

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: West Cork Women Against Violence

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

Our clients experiences of garda, courts, social services via social workers and to a lesser extent social protection services is still overwhelmingly one of having to negotiate a culture of victim blaming, inadequate knowledge or comprehension by state service personnel of the dynamics and implications of DV. When gardai continue to give wrong information about appropriate protection orders to women, or do not follow up on breaches of orders, judges minimise the crime of DV in their sentencing or more often failure to sentence, when child protection is targeted at the woman for being unable to protect her children because of the behaviour and actions of the perpetrator in the home, there is evidently a long way to go before we can say that the current Strategy has had much of a positive impact on victims' experiences. Where 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.

1.2 Victims' experience of voluntary sector services

Many of our clients are referred to us (and vice versa) by other vol organisations such as West Cork Carers, our local CIS office and family resource centres in the area. These relationships have been carefully nurtured in this region and recently we have included some voluntary orgs personnel in our in- house training to help them identify and give initial support to clients who present to them.

1.3 Accountability of perpetrators

We know of no change whatsoever in the accountability of perpetrators.

1.4 Awareness and attitudes

Through our own promotional and educational awareness raising, our quarterly magazine the West Cork Whisper which has a 2000 copies distribution around the region and nationally, interviews and articles on local radio and press, and our recent youth rap

project we are doing all that we can with ever diminishing resources to educate and inform the public and particular sector s of our community about DV and the need to combat violence against women and children. Certainly the Cosc grant has been of benefit in this respect. However, major change requires more consistent, national coverage and campaigns, not one-off spurts of activity with no follow-up.

1.5 Prevention

As they often say on school reports- “ MUST DO BETTER”. It is essential that schools and third level institutions are targeted and that understanding DV and promoting healthy relationships is integral to all school curricula, not just as a one- off 2 hr lecture to transition years or on a SPHE programme but ongoing and integrated into lesson plans on life skills and throughout the years of schooling. Where is the work that was to be done in teacher training colleges- what is the result of the pilot project referred to in last progress Review? Why hasn't it been disseminated?

1.6 Policy making or service planning

Without a dynamic, pro-active lead taken on the National Strategy that involves more than ticking boxes, policy-making and service planning on DV will continue to be somewhere down the agenda after all other priorities have been taken into consideration and the crumbs remaining distributed.

1.7 Research or data collection

See recent EUFRA research and the need now to do country-specific detailed research in Ireland.

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

Consultation 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. It is clear that the regional action committees have not been a success and mostly petered out. Cork RAC has not met since 2011/2012.

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?

That despite continued cutbacks and against the odds, DV services are still managing to deliver professional, client centred services to women and children at risk and saving lives in the process. Also growing public outrage at the obscenity of judges who let perpetrators off with fines or refuse to convict lest their (

the perpetrators) futures might be negatively impacted by a sentence.

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?

(See above and for more details see Safe Ireland submission)

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.

(See Safe Ireland submission for further details)

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?

The key priority of the WCWAV Strategic Action Plan (2013 -2016) is working towards a multiagency approach to DV in our region, with involvement from our Child Protection Units, Mental Health Teams and local Gardai. We will be pushing for a multi-agency risk assessment process involving all of our key services.

We will be developing a training programme to work with women and their children to rebuild relationships that have been impacted by DV which will also be of relevance to family resource centres and Child Protection. We will be rolling out our peer support programme for women who have exited DV relationships. We will be working to highlight with social workers and gardai the dangers posed by access issues for women and their children.

We will also be building on awareness raising with young people by developing a schools programme from 2014 onwards.

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?

The most important element of any future plan is to make it short, achievable and not aspirational. It must have dedicated resourcing, it must have specifically timetabled targets and provide detailed reasons when these are not met. It can only be real and meaningful if it has a pro-active Lead which places DV at the centre of policy making and implementation. DV requires a Ministerial Lead who will drive the strategy, who will involve NGO representatives at all levels and make departments accountable.

And finally

- 8. Please make additional comments, if any, here.

For further details on all of these issues and questions please see Safe Ireland submission which WCWAV has contributed to through our national meetings and consultations as an SI member organisation.