



Northern
Ireland
Office



Department of
**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

An Roinn
**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

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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

Written: Sexual Violence Unit
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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 or www.nio.gov.uk

Responses must be received no later than **27April 2007**

I am responding: as an individual on behalf of an organisation

(please tick a box)

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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: We wondered if 'believed' should replace 'perceive', as a term more easily understood. Some elaboration of 'consent' may also be required.

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: Positive use of media would be effective. For children the school environment will be important, and tools such as age appropriate school debates may be useful.

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

Response: Key groups would include media, statutory agencies (through the provision of key messages), health provision (emphasis on pre-natal stage where risk can be heightened), schools (input through relationships discussion), music industry (as a medium to relate messages to children and young people).

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

Response: Suggestions include internet sites, also BEBO and Blue Peter, childrens' magazines as external sources which could be used. Research through the Childrens' Commissioner's office could be carried out. The issue of 'consent' must be taken into account, and this is a difficult area.

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: (a) A broad approach would be helpful. On line surveys could be used to evaluate.

(b) Key influencers include Government, schools, parents, youth workers and media.

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

Response: Yes, but we are not sure that sexual violence can be seen in isolation from other forms of violence, so targeting may need to be wider. The drink drive campaign may be a model to consider. Government can also use the legislative function.

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: Exposure of the subject on TV soaps, films and documentaries. Use of media figures to promote key messages in resources used in school sex education.

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

Response: Key messages should centre around the development of healthy relationships; how to protect oneself; and where to seek help if needed.

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

Response: Parents/families are crucial. Also GPs, health, churches, employers, unions. The voluntary sector may also have a role in working alongside schools.

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

Response: Education should encompass life skills as well as the academic side. A focus on children of today would pay dividends in the future. It should be remembered that sexual violence may not be reported and there may be other issues to the fore which may be linked, for example mental health issues, alcohol and drugs misuse, teenage pregnancy.

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

Response: Agreed standards on definitions, data sharing protocols and access to data. There needs to be an understanding of the purpose of the data collection to ensure that data fits that purpose. Registration of data for required purposes is necessary.

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: Research will have a role to play here in terms of identification of risk factors. International models should be examined. Relevant agencies need to share expertise and knowledge. It may be helpful to consider the development of local fora for sexual violence with action plans. The multi-sectoral aspects of addressing known risk factors could be facilitated by both a "one stop shop" for victims, as envisaged in the 'Delivering Services to Victims - a Northern Ireland Strategy' consultation, as well as in the development of a SARC.

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

Response: Encouragement of communication between parents and children. Education on safe behaviour, and impact of alcohol and drugs. Environmental measures, such as CCTV and good street lighting, for example, are essential practical measures.

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: Provision of a safe environment; listening to children; effective utilisation of child protection procedures.

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

Response: Children and young people should have total protection.

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: Child friendly prosecution service processes and court processes. Specialist training for police investigators, prosecutors, solicitors, barristers, judges and jurors. Use of special measures in courts.

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

Response: Access to information, education, mentoring. Also assessment and tailored interventions..

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

Response:

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: Therapeutic intervention pre-court with adult perpetrators should be developed - self referral. The key messages to be developed are (1) that behaviour can change (2) that help is available and (3) that behaviour can be managed.

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: While the individual criminal justice agencies are likely to have individual policies there should be overarching standards governing practice to ensure consistency. An agreed action plan would ensure that identified needs are addressed. (See also response to Q 12).

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

Response: 'Seamless' treatment of victims throughout the system.
Managing revictimisation.

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

Response: Ideally there should be information available from a common database - a current problem is lack of comparable information due to different counting rules and timeframes.

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: Areas would include identification of available services, and perceived gaps in service provision; levels of victim satisfaction, including analysis of complaints; individual organisational responses to victims; and adherence to standards of practice, as well as looking at levels of prosecutions and convictions.

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:

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

Response: Access to therapeutic help - current waiting lists are very long. Also there are few resources for child victims.

Clear accurate information in relation to case progression is also key. It is important to recognise that all victims do not necessarily require the same forms of support, or at the same time, and services should meet their needs, rather than the needs of the system.

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: More services are required for child victims.

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:

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

Response:

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:

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: On balance yes. It is important to recognise that not all victims of sexual violence will report an offence, yet will require access to support services. A help-line could signpost services.

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

Response:

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

Response: Core services, such as those provided by criminal justice agencies in relation to prosecution and court processes; victim information in respect of sentenced offenders. Services should be subject to internal monitoring and external inspection.

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

Response:

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

Response:

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:

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:

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:

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

Response:

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

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COMMENTS

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January 2007

Ref: 222/2006
