

## **PART 1 - INTRODUCTION:**

***The regional strategy will use the term sexual violence, which is defined as follows:***

*'Any behaviour perceived to be of a sexual nature which is unwanted or takes place without consent'.*

***Q.1 Is this definition of sexual violence acceptable?***

***Response:*** The definition of sexual violence is acceptable. There may be difficulties from a legal perspective.

## **PART 2 - PREVENTION:**

***Q.2 What will be the most effective ways to increase understanding of the realities of sexual violence among the general public, including children?***

***Response:*** We welcome the outcomes of benchmarking research commissioned by DHSSP&PS and Northern Ireland Office. The Trust would hope to increase awareness with our partner agencies in Trust Child Protection Panels.

**Q.3 Which key target groups could contribute to supporting the process of increasing public understanding of the realities of sexual violence?**

**Response:** Across all Trust services. Leaflets/posters across all Programmes.

**Q.4 How best can children's attitudes to sexual violence be gathered?**

**Response:** Through schools. Specialists forum. NICC. VOYPIC. Children and young peoples committee - subgroup.

**Q.5 What will be the most effective ways to (a) develop, deliver and evaluate initiatives aimed at encouraging the development of social attitudes that will support the prevention of sexual violence and (b) which key influencers could contribute most effectively to the process of dispelling myths and changing social attitudes?**

**Response:** The most effective development of initiatives would be those which include the statutory sectors working alongside community and voluntary groups. The Department of Education is a particularly necessary contributor given that children and young people spend the majority of their time at school.

General training and education in relation to self respect, self esteem, respect for others healthy relationships.

It is important to develop resilience during childhood.

Engaging local community leaders is particularly important, especially role models for boys and young men eg sports stars, teams etc.

The media, particularly "soaps" contribute to normalisation of violent behaviour - the "educative" element of the story line is often underplayed and less dramatically interesting. It would, therefore, be important to ensure that messages in relation to acceptable behaviour and attitudes are made with a higher level of dramatic input.

**Q.6 Should Government give a clear message ahead of public opinion, to stem the tide of normalising sexual violence in society?**

**Response:** It is an opportunity for Government to have a strategy that has clear messages including public health. The message should be targeted widely, directly to children's parents, communities and general public.

**Q.7 What steps could the media take to support the process of increasing public understanding and awareness of the realities of sexual violence?**

**Response:** Media have an important role, need to be responsible in reporting to minimise sensational aspects. To reinforce the message that sexual violence is always unacceptable.

**Q.8 What key messages should be promoted in relation to how healthy relationships and respect can help to prevent sexual violence?**

**Response:** The importance and value of positive relationships.

**Q.9 In addition to the education and training sector, what other sectoral groups and influencers have a role in delivering relevant messages?**

**Response:** All statutory organisations, community and voluntary groups plus retail sector.

**Q.10 What more could Government do to promote the importance of healthy relationships in society?**

**Response:** The consultation proposal to build in education on sexual violence at key stages in the school curriculum is an excellent start as is the school curriculum on Personal and Social Development; these alongside as well publicised zero tolerance approach from the PSNI and judicial system would provide added value. Intergrating this meesage into all aspects of social policy development is also vital.

**Q.11 What mechanisms could be used for the ongoing collection of data?**

**Response:** All agencies should have same definitions and counting system. The Trust would welcome the establishment of a SARC. However the Trust would have some concerns about the geographical location of a SARC in terms of an accessibility and proximity to other related services.

**Q.12 In what ways can consistent messages and guidance be developed about specific risk factors and how best could the task of co-ordinating that multi-sectoral aspects of addressing known risk factors be taken forward?**

**Response:** In regard to children there are multi-disciplinary Regional Area Child Protection Policy and Procedures and Departmental guidance, Co-operating to Safeguarding Children (CtSC), which provide guidance on child protection to community, voluntary and statutory agencies and emphasise the shared responsibility of safeguarding children. The Roles and Responsibilities section of the CtSC guidance references Probation, Social Services, the Voluntary and community sectors, prison service, local government and the wider community. The proposed Safeguarding Board will be a key mechanism to develop, co-ordinate and address risk factors to children.

It is important to ensure that all strategies and initiatives are co-ordinated and consistent eg how does this draft strategy complement the proposed Sexual Health Strategy and the current Teenage Pregnancy and Parenthood strategy?

There should be a clear public health message that assist with joining these areas up.

**Q.13 What practical measures could be developed to promote personal safety, generally, and to protect those most at risk, in particular?**

**Response:** The extension of safety zones in town and city centre.

**Q14 (a)How can we stop sexual violence happening to children (b) what actions can be taken to better protect young people from sexual assault and (c)what role can the media play in bringing this about?**

**Response:**

Education Programmes

Access to help lines

Agencies being aware of ACPC Policy and Procedures and taking appropriate actions

See response to question 6 re media.

**Q.15** *What type of protection under the law should children and young people have?*

**Response:** The Law is increasingly acknowledging this area.

**Q.16** *How do we ensure that the legal system is better able to provide children with protection and justice when they have experienced sexual assault?*

**Response:** There are continuing concerns regarding the role of the legal system in the prosecution of alleged offenders and how children are currently subjected to cross-examination, in association with time lapses between violence occurring and the case coming to court for adjudication. The low rate of conviction, in comparison with allegations and investigations, shows that the present system requires scrutiny and improvement. Further work on video evidence, to allow for therapeutic work to be undertaken, rather than children and young people having to wait for the completion of court cases before benefiting from counselling needs to be addressed.

**Q.17** *What additional actions are required to protect sexually active young people from abuse and exploitation?*

**Response:** The proposed Safeguarding Board needs to ensure member agency staff are trained and aware of the potential for exploitation of this group of young people.

**Q.18** *How can awareness be raised among children and young people about sexual exploitation?*

**Response:** To ensure that education is a key component of the strategy.

**Q.19** *What are the key messages to be developed in relation to early intervention with (a) adult perpetrators and potential perpetrators and (b) with young people who display sexually harmful behaviour?*

**Response:**

A. Coordinated work as demonstrated by the MASRAM process - assessing risk and adequate treatment programmes.

### **PART 3 - PROTECTION AND JUSTICE**

**Q.20** *How can the policy and practices of the different criminal justice agencies be improved when addressing the needs of victims of sexual violence?*

**Response:** Trusts to adopt services such as the Young Witness Programme.

**Q.21 What areas should the criminal justice system prioritise when addressing cases of sexual violence ?**

**Response:** Needs of young children expected to give evidence.

**Q.22 What types of improvements are required in the statistical information available within the criminal justice system?**

**Response:** Consistency of definition and all agencies collecting same information.

**Q.23** *What might be included in the terms of reference for an Inspection by the Criminal Justice Inspectorate of the handling of cases involving sexual violence?*

**Response:** Possible areas included:

- . to inquire into the delays in progressing prosecutions;
- . the experience and knowledge base of Barristers operating in this field;
- . the management of situations and allegations involving people with learning disabilities in particular and more generally, those considered to be vulnerable adults;
- . support for jurors;
- . support for victims throughout the court process.

## **PART 4 – SUPPORT**

**Q.24** *What will be the most effective way to identify necessary support services and models for resourcing and delivering them?*

**Response:** An understanding of the long term adverse health, both emotional and physical of sexual assault. The acceptance that there is no quick fix answers and therapy is often over time.

**Q.25** *What key services would contribute most to victim/survivor care and support?*

**Response:** Range of early therapeutic services that are timely and offer a degree of choice.

**Q.26** *Is there a need to develop different services for different cohorts of victim/survivors, for example, due to gender, age or sexual orientation?*

**Response:** Yes. Range of services that meets need eg same sex sexual violence.

**Q.27** *How can services provided by HSS Trusts and the PSNI be better co-ordinated with those services provided by voluntary sector organisations to achieve the best outcomes for victims/survivors?*

**Response:** Better co-ordination and outcomes could be achieved by:

- . shared aims and objectives and joint funding of particular services;
- . increased engagement on the proposed Regional Safeguarding Board, as well as with Trust's Safeguarding Panels;
- . shared learning gained from experience in operating existing protocols, policies and procedures;
- . developing shared outcomes;

All services need to have a timely response to services users and SARC's need to include clear and appropriate linkages with other services.

**Q.28** *Which organisations could benefit victims/survivors by having clear protocols for joint working?*

**Response:** Joint protocols in place with Trust and PSNI: needs to be reviewed.

**Q.29** *What are the advantages of developing a uniform model of assessment (to complement the DHSSPS model) for assessing the risks of young people who present with sexually harmful behaviour?*

**Response:** A uniform model will ensure that all the involved agencies have a clear understanding of the different levels of risk and are applying the same criteria, this will also facilitate ongoing data collection on the extent of sexual harmful behaviours and details on the nature of the behaviour.

**Q.30** *Taking account of existing help-line facilities already in place, is a 24 hr sexual violence regional help-line needed in Northern Ireland?*

**Response:** Yes.

**Q.31 What will be the most effective ways of increasing awareness about services that are available?**

**Response:** From Trust perspective: website, leaflets, directory. Single entry point to services.

**Q.32 To which services should regional standards apply and how should standards be monitored?**

**Response:** Regional standards should apply to all organisations offering a service in this area, and should be monitored through RQIA, or an equivalent quality assurance process.

**Q.33** *What (a) skills and training and (b) support, do people working directly with victims/survivors of sexual violence need?*

**Response:** A range of different levels of training from awareness levels to advanced counselling work. That all training is accredited.

**Q.34** *How best could a Training Strategy feed into existing multi-disciplinary training plans in statutory and voluntary sector agencies?*

**Response:** Trust has a training strategy and this will be incorporated into it at various levels.

**Q.35** *Should training about the nature, incidence, impact and response to sexual violence be incorporated into pre-qualification training for relevant health professionals?*

**Response:** Yes, if this strategy is aimed at increasing awareness and understanding within the general population, then staff who are likely to encounter sexual violence on an ongoing basis need to have a level of understanding which should also include knowledge of services to assist them provide signposting to relevant services to victims.

## **PART 5 - EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

**Q.36** *Are the proposals in this document likely to have an adverse impact on equality of opportunity or on good relations with regard to the Section 75 categories of people described above? Please give details of any qualitative or quantitative evidence. If yes, please state how these adverse impacts could be reduced or alleviated in the proposals.*

**Response:** The needs of same sex victims, as previously referenced, needs to be taken into account as does the geographical positioning of a SARC's as this is likely to require consideration in terms of equity of access.

**Q.37** *If you feel the adverse impacts cannot be alleviated within the current proposed actions, please suggest alternative actions that could be considered to reduce the adverse impact.*

**Response:** No comments.

**Q.38** *Have the needs of the Section 75 categories of people been fully addressed in the proposals? If not, please provide details.*

**Response:** Not all eg under 18.

***Additional Comments (please refer to Questions if continuation from above)***

The Trust is in broad agreement with the consultation document and welcomes this comprehensive and coordinated strategy addressing this complex area of work.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COMMENTS**

---

Produced by:  
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety,  
Castle Buildings, Belfast BT4 3SQ

Telephone (028) 9052 0271

Text phone: (028) 9052 7668

[www.dhsspsni.gov.uk](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk)

January 2007

Ref: 222/2006

---