

# 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: Women's Aid

## 1. What was good about the strategy?

2010-14 Strategy had a positive vision and 4 clearly articulated strong high level goals.

There has been a sense of progress in relation to High Level Goal 1 e.g 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.

Progress in relation to the other goals has had less impact e.g. best practice to encourage disclosure has been hampered by lack of resources. The current consideration of a feasibility study on attrition re DV is a welcome development. The extension of the Domestic Violence legislation in 2011 was a welcome development as is the commitment to the consolidation and reform of the Domestic Violence Act. Actions under the Goal 4 have been useful to assess progress or lack thereof. It would be helpful to include challenges/barriers to progress in the monitoring reports for the next strategy so that this can be identified and addressed.

## 2. What was not good?

Progress has been slow and was hindered by economic challenges, changes in infrastructure and loss of continuity, experience and expertise through a series of early retirement initiatives in statutory bodies. The original strategy was developed with an awareness of the challenges that lay ahead.

However some of the activities and progress indicators identified in the plan lacked concrete commitments relying more on a focus on improving things where possible but sometimes without clear measurements to identify success.

There has been limited political will to tackling DSGBV. Resourcing to all key services involved in delivering the strategy diminished during the timeframe of the strategy and Cosc itself as the driver of the national strategy is under-resourced given the range of actions that needed to be progressed. The primary strategic objective of having a strong framework in place by the end of the 2010-14 strategy does not appear to be any closer. For example, such a framework requires an infrastructure that supports closer working and coherence among the key statutory and NGO players. However, over the past 2 years there has been a reduction in multi-agency contact with the demise of the RAC's and the reduction in NSC meetings and we understand that developments in relation to any new infrastructure are on hold at present. Key developments that have taken place such as the Dolphin House Support & Referral service are the direct result of a 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. Progress in relation to homelessness and housing has been slow and is now at crisis levels. The ERAC has facilitated regular connection between all local authorities in the region and was moving toward creating greater coherence among them.

Progress in relation to data collection has been slow and there is little evidence of any additional data being available at the end of the strategy to inform the work of the strategy. So while for ROI we know that in 2012 there were 323 breaches of domestic violence orders (305 by males and 18 by females) the PSNI statistics provide a more regular and comprehensive picture [http://www.psni.police.uk/quarterly\\_domestic\\_abuse\\_bulletin\\_apr-mar\\_13\\_14.pdf](http://www.psni.police.uk/quarterly_domestic_abuse_bulletin_apr-mar_13_14.pdf) show 27,628 showing total incidents with a domestic abuse motivation; covering violence against the person offences, theft and criminal damage, breach of non-molestation order and other offences.

The exclusion of prostitution as part of 2010-14 strategy was a serious gap in relation to the spectrum of violence against women and needs to be rectified in the forthcoming strategy. The European Parliament's recent resolution acknowledging all forms of prostitution as violence and abuse of women and girls should support the inclusion of prostitution in the new strategy.

### 3. Have you any evidence either way?

No, however our contacts with women experiencing domestic violence and their supporters enable us to have a good picture of the issues that need addressing to improve systemic responses.

### 4. What do you want to do in the next strategy?

1	<p><b>Ongoing Actions</b> – Women's Aid intends to continue to maintain, review and develop our existing services outlined below based on current resource levels. During 2014 Women's Aid will develop our new strategic plan which will include a review of our services to improve their accessibility</p>
	<p><b>National Freephone Helpline</b> Our National Freephone Helpline (1800 341 900) operates from 10am to 10pm, every day of the year (except Christmas day), and provides support and information to callers experiencing abuse from intimate partners. It is the only free, national, domestic violence Helpline with specialised trained staff and volunteers, accredited by The Helplines Association and with a Telephone Interpretation Service facility covering 170 languages for callers needing interpreting services. In 2012 the Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline responded to 11,729 calls.</p>
	<p><b>One to one support visits and Court Accompaniment</b> We also provide face to face support visits and Court Accompaniment in the greater Dublin area. Court Accompaniment is a specific service providing support to the particular needs of women seeking legal redress in the Courts regarding violence by a current or former husband or partner. In 2012 Women's Aid provided 508 support visits and 162 court accompaniments.</p>
	<p><b>Dolphin House Family Law Support and Referral Service</b> Women's Aid also operates the Dolphin House Family Law Support and Referral Service, in partnership with the Dublin 12 Domestic Violence Service and Inchicore Outreach Centre. This is a free and confidential drop in service for women who are experiencing abuse in a relationship, located in the Dublin District Family Law Court. In 2012 the service supported 226 women on 239 occasions in face to face sessions.</p>
	<p><b>Training and Development</b> Women's Aid is a centre of excellence in training to statutory, voluntary and community organisations as they develop and maintain organizational responses to women and their children experiencing domestic violence. Training participants include health and social care professionals, staff from community groups throughout</p>

	<p>Ireland and Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline volunteers.</p> <p>Women's Aid receives applications for training from a wide range of health and social care professionals from all over Ireland including those working with children. These include: social workers, doctors, clinical psychologists, day hospital staff, CAMHS team members, forensic psychiatry staff, counsellors, mental health nurses, occupational therapists, addiction counsellors, family therapists etc. In addition to the above we also provide training to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FRC staff to include child care workers, counsellors, BOM members, family support workers, co-ordinators, administrators, development workers and managers.</li> <li>• LCDP supported programmes to include staff attached to childcare providers (childcare staff and managers) and local employment services staff and managers</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Policy and Communications work</b></p> <p>Our contacts with women experiencing domestic violence and their supporters enable us to have a good picture of the issues that need addressing to improve systemic responses and we use that information in our policy and communication work. We provide relevant information and recommendations to government and other relevant agencies on the nature and prevalence of domestic violence, the barriers faced by women experiencing domestic violence and the gaps in existing legislation/systems.</p> <p>Women's Aid is an active member of the domestic violence coalition looking to improve responses for non-Irish national victims of domestic violence. The coalition is looking for a waiver of the HRC, and access to social protection and services, and granting of independent immigration status</p> <p>Women's Aid will continue to hold a representational role at national and local level and in various fora to highlight gaps and short comings and to feed into national developments as appropriate</p> <p>Women's Aid has been publishing annual statistics for over a decade and will continue to work on providing quantitative and qualitative data on domestic violence.</p> <p>Since the Zero Tolerance Campaign - Flowers Chocolates and Multiple Bruising public awareness campaign in 1995, Women's Aid will continue to highlight the issue of domestic violence and to promote our National Freephone Helpline through awareness campaigns.</p> <p>We will continue to work with the FRC's and domestic violence services nationally and support actions during the 16 days to highlight awareness of domestic violence</p>
	<p><b>Research</b></p> <p>Since 1996 Women's Aid maintains the Female Homicide Media Watch using media cuttings from Irish national newspapers and other news sources such as the RTE news website and Sunday broadsheets. As of March 2014, 199 women have died violently in Ireland since the beginning of 1996 with 124 (62%) of these women killed in their own homes. Of the resolved cases 76 (53%) women were killed by their partner or ex-partner and a history of domestic violence had been specifically referred to in 31 (20%) of the resolved cases.</p>
2	<p><b>Proposed Actions – dependent on securing funding</b></p>
	<p><b>Training</b></p> <p>Women's Aid would like to be in a position to deliver comprehensive systematic</p>

	<p>ongoing and in depth training to State Services to be rolled out on a National basis however this is resource dependent. Such target groups would include Gardaí, Judiciary, Probation and Welfare, education, housing officers, Department of Social protection and any other State Agencies whose staff come across domestic violence. Women's Aid is also particularly interested in providing training to local networks of CFA, NEWB and FSA staff that have amalgamated under the new CFA structures this we are awaiting a response from CFA about this proposal.</p> <p>If Women's Aid secures funding under the Scheme to Support National Organisations we will be in a position to deliver awareness raising and training to voluntary and community organisations across Ireland. Women's Aid would like to be in a position to deliver comprehensive systematic ongoing and in depth training for staff in the community and voluntary sector to include all DV services, services to migrant women, marginalised women, disability sector, substance abuse sector, homeless services etc. however this is resource dependent.</p>
	<p><b>Research</b>  Women's Aid proposes to assess the feasibility of developing and maintaining a Domestic Violence Sentencing Watch similar to the Female Homicide Media Watch using media cuttings from Irish national newspapers and other news sources such as the RTE news website and Sunday broadsheets. Systems to check data against court statistics would need to be developed and piloted.</p>

## 5. What should others do?

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Key Bodies</b>
1.	Review of Domestic Violence Legislation – see recommendations in Appendix 1 Submission to Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality on Domestic Violence	Department of Justice & Equality/Courts/Tusla
2.1	Build understanding of the links between domestic abuse and child abuse and recognition that domestic abuse can and often does continue post separation through training to key professionals in justice sector. Address issue whereby domestic abuse is often not identified/addressed when contact orders are being decided upon – See initial submission on the General Scheme of the Children & Family Relations Bill – Appendix 2 (more detailed submission at advanced stage and will be forwarded when completed)	Department of Justice & Equality/Courts/Probation/Tusla
2.2	National roll out of contact centres following pilot by Barnardos and One Family	Tusla
3.1.	A pilot MARAC led by the Gardaí in an appropriate divisional area in partnership with all relevant stake holders including risk assessment and management underpinned by training of the dynamics of domestic violence of all key professionals in the pilot	Cosc/Gardaí/Probation/Tusla/Women's Aid/

	area	
3.2.	Data collection and analysis of full range of criminal acts involved in each domestic violence call out in addition to breeches of orders similar to PSNI for pilot area	Cosc/Gardaí
4.1	Development and full delivery of a national training strategy informed by an audit of current training and available resources	All led by Cosc
4.	Reinstatement of training of Gardaí recruits by Women's Aid. Annual reviews of the record-keepers completed by the Women's Aid Helpline have shown an increase in satisfaction levels by women contacting the Gardaí following a decade of training all new recruits. Further progress could be made by expanding the training pool beyond recruits and providing tailored continuous professional development that targets Gardaí in key positions e.g responding Gardaí to 999 call outs, divisional leads etc.	Gardaí/Women's Aid
5.	Promotion of Women's Aid Freephone Helpline as first point of contact for DV services by responding Garda for each call out	Gardaí/Women's Aid/Safe Ireland
6.	Gardaí to serve orders – current practice by Women's Aid in our court accompaniment is ask that DV orders issued are stamped by the courts for Gardaí to serve	Gardaí/Courts/Women's Aid
7.	Address the current housing/homelessness crisis for victims of domestic violence by progressing the recommendations of the National Steering Committee on Violence Against Women including capping rents and matching them with rent allowance, and increasing the housing stock	Cosc/Department of Environment, Community & Local Government
8.	Continue partnership with Women's Aid/Dublin 12 DV Service/Inchicore Outreach	CSV/Courts/Women's Aid/ Dublin 12 DV Service/Inchicore Outreach Centre
9.	Adequate resourcing of Family Law Court Infrastructure to reduce waiting times between issue of protection orders and hearing for safety/barring orders; provide supports for decision re custody & access – see 2 above; increase safety measures for women in family law courts; improve facilities such as consultation rooms, toilet facilities, changing rooms etc. for women and children	Department Finance/Courts
10.	Ratify and sign the Istanbul Convention	Department of Justice & Equality
11.	Increase support provided across suite of services e.g. mental health and drug and alcohol services	Tusla

12.1	Zero tolerance of violence against women campaign with leadership from top similar to US '1-is-2-many' campaign showcasing men displaying positive attitudes and behaviour re violence against women	Cosc
13.	Department of Education initiative re Senior cycle to progress	Department of Education/Cosc/NSCVAW
14.	Perpetrator programmes to be court mandated to ensure consequences for repeat offending	Courts/Perpetrator programmes
15.	Minimise attrition in domestic violence cases	Department of Justice & Equality
16.	SAVI 2 research with particular focus on intimate partner rape & sexual assault building on FRA & SAVI 1	Department of Justice & Equality/DRCC/Women's Aid and other relevant parties

## 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:**

### Victims' experience of state services

Feedback to Women's Aid Freephone National Helpline has shown an increase in the number of women reporting positive responses from Gardaí. Examples includes 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. We believe this is a result of both the work-shop based tailored training Women's Aid delivered to recruits to support them in their role as law enforcement officers and the practical and theoretical training delivered as part of their course in Templemore.

Waiting times for hearings re domestic violence orders had decreased during 2010 and most of 2011 but have gone back up to a waiting time of just under 3 months at present in Dolphin House

### Victims' experience of voluntary sector services

Promotion of the National Helplines as a first point of contact particularly for people in rural areas who don't want to contact their local service for reasons of confidentiality

The development of the Support & Referral Service in Dolphin House in partnership with Dublin 12 Domestic Violence Service and Inchicore Outreach Centre and supported by Court Services which provides women with information and support as they make new domestic violence applications; looks at their immediate safety

planning needs; and links them into domestic violence and other support services for long term support.

### Awareness and attitudes

Cosc supported awareness raising has been good for highlighting issue of domestic violence and availability of services e.g. 2 in 2 U; We're ready to listen; Don't be afraid, Your Silence fuels the violence and the Red Light Campaign

COSC resourcing local services to produce good publications for example resourcing leaflets for the Support and Referral service in Dolphin House and contact cards in different languages

Continued support for a national focus on the 16 days campaign has been welcome

### Prevention

Awareness-raising re dating violence has been good, especially USI research etc. Amendments to DV Orders positive particularly for couples with a child in common. Training delivered by WA to Health & Social Care Professionals and other key points of contact

### Policy making or service planning

WA supports the vision of the Strategy (vis societal acknowledgement of DV being unacceptable, the need to increase understanding and recognition of DV, the need for more services, safety of victims, perpetrator accountability and the need for a more effective response). Likewise the 4 high level goals are good, (vis prevention/recognition, consistent service provision, policy and implementation).

It is positive that the Strategy recognises the need for a united national response to DV. It is also positive that the Strategy acknowledges that VAW is rooted in gender inequality. The FRA study 2014 confirms that the Government was correct, when drafting the Strategy, to express concern at the level of non-disclosure regarding DV (to include stats proving that only one in five women in Ireland have reported physical or sexual violence to the police with half of those who do not report dealing with it themselves or regarding it as a matter for friends and family).

The planned comprehensive review of the DV Act was a positive development including the process of inviting submissions, Oireachtas hearings etc. and we look forward to this work being completed under the new strategy if not before.

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

It is good that COSC publishes the strategy updates on the website. However for Women's Aid the acid test is women's experience particularly in relation to protection and housing.

**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?

Joint Barnardos and One Family pilot of Child Contact Centre was good and an encouraging development given the absence of safe contact centres and the vital need for them. We would like to see robust child contact centres with trained professionals in situ.

The addition of the Language Line to the Women's Aid Helpline has been a very positive development with 92 calls facilitated in 2012 including Kurdish, Polish, Chinese/Mandarin, Romanian, Arabic, Persian and others.

The FRA Study is a very positive development providing up-to-date information on women's experience of violence in Ireland and Europe

Recognition (as per Barnardos submission to COSC 2008) of the overlap between domestic violence and child abuse

Children First 2011 naming DV as emotionally abusive to children

Lifting of the In Camera rule

Turn off the red light campaign highlighting the issue of prostitution as violence against women and girls

## **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:**

### Victims' experience of state services

In the FRA study Ireland had the highest rate of all countries in Europe for not meeting women's needs when they sought assistance after the most serious incident of violence by a partner.

Inadequate provision of housing for women fleeing domestic violence with the lack of housing being a huge problem – regardless of housing status, and a particular problem in Dublin with rising rents. Lack of adequate control regarding rent therefore people on rent supplement do not have enough finance to pay the full amount of the rent.

There are structural barriers to housing e.g. transferring from one Local authority to another; women who are property owners not being permitted to go on the housing list thus not having access to rent supplement and therefore not being able to leave

In addition women who don't comply with the HRC requirement have very limited options.

A very serious concern is long wait for legal aid and the increase of the fee to €130, making access to this service for women who are already financially challenged extremely difficult because they may not be the main earner.

The growing number of routine referrals to child protection without consideration of whether this is in the best interests of the child or their mother is a concerning trend. In a victim blaming culture women are often not recognised as victims along with the children. An unintended consequence is that a large number of women are not disclosing abuse as they fear that they will lose their children if they do so. In addition some women are choosing not to avail of services they need thus becoming more isolated and increasing the level of danger for themselves and their children. We have heard from women who, when they contacted the Gardaí about an assault were advised that if the Gardaí intervened that a referral would have to be made to CFA. The approach needed is one where all services partner with the non-abusive parent to ensure the protection of both the non-abusive parent and the children and works with the non-abusive parent to ensure referrals that lead to a safer outcomes for both children and their mothers.

#### Victims' experience of voluntary sector services

Lack of refuge accommodation is a huge issue for women who are trying to access a safe place to stay for themselves and their children. Threatened closure of refuges and reduced access are a serious concern. Refuge accommodation in Ireland is well below the EU guideline with only 126 beds spaces available.

Cuts in funding to so many support agencies has led to women not being able to access appropriate support or good referrals .

The Community and Voluntary sector has been decimated e.g. in the past community development projects (CDP) acted as a key referral source to frontline DV services following a decade of training delivered by Women's Aid on a nationally adopted code of practice on domestic violence. A national programme of training had been delivered to CDP staff based on the 3 Rs (recognise, respond and refer). After the first round of training a need analysis was undertaken and an advanced training module developed to support CDP in relation to the impact of domestic violence on children and on how to make a good referral.

2010-14 Strategy proposed counselling for all and the Women's Therapy Centre shut down in 2014. The National Counselling Service is not resourced enough to cater for victims of domestic violence.

#### Accountability of perpetrators

Our experience as a service indicates that this is still lacking with inconsistent responses, thereby not promoting a culture of non-tolerance of DV – e.g charges dropped for men admitting to assaults and acceptance of men saying he said he was provoked.

Lack of court mandated perpetrator programmes and lack of adherence to International best practice (i.e. the man can re-offend without sanction) are a concern. Women's Aid supports the Duluth Model as offering the safest outcomes for victims and increasing the sanctioning and accountability of perpetrators.

There is anecdotal evidence of men using the current system to apply for Safety Orders after his victim has done so.

We believe the rates of custodial sentences to be low however we do not have statistical evidence of this to hand – more research is needed as well as a consistency from Judges in a non-tolerance approach and sentencing that reflects the seriousness of the crime, focused on the perpetrators behaviour and holding him accountable for it. Tied in with these attitudes we do not have a societal non tolerance of domestic violence

No understanding that VAW is rooted in gender inequality or of the dynamics of domestic violence. Women not getting an opportunity to speak in court about the abuse they have experienced by their husband/partner – due to solicitors negotiating an 'undertaking' with the abuser and sometimes both parties outside the court room. An 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 were 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.

Inconsistent and at time inappropriate Gardaí responses to women experiencing DV e.g. 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'.

No consistent consequence of men who breach maintenance order and present in court again and again because they won't pay maintenance for their children.

### Awareness and attitudes

There needs to be more awareness-raising for young people regarding what constitutes a healthy relationship. Work in Department of Education is a good start.

There is a proliferation of pornography available to all giving a message to men that women are sexually available to them including acceptance of the use of prostitutes for sexual gratification without recognition of it being a form of violence against women.

It is essential that appropriate and tailored training is delivered to all professionals who deal with domestic violence. This would include: refuge and domestic violence support services workers, Gardaí, teachers; social workers; child protection

professionals, the judiciary, solicitors, court personnel, medical personnel, NSC staff and mental health professionals , prison officers; probation officers

The training implementation structure set out in the original Plan under Goal 1 Action 2 (Implementation Structure) describes the analysis of training needs for all relevant justice sector organisations as being completed but we cannot see any evidence on the ground of the impact of effective training and an understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence.

Primary interventions as defined by the Strategy involve developing and implementing training programmes to ensure that front-line staff and professionals provide an effective response. WA strongly agrees with the necessity for this inclusion in the Strategy. Training and awareness raising should form a crucial part of the overall response. However there is little evidence of this happening in a robust enough way to make the necessary impact.

The FRA 2014 study notes the following figures re public awareness:

- 50% know about legislation. 50% don't.
- 19% don't know about services
- 50% have seen campaigns

| with recommendations for:

- Enhanced awareness and knowledge of crime, non-acceptance, services, and legislation.
- Adequately resourced specialist services need to be in place to meet victims' needs
- Encouragement to report.

In the 7<sup>th</sup> COSC progress report of the implementation of the Strategy, WA notes that action 2 goal 2.1 is not progressing due to ban on travel. Also re 2.2 training to Justice Sector the report notes No plans for specific additional training beyond ongoing training for operational reasons which will be periodically reviewed and updated as necessary.

### Prevention

Female homicide rates are evidence of the need for more attention to prevention. More preventative work needs to be done if we're not to be in an endless cycle of supporting victims with nothing challenging the cause. Needs to be done alongside developing total societal unacceptance/non tolerance

Barriers to leaving such as emergency and long term housing and habitual residency etc. need to be addressed

There is no facilitation at institutional level to help women negotiate the linkages between the different Government Departments

### Research or data collection

Important to know rates of custodial sentences for men who breach Protection/Safety/Barring/Maintenance/ Orders – and research is needed about sentences for DV crimes overall. This information is currently not available and there has been no apparent progress in relation to this type of data collection during the 2010-14 strategy

Research is also needed and a plan put in place to address attrition rates in relation to domestic violence

Not enough guidelines to the court services about how they should segregate those statistics

Not enough recent research in Ireland

**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?

There is still a big gap in the provision of services for children impacted by domestic violence. Abusive partners often won't consent to children getting support and counselling.

Duty social work system isn't resourced to respond, and can put unrealistic demands and blame on victims – women still fear a referral to social workers

Lack of safe supervised access

Waiting times for Legal Aid for divorces separations custody access and maintenance

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.

## **The Evidence .....**

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.

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.

In preparing for the review of the Domestic Violence legislation Women's Aid set up an in-house working group to review current gaps in protection as revealed by our

contact with women using our National Freephone Helpline, support and court accompaniment. We then commissioned research through PILA to identify solutions that worked in other jurisdictions e.g. provision of emergency barring orders outside court hours – see Appendix 1.

Women's Aid undertook regular evaluations of campaigns funded by Cosc such as 2in2u/One in Five Women awareness raising campaign/16 days and has submitted these to Cosc each year.

Women's Aid publishes our own statistics annually. This outlines our annual work with victims of domestic violence and highlights concerns. Issues coming from the women using our services inform our policy work and our lobbying and campaigns.

## **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.

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?

**See 4, page 3 - What do you want to do in the next strategy?**

### **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?

**See 5, page 5 - What should others do?**

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

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

Please make additional comments, if any, here.

The Cosc Conference report 'Stopping Domestic Violence: What Works?' p.4 recorded a number of issues to be addressed as a matter of priority. This built on the considerations in the Task Force Report of 1996 and included:

- Lack of awareness about the nature & extent of domestic abuse
- Victims feeling that the abuse is somehow their fault
- Those seeking help facing a fragmented service
- Poor coordination between different services
- Insufficient training for professional
- Insufficient data and analysis

In the intervening period there has not been significant change so basically the road map stays the same and consideration needs to be given to how and what to prioritise and resource effectively, identifying barriers and potential solutions and how to measure progress.