

“HIDDEN CRIMES

SECRET PAIN”

A CONSULTATION PAPER ON A PROPOSED REGIONAL  
STRATEGY FOR ADDRESSING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN  
NORTHERN IRELAND

JANUARY 2007

CONSULTATION RESPONSE DOCUMENT

CONSULTATION RESPONSE QUESTIONNAIRE

You can respond to the consultation document by e-mail, letter or fax.

Responses should be sent to:

e-mail: [sexualviolenceunit@dhsspsni.gov.uk](mailto:sexualviolenceunit@dhsspsni.gov.uk)

Written: Sexual Violence Unit  
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety  
Room C4.8 Castle Buildings  
Stormont  
BELFAST BT4 3SQ

Fax: (028) 9052 0529

Further copies of the consultation paper are available by telephoning 028 9052 0271

or

text phoning 028 90527668 or via the internet at: [www.dhsspsni.gov.uk](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk) or

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

Responses must be received no later than 27 April 2007

I am responding on behalf of an organisation

Job Title: Equality and Social Affairs Officer  
Organisation: Irish Congress of Trade Unions  
Address: Carlin House  
4-6 Donegall Street Place  
Belfast  
BT1 2FN  
Tel: 03890 247940

Fax: 02890 246898

e-mail: Pauline.buchanan@ictuni.org

**PART 1 -INTRODUCTION:**

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

Q.1 Is this definition of sexual violence acceptable?

Response:

1. Yes

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

**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:

Public awareness campaigns which focus on the vulnerability of certain groups such as people with mental illness, learning disabilities and disabled

Campaigns should be gender focused as the majority of victims of sexual violence are female.

A naming and shaming campaign aimed at the perpetrators of sexual violence similar to the drink driving campaigns targeted at young males.

Education on sexual violence should be included in the school curriculum, delivered by specialist groups already working in this area as part of an integrated programme on safety and rights.

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

Response:

Victims and victims support groups.

Representative groups from those most vulnerable to sexual violence.

Education providers.

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

Response:

By awareness education as part of the norm in school.

Specific projects with young people vulnerable to offend

By addressing the issues with young adults who have been the victims of sexual violence as children.

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:

To develop initiatives with the most affected groups of victims, victims support groups and potential offenders

To ensure public awareness campaigns are well resourced.

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

Response:

Yes

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:

In general the story lines of the soaps can play a lead role in generating awareness. In relation to younger people there should be greater links to new methods of mass communication with advantage being taken of cheaper and direct communication convergence by mobile technology.

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

Response:

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

Response:

Trade unions and employers to address sexual violence in the workplace. Direct interlink between bullying, harassment, sex discrimination and sexual violence.

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

Response:

Additional resource to those groups supporting the most vulnerable in society  
In partnership with trade unions and employers organisations developing workplace policies procedures and training for education and awareness

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

Response:

Best practice should be adopted from the research carried out in Ireland, England and Wales

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 the multi-sectoral aspects of addressing known risk factors be taken forward?

Response:

Public awareness campaigns which focus on the vulnerability of certain groups such as people with mental illness, learning disabilities and disabled  
Education on sexual violence should be included in the school curriculum, delivered by specialist groups already working in this area as part of an integrated programme on safety and rights.

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

Response:

In addition to previous questions, specific arrangements should be put in place to assist those most at risk to identify and report sexual abuse.

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 on sexual violence should be included in the school curriculum, delivered by specialist groups already working in this area as part of an integrated programme on safety and rights.

In relation to younger people there should be greater links to new methods of mass communication with advantage being taken of cheaper and direct communication convergence by mobile technology.

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

Response:

The system needs to be child friendly. There should not be required to be removed from any aspect of the law which is adversarial, such as cross examination.

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:

An overhaul of the legal system is required. It needs to be child friendly, non adversarial. The formality of the process should be removed and an environmental setting with which the child is accustomed developed. The process must be both speedy and effective.

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

Response:

Education on sexual violence should be included in the school curriculum, delivered by specialist groups already working in this area as part of an integrated programme on safety and rights.

This programme should extend in further education and the workplace for inclusion in basic induction training and programmes for work – this should include the large numbers of students who have part time employment.

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

Response:

This should be a specific topic with the school programme again lined to new technology to deliver the message.

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. To take responsibility for and control their behaviour. Break the cycle.
- b. Behaviour is not acceptable, support is available. Break the cycle

### 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:

Encouraging victims to report offences.

Making the reporting and investigation of offences more “user friendly”

Taking the adversarial approach out of the law when dealing with these cases.

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

Response:

Protection of the victim from first reporting.  
Speedy investigation

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

Response:

Clarity is required in what is meant by “an offence is cleared”.

Information should identify the difference between an offence being cleared and a conviction being obtained.