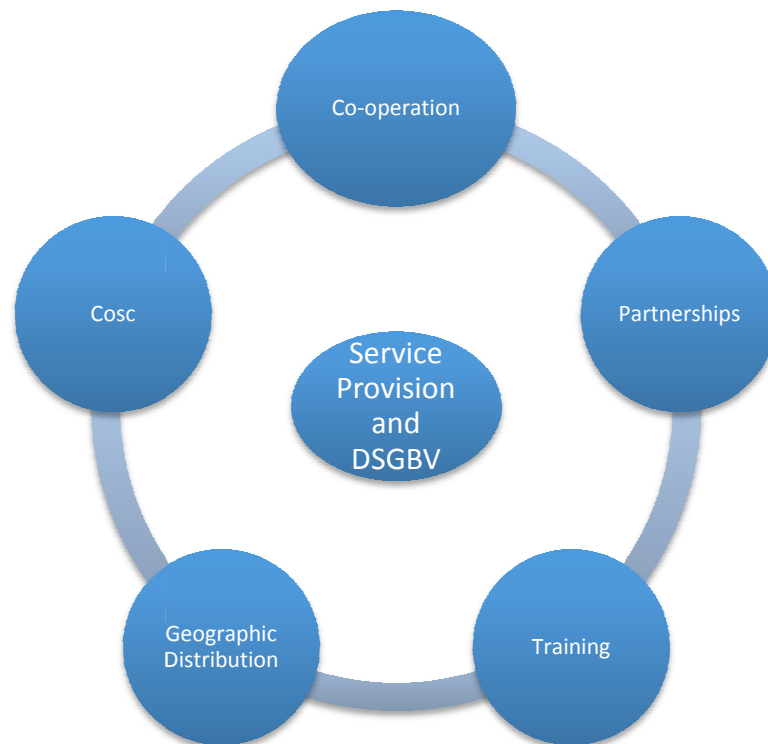
*“A particular focus will likely be required in respect of the role of public health nursing services as they relate to pre and ante-natal support and other services to children and their families in the primary care setting.” (Department of Children and Youth Affairs)*

Positive development in this space includes the establishment of the Maternal Death Enquiry office which has *“potential to highlight the issues of death and pregnancy as a result of partner violence.”* (HSE)

### 3.8 Other cohorts

There are a number of other cohorts with characteristics which respondents refer to and feel should be specifically considered in the development of the next national strategy including LGBT; people with a mental illness; people with an addiction; and, older people.

## Chapter Four: Service Provision and DSGBV



### 4.1 Overview of Theme

The services offered to victims of DSGBV are provided by a wide variety of organisations and individuals and involve both statutory and non-statutory organisations. These organisations must be appropriately trained and work together, with support, in order to ensure the best possible service to victims. A review of comments on services highlighted a number of themes:

- Co-ordination
  - Co-ordination between the various statutory organisations working in the sector and between statutory organisations and non-statutory organisations in the success of the strategy.
- Partnerships
  - Partnership between the variety of non-statutory organisations working in the sector.
- Cosc
  - Strategic role played by Cosc in the sector.
- Training
  - Role of consistently and thoroughly trained personnel, with an understanding of the phenomenon of DSGBV and existing supports, in the provision of the best possible service to victims.

- Geographic Distribution
  - Disparity in the distribution of resources for service provision throughout the country.

## 4.2 Coordinated Co-operation

There are several governmental departments, agencies and non-governmental agencies involved in work related to the prevention and alleviation of DSGBV. This has created difficulties in ensuring that victims receive the optimum level of support and care across all service providers, both statutory and non-statutory. A major concern expressed by respondents related to the difficulty which victims experienced in identifying and accessing the range of services which exist, often due to a lack of co-operation between the statutory and non-statutory agencies working in the field:

*“Overall the lack of a joined up approach is a major difficulty. To affect change individual women still rely on individual responses – e.g by the Gardaí, by a Judge, by a housing officer, by a social worker. Supporting infrastructure and leadership needs to be developed as to how agencies all interact to help make victims safer.” (Women’s Aid)*

Women’s Aid were critical of the failure of the strategy to provide *“an infrastructure that supports closer working and coherence among the key statutory and NGO players.”* The Longford Women’s Link highlighted the importance of continued cooperation between state agencies and non-governmental organisations to maximise victim safety.

While the difficulties in ensuring effective co-operation between statutory and non-statutory bodies were acknowledged, several successes in this regard during the lifetime of the strategy were highlighted by both statutory and non-statutory bodies.

### 4.2.1 Statutory Bodies

Successes identified by statutory bodies include:

- Memoranda of Understanding settled between Office of the DPP and service providers including an agreement with the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre and with the Health Services Executive relating to the disclosure of often very sensitive material held by therapists/social workers/counsellors.
- Representation of the Office of the DPP on the inter-agency committee reviewing the National Guidelines for Sexual Assault Treatment Units (SATU Guidelines).
- Development of “Guidelines for Making a Victim Impact Statement” by the Office of the DPP in collaboration with a working group comprising of staff from the Victims of Crime Office of the Department of Justice and Equality and An Garda Síochána.
- An Garda Síochána pointed to coordinated work of statutory and non-statutory organisations leading to the submission of *“measured, balanced recommendations to the Law Reform Commission and to Government in relation to proposed changes or developments in legislation, which have been taken on board by the relevant sectors.” (AGS)*
- Appointment of the Detective Inspector Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Investigation Unit (DVSAIU) as national liaison between An Garda Síochána and the NGO Sector.

- Designation of an Inspector in each Garda Division with responsibility for overseeing DV incidents locally and with ensuring liaison with local NGOs.
- Improved inter-agency co-ordination in the *“identification and provision of training requirements which led to the delivery of joint-agency DV training involving Adapt and CPD personnel to frontline Gardaí.” (AGS)*
- Protocol for dealing with high risk offenders was finalised between An Garda Síochána and the Probation Service.
- HSE Mid West noted strong interagency cooperation resulting in *“Speak out Cafe Events based on the ‘World Cafe Model’ [which] were facilitated to promote DSGV Service Users and the Families to meet with Service Providers to identify Service Issues” (HSE)*
- HSE support for Akidwa to carry out a range of community based actions in the area of gender based violence and funding by the HSE of a weekly sessional clinic provided by the Irish Family Planning Association to provide appropriate care and treatment in relation to female genital mutilation.
- The Irish Prison Service noted *“[i]ncreased co-ordination between the three criminal justice agencies in managing sex offenders released from prison” (IPS)*. The three agencies are An Garda Síochána, the Probation Service and the Irish Prison Service.
- Co-operation on the Legal Issues sub-Committee of the National Steering Committee on Violence Against Women resulting in the presentation of recommendations.
- Probation Service reviewed its practice and protocols for the sharing of information between agencies.

#### 4.2.2 Non-statutory Bodies

Successes identified by non-statutory bodies include:

- The development of the Support & Referral Service in Dolphin House by Women’s Aid in partnership with Dublin 12 Domestic Violence Service and Inchicore Outreach Centre and supported by the Courts Service.
- Roscommon Safe Link noted an improved relationship between statutory agencies, including the Gardaí, the Courts Service and the Child & Family Agency and their organisation.
- Successful joint trainings noted by the RCNI including joint training by the Probation Service and An Garda Síochána on sex offender risk management and a conference on GBV organised by Cosc.
- Partnership between Cosc and the RCNI, in part funding the Legal Policy Director located in RCNI.
- RCNI Garda Round Table Project was considered a successful *“local inter-agency mechanism in improving inter-agency collaboration” (RCNI)*.
- Collaboration between Ruhama and An Garda Síochána on the development and delivery of training on sensitive policing of prostitution.
- Collaborative policing initiative in Dublin 7 between Ruhama and an Garda Síochána, ‘Operation Kerb’, targeting buyers and offering support and assistance to the women ‘selling’.

#### 4.2.3 Cosc Committees

The value of Cosc Committees including the National Steering Committee on Violence Against Women and the Legal Issues Sub Committee and the HSE / Tusla supported Regional Advisory Committees on Violence Against Women were commented on in many submissions including ensuring:

*“that there is a focus by all members on the Actions contained within the National Strategy... [and providing] for excellent interaction with other Agencies involved in the provision of services to victims of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence. This partnership allowed us to share information and design our service delivery to meet the needs of victims of DA & SV” (AGS).*

It was noted that key successes under the strategy such as the Dolphin House Support & Referral service *“are the direct result of ...fora such as the ERAC that facilitated good connection, communication and co-operation among statutory and NGO agencies in this instance the courts and domestic violence services.”* (Women’s Aid) The reduction in the number of meetings of the RACs and of the NSCVAW meetings was therefore considered to be a very undesirable development and there has been no *“replacement to connect the work of the national strategy with work at local or even regional level.”* (Cosc)

There was also disappointment *“expressed at the perceived failure of the One Stop Shop pilots.”* (HSE)

#### 4.3 Partnerships

Participants acknowledged the importance of a collaborative multi-agency approach amongst NGO’s to best serve victims and reported *“carefully nurture[ing]”* relationships with other NGOs (West Cork Women Against Violence). Examples of successful projects resulting from such cooperation among NGOs included the Dolphin House Family Law Support and Referral Service a partnership between Women’s Aid, the Dublin 12 Domestic Violence Service and Inchicore Outreach Centre, the inclusion of personnel from other voluntary organisations in in-house training offered by West Cork Women Against Violence and the Joint Barnardos and One Family pilot of Child Contact Centres.

Despite the efforts by some, certain non-governmental agencies reported difficult relationships with other NGOs: *“As an organisation, we have experienced difficulty with NGOs in the region. This history has left us somewhat isolated. We have no place to take this issue as it is impossible to know where to trust”* (Roscommon Safe Link). Amen Support Services also reported working in isolation from other domestic violence services and expressed concerns about lack of inter-agency awareness of projects which may exist for the benefit of victims. It was suggested that inter-organisational tensions within the voluntary sector were heightened in recent years due to an increase in tendering which increased the competitive environment.

#### 4.4 Cosc

Participants were positive about the *“inclusive and all encompassing attitude of Cosc”* (Amen Support Services) and the inclusion of a variety of organisations and groups in the *“structures and processes of the development and implementation of the Strategy”* (Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre).

##### 4.4.1 Action

While Cosc were commended on producing a *“thoughtful and informed strategy 2010 to 2014, and striving to secure implementation to the greatest extent possible across multiple government offices and other partner agencies”* (RCNI), a common theme in submissions was a concern that the strategy did not develop as one of action. Progress in some areas was noted, particularly in relation to high level goal one objectives, for example, *“moves to ensure greater coherence in promotion of services, specific audiences targeted e.g Traveller and Roma women and people with disabilities; commencement of work in 2<sup>nd</sup> level schools; and campaigns and survey in 3<sup>rd</sup> level colleges.”* (Women’s Aid). However, progress in relation to the other goals was considered to be less evident. The importance of achievable and realistic goals was highlighted with Ascend Domestic Abuse Service noting that *“[t]he actions and objectives of the previous strategy are mostly unachieved.”* Examples of failures to progress to action included the *“failure to implement recommendations of the Cosc-led Justice Committee report on attrition”* (Cosc) and the failure to establish a training committee as required under the strategy.

It was suggested that the original strategy may have been overly ambitious, lacked concrete and measurable goals, did not consider the changing economic environment, and that the political will to support the strategy was lacking. A consequence of this is that service providers may have felt disengaged from the strategy; *“[g]enerally, managers were no longer familiar with the Strategy because they felt that it had little or no relevance to the functioning of their services.”* (Safe Ireland)

##### 4.4.2 Communication between Cosc and Service Providers

Communication between Cosc and service providers was highlighted as a concern by participants on a number of levels. First, while the value of Cosc committees was recognised in fostering communication, *“[c]onsultation meetings need to be meaningful and feedback needs to be heard and acted upon. Reviews that tick boxes and co- opt achievements made by others are pointless.”* (West Cork Women Against Violence) (emphasis not added). Safe Ireland noted that:

*“Members felt that consultation, interaction, evaluation and assessment descended to be little more than a tick-boxing exercise – covering off what was set out to be done rather than really analyzing, assessing, asking, listening, reviewing and putting structures and plans in place to effect meaningful change for women and children.”*

Several other participants noted a lack of meaningful communication between Cosc and services; *“the only communication we had with regard to the strategy was requests for implementation updates (which did not come as frequently as anticipated)”* (SATUs). Mná Feasa Women’s Domestic Violence Project noted that: *“It would be nice if someone from Cosc or Justice would call to our*

*project now and again – you would get great feedback through a round table discussion in a face to face situation and it would be nice to meet the people behind the names on the computers.”*

#### 4.4.3 Funding

The importance of funding received from Cosc in funding individual initiatives by service providers was noted. However, concern was expressed about the apparently ad hoc nature of funding initiatives: *“major change requires more consistent, national coverage and campaigns, not one-off spurts of activity with no follow-up.”* (West Cork Women Against Violence). Safe Ireland noted that grant applications focused *“more on costs and unit costs and much less on concept, and the strategic development of a coherent awareness plan that would work across the whole sector.”*

#### 4.5 Training

Despite the identification of improvements, it is clear that victims of DSGBV do not always meet frontline staff who understand the complexities of DSGBV or are sensitive to the *“traumatic impact of abuse on the victim.”* (Adapt House Limerick). The requirement to train individuals working in both statutory and non-statutory organisations to ensure the provision of the best possible service to victims was a key finding in the submissions.

There are several aspects to this, including training to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena of DSGBV, how to deal with victims sensitively and to *“recognise the danger and understand level of risk escalation that exists around the time a women makes a complaint or tries to leave the situation”* (Longford Women’s Link). Consistency of approach was considered to be important: *“[c]ross- sectoral training has been integrated in to training departments which brings greater consistency and complementarity in the delivery of service to victims”* (Irish Probation Service). Programmes such as “Train the Trainer” were welcomed as a means of upskilling key personnel and achieving consistency of approach nationally. The fact that specific training may be required to educate service providers on the needs and specific supports required by certain groups was emphasised. It was clear that best practice guidelines were considered to be important in aiding this process.

The final strand related to increasing knowledge of existing supports and programmes amongst the state and voluntary sector, as some organisations raised their concerns about a lack of awareness of complimentary services which would benefit their clients. It is anticipated that this would result in increased cross-agency referrals where appropriate.

The failure to establish a training committee under the strategy was lamented as it resulted in *“the on-going dilution of training actions. The range of training across the broader Community and Voluntary Sector - achieving the dual outcome of raising awareness of GBV, increasing the climate of disclosure and building inter- agency collaboration likely to result in better cross agency referrals, never took place.”*(RCNI) The impact of resource limitations on the ability to access and utilise quality training programmes was further recognised by participants who noted that *“it can be difficult for*

*practitioners to acquire time and funding to complete these programmes, which potentially impacts on both service provision and sustainability” (SATUs).*

The importance of up-to-date data and research for training and educational purposes was highlighted.

#### 4.6 Geographical distribution

Concerns were expressed about the equality of distribution of resources for service provision throughout the country. While this perception was pointed to in a number of submissions, specific examples of unequal distribution were provided. One such example related the absence of resources to examine paediatric victims of sexual violence in acute settings in *“large geographical areas... This means that innumerable phone calls may have to be made in an attempt to arrange and secure review, care and examination which is simply not good enough.” (SATUs)*

Participants have responded to the challenge of operating in resource poor areas in different ways including *“restructure[ing] outreach services in order to meet service demands in areas where there were none or few services” (Sonas)*. It was also noted that the experience of victims or the services they receive from region to region was not dictated solely by the allocation of resources in specific areas. It may differ on the basis of the approach taken by specific individuals or the relationships which exist; *“[w]here there is a more sympathetic approach taken by state services it is at the local level because of relationships built between local DV support services and local personnel in those other services” (West Cork Women Against Violence).*

For geographically isolated service providers, communication through fora such as the RAC meetings becomes increasingly important: *“[t]he loss or absence of the RAC meetings in the area has had enormous disadvantage for our project in that it creates isolation for us in our rural setting” (Roscommon Safe Link).*

## Chapter Five: Legal



### 5.1 Overview of Theme

The legal framework within which the strategy operates and within which victims seek protection and justice were highlighted as being of great importance in the responses received. Seven related themes emerged:

- Legislation
  - The role of the legislative framework in ensuring the safety of victims and the accountability of perpetrators.
- Legal aid
  - The ability of victims to access the courts through the provision of legal aid.
- The Court Process
  - Impact of interaction with the justice system on victims and the supports necessary for victims.
- Accountability
  - Holding perpetrators of DSGBV accountable for their actions and reducing attrition rates.
- Training of those in the Legal System
  - Benefit to victims of appropriately trained and educated personnel in the criminal justice system.

- Policing
  - Role of An Garda Síochána in the frontline response to victims, protecting them and ensuring accountability.
- International Obligations
  - Role of international obligations in shaping responses to DSGBV in an Irish context.

## 5.2 Legislation

It was clear that respondents felt the legislative framework was vitally important in protecting women and played an important communicative role in society. Amendments to the Domestic Violence Act 1996, particularly the *“extension of safety orders to cover parents of a child in common and civil partners as well as a change to the eligibility period in legislation”* (Cosc), and the introduction of legislation dealing with female genital mutilation were considered to be positive developments during the lifetime of the strategy. Respondents also highlighted the on-going review and commitment to consolidation and reform of domestic violence legislation as a positive development.

This review is particularly important as it was noted that *“[t]he effectiveness of current legislation and the criminal and civil justice system to prevent, investigate and protect women against domestic and sexual violence has been seriously challenged by research commissioned by Women’s Aid<sup>2</sup> and Amnesty International<sup>3</sup>”* (Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre). Safe Ireland raised concerns about the experiences of women in their interactions with the legal system and the efficacy of the current legal framework to protect them and suggest that women are *“living with the reality that domestic violence is not categorised as a crime within our statutes.”*

### 5.2.1 DV related orders

While participants were positive about the amendments in this area, particularly where there was a child in common, concerns were raised by several respondents about the use of domestic violence related orders. One area of particular concern was the absence of an emergency legal order available to victims of domestic violence outside of court hours:

*“If the Gardaí are called to respond to a domestic violence situation they may face difficulties in making an arrest due to lack of evidence. If an arrest is made it is likely that the perpetrator... is not charged and is free to return home. The only option is for the women and children to leave the family home and access accommodation either with family, in a local refuge or maybe a refuge outside the jurisdiction. If the woman meets the criteria for Barring Order she has to wait until the next sitting of the District Court to obtain a Protection Order. A court hearing is then scheduled for a month or so later to have application for Barring*

<sup>2</sup> Kelleher, P. & O’Connor, M., (1999) *Safety and Sanctions: Domestic Violence and the Enforcement of Law in Ireland*

<sup>3</sup> Amnesty International *Justice and Accountability: Stop Violence Against Women, Summary Report*  
Available at: [http://www.womensaid.ie/download/pdf/justice\\_and\\_accountability.pdf](http://www.womensaid.ie/download/pdf/justice_and_accountability.pdf)

*Order heard. The woman and children are out of their home often traumatised and their lives are disrupted” (Oasis House Women’s Refuge).*

Restrictions on the availability of barring orders including those relating to co-habitation and property ownership were also of concern to respondents: “[s]uch criteria create difficulty for women in these situations who do not fulfil the criteria for a barring order as they may ultimately find themselves homeless” (Oasis House Women’s Refuge). There was also criticism of the failure to protect women from emotional or psychological abuse and the availability of DV related orders to protect women from abuse of this nature.

Concerns were also expressed by several respondents about the impact of the Habitual Residence Condition (HRC) contained in the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005 (see 3.3 page 18 above).

### 5.3 Legal Aid

Three principal concerns were raised in relation to the provision of legal aid in Ireland. The primary concerns related to the lengthy waiting times for legal aid and the increase in legal aid fees:

*“Women regularly attend court without a solicitor because legal aid will not represent them without receiving payment for their services up-front. That payment has increased considerably in recent times and women quite literally have no money to pay for necessities not to mind legal aid so they go it alone” (Mná Feasa Women’s Domestic Violence Project).*

The impact of a clause which prevents two people from accessing the same legal aid centre was also raised as a concern with participants suggesting that “[t]o address the issue of conflict of interest the Legal Aid office could issue a Private Practitioner Cert. This will address the challenge for some woman having to get to a different county when their partner got Legal Aid” (Longford Women’s Link).

### 5.4 The Courts Process

Concerns were raised by several participants about the impact of interaction with the justice system on victims and it was noted that victims and victim-advocate groups continue to report traumatic experiences in the prosecution of sexual and domestic violence related offences.

#### 5.4.1 Supports for victims

It was noted that the experience of engaging with the criminal justice system in itself may be stressful for victims and the added possibility of intimidation by the perpetrator, particularly in cases of DV, means that victims are in need of information and advocacy support in their engagement with the legal system. The Dolphin House Family Law Court Support and Referral Service was cited as an example of good practice in this regard providing information, support and court accompaniment. The funding provided by the Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime in the development of a more professional court accompaniment service was noted.

The launch of the revised *Victims Charter* in 2010 and the development by the Office of the DPP of “Guidelines for Making a Victim Impact Statement” are further examples of developments in this area which are of practical benefit to victims. This guide was developed in collaboration with a working group comprising of staff from the Victims of Crime Office of the Department of Justice and Equality and An Garda Síochána. The launch of Domestic Violence Policy and Practice Guidelines by The Probation Service were also noted as positive supports.

The negative impact of the decision of the Office of the DPP to seek a victim’s counselling notes in cases of sexual violence was noted, particularly the *“uncertainty and distress [caused] for victims, although aimed at preventing the collapse of cases”* (Cosc). However, the protocol agreed between the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the commitment to address the issue in sexual violence legislation were also noted.

The physical environment of the court building may also impact upon the victim of DSGBV and the work by the Courts Service to improve facilities for victims in court buildings was noted a success outside the strategy. It was suggested that increasing safety measures for women in family law courts and improving *“facilities such as consultation rooms, toilet facilities, changing rooms etc. for women and children”* should be a priority in the future (Women’s Aid). The impact of women in rural areas having to *“follow the Court” perhaps from Skibbereen to Clonakilty – with no transport or childcare* was also noted (Mná Feasa Women’s Domestic Violence Project).

#### 5.4.3 Waiting times for hearings

Several respondents highlighted the need for *“faster redress in court”* (Ascend Domestic Abuse Service) given the impact of a drawn out legal process on victims. Women’s Aid reported reduced waiting times for hearings in relation to DV related orders in 2010/2011. However, since that time, waiting times have again increased. The importance of adequate resourcing of the family law court infrastructure in order to reduce waiting times in the future was highlighted, particularly to reduce the time between the issue of a protection order and hearing for safety/barring orders. Mná Feasa Women’s Domestic Violence Project noted that *“[r]ecently in Cork City no judge was available to hear a case for an order on a Tuesday.”*

#### 5.4.3 Specialist Courts

The important role played by judges in this area was recognised by respondents and it was suggested that a specialist DV court model *“which ensures victim autonomy or agency, operated by trained professionals who understand the complexities and dynamics of domestic violence and risk minimization”* be created. (Safe Ireland)

### 5.5 Accountability

It is clear that perpetrator accountability was important for many respondents and that there were low expectations amongst respondents that perpetrators of DSGBV would be held accountable for their actions, for a variety of reasons.

#### 5.5.1 Custodial sentences

There was a general consensus that custodial sentences in cases involving domestic and sexual violence were low, although it was acknowledged that there was little empirical evidence to support this contention. It was suggested that judges should take a *“non-tolerance approach ...[to] sentencing... reflect[ing] the seriousness of the crime, focused on the perpetrators behaviour and holding him accountable for it”* (Women’s Aid). The introduction of sentencing guidelines was mooted as a possible solution to address both the low levels of custodial sentences and concerns about inconsistencies in sentences with *“geography and/or varying approaches by the judiciary and judicial personnel... [playing] a significant part in outcomes for women”* (Longford Women’s Link). Recent legislative proposals to *“decouple compensation... and consideration by the judge of a prison sentence”* was considered to be a positive development in this context (Cosc).

It was noted by Cosc that while there was a perception that the sentence handed down in a number of high profile sexual violence cases was unduly lenient, it is open to the DPP to appeal a sentence handed down in the Circuit Court and the Central Criminal Court on grounds of undue leniency. However, it was highlighted by the DPP that *“[t]his application is limited to matters dealt with on indictment and no such right of review exists in respect of district court sentences, where a large proportion of domestic violence cases are heard.”* (Office of the DPP).

The importance of data on custodial sentences was noted, particularly on the *“rates of custodial sentences for men who breach Protection/Safety/Barring/Maintenance/ Orders”* (Women’s Aid) and the failure to progress the collection of data of this nature under the current strategy was criticised.

#### 5.5.2 DV Orders

While there has been an increase in the number of domestic violence orders being sought and being granted, there was a concern about the lack of consistency in the response to breaches of DV related orders: *“barring orders and safety orders are breached without consistent, or sometimes, serious, consequence”* (Safe Ireland). Similarly, there was a concern about a lack of consistent consequences for men who breach maintenance orders and *“present in court again and again”* (Women’s Aid).

Concern was also expressed about the effect on women of the use of ‘undertakings’ rather than more formal orders:

*“[a]n undertaking has no power of arrest and does not give the woman the immediate protection of a Domestic Violence order. When both have signed an undertaking, which women can feel pressurised to do, this leaves them vulnerable as it makes the women equally accountable in the perpetrating of verbal/physical abuse, which is more than likely not the case where the male is the perpetrator of the abuse. This is a retrograde step leaving women vulnerable and weakening the Gardaí response to 999 calls as it leaves them without an order to enforce”* (Women’s Aid).

Respondents also noted that the use of ‘undertakings’ has the result of excluding women from an opportunity to speak publically in court about their experiences at the hands of their abusers.

### 5.5.3 Perpetrator programmes

The feedback on perpetrator programmes contained several strands. First, there was positive feedback on improvements in domestic violence perpetrator programmes funded by Cosc. The work of Cosc was commended in this regard including *“actively profil[ing] the work of Intervention Programmes (e.g., in Spain), engag[ing] with external researchers regarding Programme development... and meet[ing] with expert trainers in the work of the intervention programmes”* (MEND Programme and the Men’s Development Network). However, it was noted that there is *“no research backed international “gold standard” domestic violence perpetrator programme protocol which has been shown to work”* (Cosc) and concerns were raised about the quality of some perpetrator programmes. In this context, it was considered to be important that perpetrator programmes be evaluated and their effectiveness monitored. Cosc suggested that this include *“risk assessment of perpetrators to target interventions at the high risk areas for each perpetrator”*.

The lack of court mandated perpetrator programmes was a cause of concern and Women’s Aid suggested that *“[p]erpetrator programmes to be court mandated to ensure consequences for repeat offending”*. It was also noted that there are no female perpetrator programmes generally (Amen Support Services) and that perpetrator programmes were not available in all areas. Cosc noted their aim to extend the geographic coverage of perpetrator programmes in the future.

The creation of new perpetrator programmes was noted by respondents including sexual violence perpetrator programmes at the National Centre for Perpetrators of Sexual Crimes established at Arbour Hill Prison and Building Better Lives Programme for violent offenders established at Wheatfield Place of Detention. Cosc also noted the acknowledgement of Irish domestic violence perpetrator programmes at EU level.

### 5.5.4 Attrition rates

While traditionally attrition rates are a concern in sexual violence cases, it was clear from submissions that attrition rates were worrying for organisations working across the sector. Several factors were highlighted as relevant to the rates of attrition, particularly frontline responses, which are dealt with in more detail elsewhere. However, an example of the reasons given include:

*“complexity of the court process and the emphasis on the victim being the person to bring the perpetrator to justice e.g. the victim of domestic abuse has to initiate the court process to gain the protection of the court. The long delays in hearing cases and the constant adjournments in hearing cases and the inconsistency in outcomes from cases brought at all mitigate against the victim having the capacity to see the process through. Added to this is the constant intimidation she may be exposed to from her partner throughout the process. Domestic abuse needs to be recognised as a crime from day one and not just when an order is breached and the timeframe from when the process is initiated and when it is completed needs to be significantly reduced.”* Adapt House Limerick

An Garda Síochána noted the efforts by all organisations to reduce attrition rates as very positive,

and proposals to gather data on attrition rates in DV cases were welcomed by Women's Aid. However, the failure to implement the recommendations of the Justice Committee Report on Attrition in 2011 led by Cosc was considered to be a disappointment under the current strategy.

One suggestion to increase successful prosecution of DSGBV is the facilitation of the collection and storage of forensic evidence by SATUs in the absence of the Gardaí, thereby giving victims who do not wish to report the crime initially the opportunity to report at a later date without losing vital forensic evidence (SATU). Cosc note the relevance of the Istanbul Convention in this context and highlight this as a specific action to be undertaken under the next strategy.

### 5.6 Training of those in the Legal System

It was clear from a multiplicity of submissions that a comprehensive training programme for those working within the legal system is important to ensure an understanding of the complexities and dynamics of DV. This would be of benefit to victims, ensuring greater awareness and sensitivity. Examples of co-operation between NGOs and frontline service providers in the successful delivery of training were provided, including workshops delivered by Women's Aid to Garda recruits and a "Train the Trainer" course delivered to the Garda Training Officers in divisions across the country by Adapt House: *"[t]hey appreciate the training and how it challenged not only their knowledge but also their attitudes."* It was noted that further input from NGO's in this way, including co-facilitation of training programmes would have been beneficial but resources did not allow it.

The importance of training legal professionals working with victims of DV in both civil and criminal cases was emphasised; *"[o]nly solicitors who are trained in family law and in the nature of Domestic Violence should represent victims, otherwise clients are being misrepresented"* (Roscommon Safe Link). Similarly, it was suggested that judges receive specialist training to deal with cases of DV.

### 5.7 Policing

Several respondents pointed to an improved response by the Gardaí to DSGBV with victims reporting more positive experiences of the Gardaí. Examples included *"Gardaí 'staying in touch', 'keeping woman up-to-date', assisting women to retrieve young children after they had been taken by abusive partners, advising women of their legal options, providing details of domestic violence services and safety planning."* (Women's Aid). This was attributed to training delivered by An Garda Síochána alone and in conjunction with NGOs. However, the experience of every victim was not positive with inappropriate or inconsistent Garda responses reported and contributing to continued underreporting in the jurisdiction. This was particularly true for certain cohorts including Traveller and Roma women and migrant men.

Other developments in An Garda Síochána include the introduction of:

- *Risk Assessment and management of sex offenders, SORAM (An Garda Síochána).*
- *A revised policy on DV intervention (An Garda Síochána).*
- *The appointment of the Detective Inspector DVSAIU as National liaison between An Garda Síochána and the NGO Sector (An Garda Síochána).*

- *A designated inspector in each Garda Division with responsibility for overseeing DV incidents locally and with ensuring that local liaison with NGO's is maintained (An Garda Síochána).*
- *Improved communication between An Garda Síochána (DV Inspectors) and NGO's (An Garda Síochána).*
- *Garda strategies on domestic violence and on sexual violence, including sexual abuse of children (Cosc).*
- *Development of material for the Garda intranet, the availability on the Garda website of leaflets in a number of languages on crime prevention, including a leaflet on domestic violence, and the inclusion of contact details of support services on the reverse of the garda business card (Cosc).*

## **5.8 International obligations**

The significance placed on ending domestic, sexual and gender-based violence in international organisations including the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the European Union was highlighted in the review and the importance of international obligations in shaping responses in an Irish context to DSGBV must be considered.

### **5.8.1 Existing obligations**

Respondents highlighted the importance of compliance with relevant international treaties which have been signed and ratified by Ireland through their inclusion in policy and legislation. These included: the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; European Convention on Human Rights; the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings; the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It was also noted that Ireland has reporting obligations under the United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which must be fulfilled in a timely manner. EU strategies directed at particular groups were also referenced including Europe 2020, the Ten Common Principles of Roma Inclusion, and the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020.

### **5.8.2 Future**

Several respondents were keen to emphasise the implications of two key instruments which have not yet come into force, notably the Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime (2012/29/EU), also known as the Victim's Directive, and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, known as the Istanbul Convention.

Ireland is under an obligation to implement the Victim's Directive (2012/29/EU) by November 2015 and Safe Ireland suggested that the needs of victims of domestic violence particularly be considered in the implementation plan with particular attention paid to:

*“o Availability of information at all entry points to the state and non-state system detailing the process for making complaints and statements to Gardaí and other justice professionals (Implementation of EU Victims Directive 3).*

*o Rules required for each party to be heard (Implementation of EU Victims Directive 4).*

*o Formalise the role of specialist DV advocates to ensure that victims have access to an advocate throughout their process of seeking protection and justice.*

*(Implement EU Victims Directive – Articles 3.3, 8, 20 and 25)”*

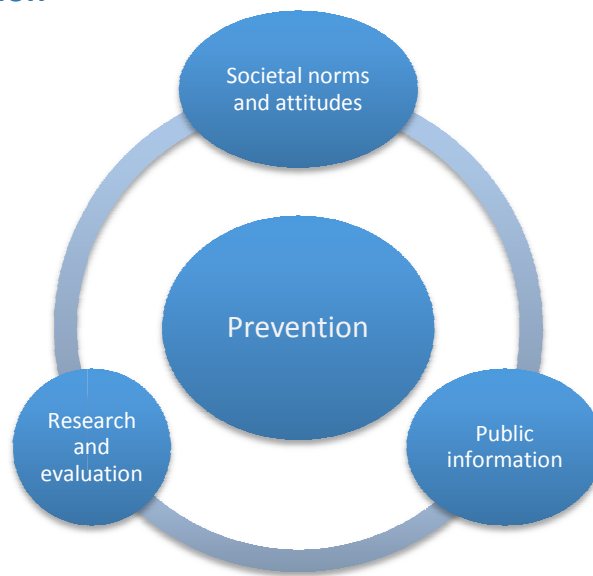
The transposition and implementation of the Victims Directive will be supported by the Victims of Crime Office in the Department of Justice and Equality. The Office of the DPP indicated that it is examining the implications *“for the Office and the prosecution of crime generally of the various provisions of the Victims Directive”*.

Of particular concern to respondents was the failure of the state to sign and ratify the Istanbul Convention to date:

*“There is an urgent need to sign and ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, which makes specific provisions in relation to GBV. If ratified, the Convention would provide the most far-reaching international treaty to address GBV as a violation of human rights.” (Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre)*

The submission by Cosc noted that work has begun on the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by Ireland which will come into force on August 1st 2014 and this process will be supported by the Office. It was suggested that a timeline be set out in the next Strategy *“for all policy and legislative changes and actions needed to ensure the full enactment and implementation of the Istanbul Convention.” (Safe Ireland)*

## Chapter 6: Prevention



### 6.1 Overview of theme

Survey respondents identify prevention planning, prevention policy and prevention initiatives as fundamental in deterring violence. Primary and secondary prevention are noted as being worthy of their own agendas and the key areas of potential prevention work are identified in:

- Societal norms and attitudes
  - How society perceives violence; the understanding of what contributes to and defines DSGBV; apathy to violence and the investment required to inform society about the prevalence and unacceptable nature of violence.
- Public information
  - Informing the public about violence through mainstream institutions and agenda-setting.
- Research and evaluation
  - Improved data collection and research with consistent evaluative approaches have the potential to inform planning and implementation of prevention strategies.

### 6.2 Societal norms and attitudes

Primary prevention, in part, needs to target informing society more about DSGBV.

#### 6.2.1 Gender inequality

Survey respondents comment on the need for primary prevention to be developed from a place of cultural understanding. Schools are particularly noted as conduits to “*meet standards of gender equality and zero tolerance to sexual harassment and other GBV*” (RCNI).

Positive reference was made to the current strategy's recognition of gender inequality "[violence against women] *is rooted in gender inequality*" (Women's Aid) and "*there is now wider recognition that Domestic Violence is about the perpetrators power and control over women and involves not only physical and sexual violence, but can include a number of behaviours, such as intimidation, threats, isolation and humiliation...*" (Roscommon Safe Link).

Understanding contributing factors to violence "*is important because a strategy cannot be based simply on the prevalence of the violence/abuse...(it) must also look at factors that might lead a person to use violence/abuse within their intimate relationships.*" (MEND Programme and Men's Development Network).

Prostitution as a form of gender based violence represents a long standing issue of inequality between men and women: "*Prostitution exploits multiple forms of inequality: men's domination over women, rich over poor, North over South, majority groups over minorities.*" Ruhama suggest that the harm of prostitution and perceptions of entitlement to buy sex need to be raised and discussed in a structured way with boys and men.

#### 6.2.2 Awareness of DSGBV

There is a strong call amongst survey respondents to improve and increase awareness of what constitutes violence, types of violence and supports in response to DSGBV across all sectors and by all agencies. There was also clear recognition of the value of awareness raising initiatives funded by Cosc under the current strategy and the resulting attitudinal change. These initiatives were directed at both statutory and non-statutory groups and the general public highlighting both the issue of domestic violence and availability of services. Examples included "*2 in 2 U; We're ready to listen; Don't be afraid, Your Silence fuels the violence*" (Women's Aid). It was suggested that "*awareness raising campaigns funded by Cosc may have also increased awareness and knowledge of the issues and experiences of male victims of domestic abuse*" thereby leading to increased positive experiences of male victims (AMEN). However "*many people still disbelie[ve] that this is an... ever increasing issue.*" (Amen Support Services)

The potential role of social media as a vehicle for appropriate messaging and addressing specific attitudes towards healthy and unhealthy relationships was noted. While the use of men with high profiles as ambassadors for zero tolerance of violence against women as an approach being used in a number of countries around the world was also commented upon.

Children and young people need to be equipped with an understanding about what constitutes violence and particularly sexual consent. The education sector is noted as a key setting for awareness raising amongst young people, particularly the delivery of relationship and sexuality education. Efforts to work with third level student bodies including a campaign with the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) relating to dating violence were commended.

### **6.2.3 Social and cultural patterns**

Survey participants acknowledge the concentration of resources, effort and recommendations focused on the individual at risk of or who has experienced DSGBV. This only addresses part of the issue and greater priority needs to be given to moving cultural norms. The societal and gendered nature of this violence has been acknowledged by entities such as the UN, and Ireland has obligations under various conventions to address these issues.

Respondents recommend identifying, through research, who needs attitudinal and behavioural intervention and targeting a campaign towards these groups e.g. use social marketing campaigns with the realisation that such campaigns raise an interest which would have to be followed through. Irish media is considered to be penetrable and if worked with locally and nationally there is large distribution potential: *“if worked with effectively, this extremely local based media could be our greatest allies in increasing understanding of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence”* (Safe Ireland).

Whole-of-government collaboration is needed in this preventative space with the Department of Education and Skills suggested as one lead agency.

Groups such as the Traveller and Roma communities would require a tailored approach to effective primary and secondary prevention that has sensitivity to culture as well as literacy and language abilities.

### **6.2.4 Funding**

The provision of funding for awareness raising and information distribution more broadly was welcomed by survey participants and considered to be a positive development.

Funding cuts have hit prevention and early intervention activities in non-statutory organisations hardest because response-driven activities are prioritised. Ad hoc youth and community prevention programmes have been developed around Ireland which focused on attitudinal change and are in demand from schools and other youth settings but resource constraints are preventing its continuation and broadening.

Commitment is requested in the next strategy to invest in and gather research that will inform strategies for changing behaviours and attitudes towards DSGBV in Ireland.

## **6.3 Public information**

There is a need for Ireland’s broader society to understand the dynamics and prevalence of DSGBV.

Survey respondents seek greater emphasis and involvement by mainstream services, such as education and health, in improving awareness of the broader population which requires an agenda incorporating whole-of-government policies and processes. It was noted by participants that some awareness and attitudinal change has come about as a result of the current strategy and there is

momentum around *“breaking the silence around domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women”* (Adapt House Limerick). This includes an *“increased awareness and knowledge of the issues and experiences of male victims of domestic abuse”* (Amen Support Services).

There is a general call by respondents to design messaging which is consistent and widespread:

*“Run a consistent national campaign with one message. The same message must reach all communities. A zero acceptance of Domestic Abuse by ALL members of society needs to be promoted. It should not continue to be seen as a private matter and recognised as a crime”* (AkiWdA).

Raising awareness of service providers amongst victims experiencing DSGBV, and their family and friends is very important. An approach is also required to raise the awareness of people who are not directly affected by DSGBV about its prevalence and the gendered dynamics at play. This could have a societal benefit.

Dissemination of knowledge can be targeted e.g. Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, the HSE; community organisations; sports clubs that would facilitate broader reaching information.

Resource commitments to mechanisms that will raise public awareness of DSGBV have been affected by funding cuts and will be amongst the first supports to be discontinued when there is such a strong demand on response service funding.

Some organisations have been providing specialised training to organisations such as the Gardaí or educational institutions in resource-constrained environments. Working on the development of a social marketing/ public awareness campaign(s) for the public and specific cohorts should be done in collaboration, with expertise and manageable deliverables.

## 6.4 Research and evaluation

There has been a positive improvement in elements of data collection, research quality and evaluative techniques. However each stream still remains fragmented and lacks transferability. A more inclusive and consistent approach is required to develop each strand and work with better informed evidence to target prevention, early intervention and response to DSGBV.

### 6.4.1 Data

The current National Strategy on DSGBV was commented on as having guidelines which resulted in the development of *“additional statistics for the measurement of recorded crime where it related to domestic and sexual violence”* (CSO). An Garda Síochána reported an improved recording of data on their PULSE system and *“[i]nclusion of FGM in the Maternity Health Record is another example of progress in this area”* (HSE).

Data gathered by the statutory and non-statutory sectors should be designed to provide point-in-time as well as longitudinal information to identify successes and deficiencies of intervention techniques over time.

There are concerns about statutory authorities e.g. An Garda Síochána and HSE methods of recording sexual and domestic violence which may inadvertently facilitate underreporting because of poor reporting mechanisms. Respondents see a need to develop a standardised approach to the collection of data, by both statutory and non-statutory authorities, about sexual and domestic violence incidents that can be validated, reliable and shared to inform future action. It is not efficient to have individual organisations developing quantitative data collection methods in isolation.

It is felt that data gathering and storage, including governance arrangements, need to be adequately invested in and sustained with recognition of the value of output from this work. Similarly expertise is required in data collection and analytical capacity to facilitate this work: *“it is essential that the strategy ensures that the generation of data serves the dual purpose to meeting monitoring and accountability requirements and supports the best evaluation and learning”* (RCNI). Presently there is limited data at the end of the current strategy to inform the work of the next strategy:

*“Data collection within individual SATUs and data sharing between SATUs and other agencies needs to be optimised. Individual units each collect comprehensive anonymous data on all attendees but the utility of this information is constrained by deficiencies in IT development and support”* (Sexual Assault Treatment Units).

At Ireland’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR) for UN human rights reporting, one of the eight member state recommendations on topics relevant to DSGBV was for Ireland to *“strengthen its policies and laws against domestic violence and prepare adequate statistics, including sex, age and family relationship of victims and perpetrators”* (Pakistan).

#### 6.4.2 Research

Respondents have reported commissioning their own pieces of research on specific elements of DSGBV which has been wholly insightful in those areas of focus. This approach however leads to a fragmented view of DSGBV and does not add to the understanding of this violence in Ireland or how to proceed collectively.

Many respondents have referenced the EU Fundamental Rights Agency report on *Violence against women: an EU-wide survey* which provides statistics on Ireland’s incidence of violence which is highly informative but it is claimed that similar statistics are distinctly absent at a national level. Development of a national strategy which addresses prevention, early intervention and response to DSGBV should be grounded in data and research *“analytical capacity and research are increasingly recognised as a foundation of National Strategies”* (RCNI). Research is sought in areas such as

- Attrition rates of domestic and sexual violence.
- Rates of custodial sentences for domestic violence.
- Consistency amongst judges in accountability and sentencing.
- Rates of custodial sentences for men who breach protection/safety/ barring/ maintenance orders.
- Wider affects of domestic violence particularly children.

- The value of non-statutory services to clients, families and communities.
- High level reports on services to victims from the PULSE system - how many DV cases; how many responses to call outs; how many follow ups etc.
- Disaggregated data by ethnicity with a focus on the intersection of poverty, ethnicity and GBV.
- Completion of the Sexual Abuse and Violence in Ireland (SAVI) 2.

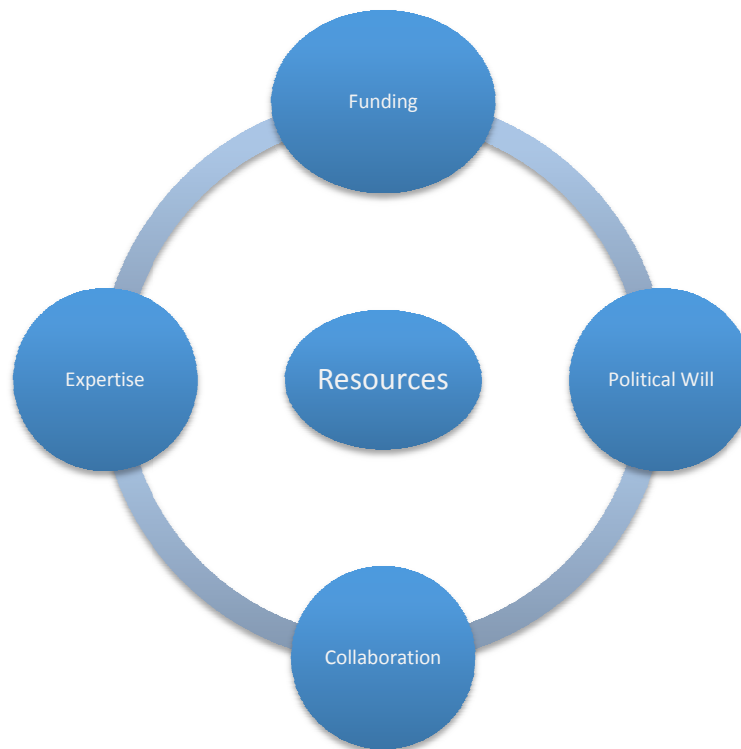
#### 6.4.3 Evaluation

Participants have noted the lack of publicly available formal evaluations from initiatives developed and funded through the existing strategy. Evaluative frameworks for externally funded initiatives are viewed as needing to have well defined parameters such as indicators that measure impact and outcomes:

*“...funders want to know how many new women we have in our project – when is a new woman new? Is it only the first time she contacts us or if there is a gap of 12, 60 or 120 months?? Is she new if she comes with a new relationship / issue?”* (Mná Feasa Women’s Domestic Violence Project).

Implementing risk assessment tools can lend itself to estimating “*levels of risk and identify strategies to manage those risks*” as well as the collation of data on risk levels “*in relation to both domestic and sexual violence...to inform interagency collaboration, the allocation of resources and training needs of staff*” (Probation Service).

## Chapter 7: Resources



### 7.1 Overview of Theme

A variety of resources were identified as important in the success of the strategy, chief amongst them funding, political will, collaboration and expertise.

### 7.2 Funding

The most obvious resource which is in short supply in the area of DSGBV is monetary funding. Respondents pointed to “[p]ersistent under-funding and cumulative cuts in the past years have greatly impacted on the capacity of authorities and organisations to respond to increasing demand” (Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre). The reduction in funding came at a time when many services were experiencing an increased demand for their services, further straining resources. In this climate women continued to receive professional, client centred services; “[s]ervices have responded by doing more with less. However, many are at breaking point now. And while services do their best to provide basic services, women and children are being faced with more barriers than options for safety” (Safe Ireland).

The impact of inadequate resourcing on service delivery for victims and in other key areas including awareness raising and education, data collection and analysis, preventative work, best practice guidelines, training, co-ordination, staffing and infrastructure was highlighted in submissions by many stakeholders. The impact of under-resourcing on Cosc was also noted: “as the driver of the national strategy [Cosc] is under-resourced given the range of actions that needed to be progressed” (Women’s Aid). The RCNI noted the impact of the failure to cost actions and allocate funding

accordingly: *“agencies with responsibilities were identified, however this was not a substitute for identification of resources required in these locations which is a separate exercise”* (RCNI).

While acknowledging funding cutbacks, Cosc noted that they were not universal and an analysis for 2012 showed that there was not a general decline in resourcing across the sector. This may be reflected in the feeling amongst some respondents that cuts had impacted disproportionately on some organisations and/or services.

While respondents were broadly supportive of the streamlining resulting from the creation of the Child and Family Agency or Tusla, nervousness was expressed about the funding allocation through Tusla.

### 7.3 Expertise

The importance of human capital was highlighted by participants and the negative impact of the reduced staffing on frontline services was noted. This reduction may be attributed to funding cuts and the disproportionately high number of retirements of experienced personnel in recent years resulting in a *“loss of continuity, experience and expertise... in statutory bodies”* (Women’s Aid). The impact of the reduction in human capital is important in two contexts; at the strategic leadership level and the expertise on the frontline. Cosc noted the impact of reduced staffing at senior level within the office including the replacement of the Executive and Deputy Directors with a Director who also carries additional responsibilities. The Rape Crisis Network Ireland noted gaps in capacity *“including gaps in skills and expertise required on key committees and in offices which were identified as having a responsibility within the strategy... A further example of lack of leadership was visible in the failure to safeguard resources that were important to the Strategy and to GBV in Ireland.”* The impact on the frontline has also been noted; *“in the context of cut-backs to state services there has been a noticeable decrease in the ability of staff to engage in consultation and awareness raising sessions”* (Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre).

### 7.4 Political Will

Participants highlighted the importance of political will in ensuring adequate responses to DSGBV and preventing future violence: *“the importance that a Strategy has, its ability to secure additional resources and/or retain existing resources, is to a large extent determined by the priority an issue is given by the state/statutory structures”* (RCNI). While it was noted that individual politicians have raised the issue in the Oireachtas and that the Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Equality and Law Reform has examined the issue, *“it has never been given the concerted political attention it requires”* (Safe Ireland). It was noted that the attention given to the issue by senior members of government is comparatively poor with the UK strategy overseen by an Inter-Ministerial Group chaired by the Home Secretary.

The impact of the lack of political will behind the strategy was that *“[m]embers felt that consultation, interaction, evaluation and assessment descended to be little more than a tick-boxing exercise – covering off what was set out to be done rather than really analyzing, assessing, asking, listening,*

*reviewing and putting structures and plans in place to effect meaningful change for women and children.” (Safe Ireland)*

### 7.5 Collaboration

Participants were positive about the value of collaboration and enhanced working relationships amongst relevant statutory and non-statutory bodies in achieving common aims, particularly in light of decreased financial resources with several examples of success in this regard provided. Ruhama noted that *“[b]etween 2010 and 2014 there have been a number of enhanced working relationships developed to ensure that we can deliver services to best effect within constrained circumstances.”* The value of collaboration in presenting a united national response to government on the issue was also noted.

However, challenges to collaboration were identified including cutbacks in staffing and resources resulting in staff with ever more limited time and energy. This made it more difficult *“to get people to engage consistently and energetically with issues they perceive to be outside their core functions”* (Cosc). Inter-organisational tensions within the voluntary sector were also highlighted as barriers to effective collaboration:

*“Statutory move towards a ‘tendering’ of areas of work in NGO funding, increasing a competitive environment amongst resource starved NGOs. This direction was adopted at a time when the IPA midway review identified insufficient co-operation as an on-going concern and has added to a competitive environment for frontline services and other SV ngos. Commissioning is not conducive to enhancing inter-agency collaboration when the wider environment is one of decreasing resources for frontline services.” (RCNI)*

It was also noted that collaboration amongst service providers or a *“reconfiguring of front line services”* (RCNI) could not counter the negative impact of funding cuts in an already under resourced sector.

## **Chapter Eight: Recommendations from Non – Statutory Organisations**

### **8.1 Introduction**

The following represents high level recommendations based on a comprehensive thematic analysis of responses provided by non-statutory respondents to the review of the National Strategy on DSGBV. While respondents have provided more specific individual recommendations in some instances, these may be accessed in the individual questionnaires.

### **8.2 Societal Awareness**

- Ensure multi-agency approach is taken to awareness raising and education.
- Focus on both awareness raising and attitudinal change.
- Run campaign on violence against women advocating a zero tolerance approach and focusing attention on perpetrator behaviour and accountability.
- Ensure attention is paid to each form of violence in primary prevention programmes and that there is consistent messaging.
- Secure funding for awareness raising and allocate resources separately to primary prevention, early intervention, secondary prevention and response.
- Deliver awareness raising and training to both statutory and non-statutory service providers.
- Raise awareness of differences between the issues associated with domestic, sexual and gender-based violence and the issue of gender equality.
- Target settings for primary prevention such as schools and higher level education institutions, including progressing Department of Education and Skills initiative for senior cycle.
- Ensure all children have access to best practice sex and relationship education.
- Mandate schools to meet standards of gender equality and zero tolerance to sexual harassment and other GBV.
- NGOs to deliver targeted campaigns (e.g. social marketing campaign to be run by Ascend Domestic Abuse Service).

### **8.3 Individual Experience**

#### **8.3.1 Information**

- Ensure there is clarity for service users on the services provided by each organisation so that they may assess if the service provider can meet their particular needs.
- Ensure comprehensive information is available to service providers on the services available through different organisations or departments to ensure that victims are directed to the appropriate service.
- Standardise practises within agencies so services users receive accurate information on rights and entitlements and appropriate referrals irrespective of where they seek assistance.

- Ensure women receive accurate information and advice on their legal situation and rights.
- Standardise forms and information materials to ensure they are accessible to a diverse group of people, including those with limited literacy and language skills.
- Ensure the availability of an appropriate and unbiased translator when required.

### **8.3.2 Accommodation**

- Housing to be a priority in the next strategy.
- Increase provisions for suitable, safe and affordable accommodation
- Ensure accommodation is suitable for a diversity of victims.
- Address the mismatch between the provision of rental allowance and private market rental demands.
- Progress recommendations of the National Steering Committee on Violence Against Women including capping rents.
- Conduct impact assessment of the HRC, with particular focus on ethnicity and gender.
- Review the HRC and ensure provision for women who do not meet the current conditions in the interim (including accepting evidence of DV from bona fide service providers for this purpose).
- Include victims of DV under the definition of 'homeless' where DV is the cause of the homelessness.
- Recognise that emergency accommodation is at crisis point and set quantifiable yearly goals for increasing emergency accommodation, particularly in areas where need has been identified.
- Continue the provision of crisis accommodation in professional refuges and ensure referrals by DV agencies where DV victims must use other homeless services to ensure victims get access to appropriate support.
- Rectify barriers to safety caused by the social housing criteria and residency status.
- Put in place standard processes for assessment of DV situations in local authorities and ensure an understanding of the specific needs of victims.
- Review the role of local authorities in the removal of a perpetrator from a local authority house and the movement of a woman from one local authority housing list to another.
- Appoint dedicated officer with appropriate training and skill on assessing the issue of homelessness and DV in each region.

### **8.3.3 Children**

- Ensure an understanding of link between domestic and child abuse and the impact of DV on children as hidden victims.
- Establish contact centres nationally.
- Ensure child protection practitioners understand the dynamics of DV and aim to prevent the use of children to re-victimise the survivor.
- Ensure services akin to SATU available for victims under 16.
- Ensure consistent responses to child protection concerns that take into account the socioeconomic and political context and avoid racial profiling.

#### **8.3.4 Cohorts of concern**

- Include specific reference and action for cohorts considered 'at risk' in the next strategy – travellers; young people; people with a disability.
- Prostitution should be recognised as a form of DSGBV.
- Development of policy and practice should be informed by understanding of needs of specific groups and strategies developed in that context (eg Ten Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion).
- Introduce positive action measures to enable specific groups (eg Traveller and Roma women) to access GBV training and employment opportunities in state and voluntary sector services.
- Child to parent violence should be explored in the next strategy.

#### **8.3.5 Response of Services to Victims**

- Response to rape and sexual violence should include specialist services that are survivor/needs led. There should be provision of a range of services, including advocacy, support, counselling, accompaniment, group therapy etc.
- Provide an integrated response to victims (including marginalised groups).
- Examine options for One Stop Shops for victims of domestic and sexual violence, taking into account the needs of specific groups.
- Explore use of Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences.
- Ensure there are clear standards in work practises of service providers including clear interagency practices.
- Provide front line staff with clear guidelines on dealing with victims including how to assess the victims story, the information required to access services and how to avoid further endangering women.
- Develop multifunction agencies that deliver awareness-raising and prevention programmes in addition to victim support.
- Introduce national coordination of victim support through the legal process.
- Increase support across services including addiction and mental health services.
- Ensure there is a clear method of evaluating service provision including identifying gaps in service required by service users.
- Review service provision with victims to improve services.
- Appoint a police officer with responsibility for violence against women in every region.

#### **8.3.6 Policing**

- Gardaí to enforce pro-arrest policy.
- Gardaí to treat assaults in domestic violence incidents as crimes in line with policy and procedures, including gathering evidence and preparing file.
- Pulse system to be available to assist applicant in demonstrating history of DV including providing victims with relevant pulse number and reports.
- Gardaí to be prepared to provide evidence (written reports) in applications for DV orders.

- Gardaí to promote supports provided by NGO's on call outs(e.g. Women's Aid Freephone Helpline as first point of contact for DV services)
- Gardaí to serve orders.
- A pilot Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) be instituted, led by the Gardaí.
- Responses to callouts monitored within stations.
- Introduce a pilot scheme where data is collected on the full range of criminal acts involved in each domestic violence incident and breaches of orders (similar to PSNI)
- Training to be provided to ensure that each member of An Garda Síochána understands the policy and procedure in instances of DV.
- Training of Garda recruits by NGO's and tailored continuous professional development for Gardaí already on the job in key positions.

#### **8.3.7 Accountability**

- Ensure accountability of perpetrators.
- Ensure perpetrator programmes are court mandated and that there are consequences for repeat offending.
- Ensure a continuation in funding for intervention programmes.
- Evaluate existing perpetrator programmes to ensure best practice is being adhered to.
- Assess need for further perpetrator programmes and support establishment where necessary.
- Minimise attrition in DV cases.
- Explore the introduction of sentencing guidelines to address low levels of custodial sentences.
- Focus on perpetrators and criminalisation of DV to alleviate blame on victims.
- Be aware of the importance of communicative effect on the imposition of criminal sanctions.

### **8.4 Institutional Responses**

#### **8.4.1 Structures for next strategy**

- Develop a clear governance structure with a Ministerial lead and identifying the key responsibilities of statutory authorities.
- Attach strong leadership to key priorities and funding and ensure the strategy is more than aspirational.
- Involve all key stakeholders in the development and implementation of the new strategy.
- Place the DSGBV victim at the centre of the development of the strategy to ensure a response system grounded in operational reality.
- Prevention and response are two lenses to be considered in the development of future DSGBV policies and programmes.
- Include clear indicators to measure impact and outcomes through action plans (including timelines) and reporting mechanisms.

- Implement annual reviews and annual plan cycle to ensure the sector remains engaged.
- Reviews should highlight barriers to progress so that they can be identified and addressed.
- Shorten timeframe of next strategy.
- Ensure goals/actions are costed and resources are attached.
- Have fewer, more achievable objectives.
- Implement original strategy as all actions have not yet been completed.
- Committees involved in implementation should have the appropriate expertise and any gaps should be addressed.
- Cosc should communicate in a meaningful way with service providers and move beyond 'box-ticking'.
- A forum such as the RACs or a similar mechanism is necessary to discuss cross-sectoral work and facilitate engagement and communication between the statutory and non-statutory sectors.
- Restore the NSCVAW meetings to four per year.
- Co-ordinating body to be established.
- Establish independent office to review implementation of the strategy.

#### 8.4.2 Legal

- Review the efficacy of the Irish Legal System in dealing with victims of domestic violence.
- Alter how *"domestic violence is defined, treated, recognized and understood in the legislative process"* (Safe Ireland).
- Review and amend domestic violence legislation within an agreed timeline to facilitate ratification of the Istanbul Convention.
- Sign and ratify the Istanbul Convention.
- Review and amend DV related orders.
- Review of the *Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1993*.
- Progress the Children First Bill, the Children and Family Relationships Bill.
- Introduce wide-ranging legislation on sexual offences including provisions on sex offenders and prosecution of child sexual violence (currently underway).
- Progress legislation on victim's rights in order to fulfil our obligation to implement the Victim's Directive (2012/29/EU).
- Review and amend primary and secondary housing legislation.
- Legal advocacy support and information is considered particularly important in the next strategy for victims who wish to appeal decisions (Safe Ireland) and in relation to custody & access (Women's Aid).
- Introduce structures to facilitate multi-agency reviews following domestic homicide.
- Assess the feasibility of a Domestic Violence Sentencing Watch (Women's Aid).
- Ensure adequate funding of the family law court infrastructure to reduce waiting times, increase safety, improve facilities and provide supports.
- Explore possibility of introducing specialist DV courts.

- Ensure enforcement of maintenance agreements.
- Commence legislation providing for the provision of s.47 reports in all relevant cases and ensuring that s.47 and s.20 reports are admissible in court proceedings and authors of reports subject to cross examination.
- Review delays and costs associated with legal aid and remove the restriction on two parties accessing the same centre.
- Ensure judges are aware of services available or not available at any point in time in the area so s/he will understand the limitations in complying with directions.
- Grant appropriately trained court accompaniment workers access to family law courts.
- Review the use of the courts by perpetrators to further abuse victims.
- Review legislation and policy to ensure it is not discriminatory towards ethnic minorities (eg Traveller and Roma women) and ensure minority groups are represented in any future Judicial Conduct Committee.

#### **8.4.3 Training**

- Training to be provided to front line staff (including criminal justice professionals) to ensure they understand the dynamics of DSGBV and how to provide the best service for victims, including specific cohorts of victims with differing needs.
- Ensure professional training is maintained and not provided on a once off basis.
- Provide training on link between domestic and child abuse, risk of continuation post separation and failure to identify DV when contact orders being decided.
- Provide specialist training to judges and legal professionals including on child welfare and child protection.
- Develop guidance documents for front line staff (including criminal justice professionals) on dealing with specific cohorts or groups with specific needs.
- Provide guidelines for judges on evidential requirements in cases dealing with DV related orders.
- Provide guidelines on the use of s.47 and s.20 reports.
- Review the implementation of existing training programmes.

#### **8.4.4 Data collection and research**

- Develop data collection practices which will generate reliable data and evidence i.e. systemic identification and recording of DSGBV across the Gardaí, schools, emergency rooms, maternity hospitals etc.
- Capture specific data from the criminal justice system for example Garda call outs, enforcement of orders, cases going to court, orders granted, convictions secured etc.
- Ensure data collection fulfils several objectives; meeting accountability and monitoring requirements, resulting in thorough evaluation and informing education and primary intervention.
- Develop standardised indicators for relevant state agencies to collect information required under the new Victim's Directive.

- Capture gendered statistics on victims and outcomes for women and men in courts.
- Conduct research on GBV including focus of needs of minority ethnic women and the intersection of poverty, ethnicity and GBV.
- Include ethnic identifier across all administrative systems (utilising human rights framework).
- Security responsibility for data collection and analytical capacity gathered from non-statutory authorities should lie with Cosc.
- Review and implement best practice in the sector from other jurisdictions.
- Undertake attitudinal research to determine public opinion on DSGBV and focus on awareness raising and opinion changing.
- Invest in research based on lived experience to inform public policy.
- Undertake research on prevalence, intervention, care pathways, efficacy of interventions and vulnerability to sexual exploitation.
- Progress SAVI 2 research with focus on intimate partner sexual violence.
- Monitor the existence and content of current sex education programmes.
- Instigate a thorough evaluation of service provision in the sector nationwide by a team of independent evaluators.
- Identify key performance indicators for service providers to measure performance year on year.
- Engage with service providers in the development of the research programme.

#### **8.4.5 Resources**

- Retain existing funding at a minimum and aim to secure additional funding for the sector.
- Audit whole of government capacity, infrastructure and resources for DSGBV.
- Secure higher level priority at senior levels in government for DSGBV including exploring the possibility of a high level cabinet committee and a minister with responsibility for the area.
- Ensure meaningful collaboration and consultation across the sector and put in place the infrastructure required to ensure an integrated approach across statutory and non-statutory organisations, thereby ensuring follow through on actions, maximising victim safety and ensuring the best possible service for victims.
- Resources for primary intervention should be delineated from “functions and structures whose principal concerns are delivering comprehensive early intervention, secondary prevention and responses” (RCNI).
- Provide funding for NGO’s to attend committee meetings etc.

#### **8.4.6 Collaboration**

- Develop a multi-agency response to DSGBV.
- Establish enhanced communication and cooperation between statutory and non-statutory bodies.
- Continue collaboration between NGOs and facilitate enhanced co-operation.
- Review protocols for information sharing to ensure objectives are being achieved.

- Develop joint protocol between domestic abuse services and social workers to ensure communication and information sharing.

## **Chapter Nine: Recommendations from Statutory Organisations**

### **9.1 Introduction**

The following represents high level recommendations based on a comprehensive thematic analysis of responses provided by statutory respondents to the review of the National Strategy on DSGBV. While respondents have provided more specific individual recommendations in some instances, these may be accessed in the individual questionnaires.

### **9.2 Societal Awareness**

- Challenge myths about DSGBV.
- Increase awareness about domestic violence, including violence directed at specific cohorts, for example, the elderly.
- Improve national awareness raising campaigns by engaging the media and potentially involving high profile personalities and involving local participants.
- Identify and disseminate third level curricula on sexual and domestic violence
- Prepare and disseminate guidance on personal safety.
- Review the provision of education on this area at second level and with Youthreach organisation (specifically SPHE modules).
- Place emphasis on workplace awareness and attitudinal changes with trade unions and employers.
- Share existing materials which may be used to raise awareness through web-based library.
- Ensure inter-agency co-operation on messaging in relation to alcohol.
- Engage with third level students, including in relation to alcohol.

### **9.3 Individual Experience**

#### **9.3.1 Information**

- Communicate information on services provided to the public by the statutory and non-statutory sector.
- Improve guidance for personal safety e.g. messaging about alcohol.
- Provide a national helpline operating on a 24 hour basis dealing with GBV.

#### **9.3.2 Accommodation**

- Consider recommendations of the Expert Oversight Group on Homelessness.
- Ensure refuges remain short-term, emergency accommodation only by providing housing to victims when required.
- Meet demand for refuge provision.
- Provide for perpetrator removal from the home rather than the victim.

### **9.3.3 Children**

- Improve the working relationship between the statutory and non-statutory authorities to streamline service response for children and families.
- Ensure integrated response to situations of DSGBV to facilitate holistic care to children and families.
- Work more with child victims of DV and the identification of and response to ‘hidden harm’.
- Outline how family support will be integrated into the National Service Delivery Framework.
- Use Children’s Services Committees as key connections at the local level to work with the new DSGBV plan.
- Provide high quality, standardised and timely care to paediatric victims of sexual violence.

### **9.3.4 Cohorts of Concern**

- Ensure focus is placed on minority groups, particularly LGBT groups in this context and ensure adequate time (at least two years) to work with minority groups in this area.
- Explicitly address the needs of socially excluded groups.
- Ensure focus on socially excluded young people in the overall cohort of young people.
- Pay increased attention to gender based violence in the next strategy including reference to forced marriage, female genital mutilation and human trafficking which is increasingly necessary given the diversity of the population and increased migration.

### **9.3.5 Response of Services to Victims**

- Provide clear information to victims at all stages of the process.
- Develop clear handover protocols between services to ensure a seamless transfer of the victim from one service to the next.
- Have protocols for service provision of groups with specific needs.
- Improve counselling provision.
- Provide for rape crisis centres.
- Focus on the alignment of services for victims.
- Support consistent service provision.
- Secure commitment by non-statutory sector to provide consistent services in conjunction with the CFA.
- Policy to identify and respond to “hidden harm”.

### **9.3.6 Policing**

- Re-emphasise An Garda Síochána’s pro-arrest policy and power of arrest and entry.
- Ensure that all cases of DV & SV are dealt with sensitively and compassionately.
- Follow up on all DV/SV incidents adequately, including call back.

- Finalise protocol on high risk DV offenders between An Garda Síochána and Probation Office.
- Further develop and promote the SORAM model.
- Continue to build relationships between An Garda Síochána and the voluntary sector including interaction between DV Inspectors and the NGO sector.
- Encourage DV Inspectors in their role, including the provision of feedback.
- Assist in awareness raising through victim support and community projects.
- Improve and upgrade Garda policy in line with best practice and publish policy.

#### **9.3.7 Accountability**

- Provide a facility and supports to allow gathering of forensic samples without the presence of a member of An Garda Síochána and storage of such samples while victims chose whether or not to report an incident to An Garda Síochána thereby increasing rates of reporting of sexual crime.
- Encourage reporting of DSGBV and explore means of reducing unnecessary attrition.
- Widen the geographic coverage of perpetrator programmes.
- Continue work to improve domestic violence perpetrator programmes including monitoring and evaluation of effectiveness and risk assessment of perpetrators.
- Continue efforts in relation to sexual violence perpetrator programmes.
- Highlight approach taken by NGOs to sexual violence perpetrators in the community and explore expansion.
- Integrate custodial and community intervention programmes for sexual violence perpetrators.

### **9.4 Institutional Responses**

#### **9.4.1 The next strategy**

##### Structures

- Develop one national steering committee to support the next DSGBV strategy.
- Representative groups to be consulted in the development of policy and service planning.
- Look to best practice in other jurisdictions to ensure the success of the next strategy.
- Outline activities to be undertaken by service providers, particularly the CFA, to deliver services in a strategic manner.
- Include implementation arrangements.
- Outline how strategy and proposed actions will relate to the National Service Delivery Framework.

#### **9.4.2 Legal**

- Amend sexual offences legislation.
- Consolidate and reform domestic violence legislation

- Work towards ratification of the Istanbul Convention.
- Establish the resource and statutory implications of the transposition of the Victim's Directive and introduce victims of crime legislation to implement obligations under the directive by 16 November 2015.
- Implement the European Protection Order (Civil).
- Progress vetting legislation.
- Progress amendment of criminal injuries compensation scheme.
- Implement independent immigration status for non-nationals with dependant status on perpetrator of domestic violence.
- Provide facilities for NGO's in court buildings.

#### **9.4.3 Training**

- Training to be implemented for all staff providing services to victims.
- Provide training for individuals working in schools.
- Commit funding to ensure the on-going provision of training and best practice guidelines.

#### **9.4.4 Data collection and research**

- Ensure research is centrally coordinated.
- Implement a plan for a full strategic review of data, information and programme monitoring systems for both internal and external audiences.
- Statutory and non-statutory datasets should be shared and made available for research.
- Non-statutory organisations to collect data on take up of services by victims, throughput and service outcomes and effectiveness.
- Improvement of data gathering by the criminal justice including aggregating data on DSV by gender, age and relationship of victim and perpetrator.
- Optimise data collection and sharing between service providers including SATUs and other agencies.
- Non- statutory organisations to continue to collect (RCNI) or extend (Safe Ireland) their data collection in agreement with the CFA.
- Work of data committee with criminal justice agencies to continue.
- Research to support the national strategy to be conducted.
- CSO to undertake regular population-based prevalence studies.
- Address how to reduce rates of attrition in sexual and domestic violence cases.
- Research on victim experiences of An Garda Síochána should be captured and communicated to An Garda Síochána in order to ensure an improvement in service.
- Increased focus on collection and disaggregation of data as basis for the strategy and for its evaluation.
- Ethnicity should be monitored as part of ethnic equality monitoring.
- Research on DV perpetrator programmes to continue.
- Encourage disclosure in the education, justice, health and housing sector.

#### **9.4.5 Resources**

- Commit budgetary allocations for the life of the strategy to avoid uncertainty in future work.
- Enhance and deepen inter-departmental and inter-agency cooperation and communication across the sector to ensure an integrated approach to the implementation of the new strategy.

#### **9.4.6 Collaboration**

- Encourage a “vision for deeper integration and coordination of the various services, structures and processes” (SATUs)
- Enhanced cross government and interagency cooperation including with NGOs working in the sector.
- Non-statutory organisations to consult with each other in policy and service planning development.
- Encourage inter-agency working groups to ensure the development of ‘joined up’ responses.
- Include a strategic plan on how to build interagency cooperation between key services.
- Facilitate communication with representative groups in the development of policy, service planning and information sharing.
- Avoid duplication of services at local level by demonstrating how “the integration of planning and provision at local level with other agencies will be achieved” (DCYA)
- Identify how services will be integrated and developed in line with emerging evidence.
- Operational policy should ensure clear pathways for communication and co-operation
  - within state departments and organisations (such as between services under the remit of the Dept of Child and Family Affairs)
  - between statutory bodies and between statutory bodies and non-statutory bodies
- Ensure a link between the new strategy on DSGBV and related national strategies in other areas, for example the National Drugs Strategy 2009-2016.
- Explore opportunities for further cross-border co-operations, for example adopting co-operative care pathways for victims of sexual violence in border counties.

## **Conclusion**

It is evident there have been achievements within the timeframe of the current National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, 2010-2014. Both statutory and non-statutory organisations provided evidence of progress in prevention and response to DSGBV, in a time of constrained resources. However, it is also evident that service providers face significant challenges in achieving their aims and progressing the national strategy. The evidence provided of experiences under the current strategy and the array of recommendations made should prove to be very useful to Cosc both in drafting and implementing the new National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, 2015-2019.



## **Appendix 1: Questionnaire**

# 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 your organisation:** \_\_\_\_\_

## 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
- 1.2 Victims' experience of voluntary sector services
- 1.3 Accountability of perpetrators
- 1.4 Awareness and attitudes
- 1.5 Prevention
- 1.6 Policy making or service planning
- 1.7 Research or data collection
- 1.8 Structures or processes to support the strategy (consultation, meetings, six monthly review reports etc.)
- 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?

## 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
- 2.2 Victims' experience of voluntary sector services
- 2.3 Accountability of perpetrators
- 2.4 Awareness and attitudes
- 2.5 Prevention
- 2.6 Policy making or service planning
- 2.7 Research or data collection
- 2.8 Structures or processes to support the strategy (consultation, meetings, six monthly review reports etc.)

- 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?

## **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.
- 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
- 4.2 Voluntary sector services for victims
- 4.3 Accountability of perpetrators
- 4.4 Awareness and attitudes
- 4.5 Prevention
- 4.6 Policy making or service planning
- 4.7 Research or data collection
- 4.8 Structures or processes to support the strategy (consultation, meetings, six monthly review reports etc.)
- 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?

## 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
- 6.2 Voluntary sector services for victims
- 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.