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Office



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

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

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“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

Written: Sexual Violence Unit
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
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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: Yes

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: Awareness, humanity, individuality and pitching input at level of person who has experienced the trauma. Also use of media via all Organisations and Departments, elected Councillors, MLAs, throughout Northern Ireland.

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

Response: Care Focus Group that has been doing ongoing work re better practice within both PSNI, Social Services and Voluntary Agencies.

Care Focus Group had major input re the refurbishment of Garnerville and although they have not been part of the Strategy, they do have a number of things to offer.

Other key groups such as Education, media, Churches and all involved with vulnerable individuals should be targeted.

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

Response: Awareness through schools, GPs, advertisement, individual support, family support, parents being enabled to get and receive information both formal and counselling.

NSPCC ongoing research and other Groups who deal with ongoing sexual violence.

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) Understanding client group and their behaviour. Employing people who are tuned in and do not conceptualise the problem as isolated and one that should only be recognised as media attention, when high profile. It should be kept to the forefront.

(b) Change needs to come from the Health Department and be recognised as a priority. Small changes can make a difference to individuals going through the process. PSNI figures on assaults.

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

Response: Yes - It has to come from Government to make a difference. Sexual crime has many aspects as clearly outlined and understood. However, on the receiving end of the system, most are isolated and often judged. From a professional point of view, many who attempt to share information are perceived as abnormal, so in normalising sexual violence we need a human approach.

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: Continued adverts through the media is required. However, awareness is ongoing and needs individuals and staff to ensure awareness is key. Having experienced Care and lack of insight, I feel there is a real need to understand that most sexual violence is interlinked and many who are subject have experienced, and those who perpetrate have been subject.

There needs to be awareness raised. Responsibility embracing the media.

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

Response: Most who have experienced sexual violence believe it is a way of life, particularly if one is coming from incest. It is a learnt behaviour and the receiver believes they have to learn a new way of life. Most of the young people continue to have sexual encounters with inappropriate individuals due to wanting to belong.

Accurate reporting by press to incorporate safeguarding children. Making use of initiatives at appropriate times.

Alcohol awareness.

Age appropriate.

True consent.

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

Response: Education is key! Most young people and their families i.e., parents are not educated re sexual violence. Most do not have the basic education.

Education needs to be of a basic level.

School provision and at the level of the client.

Wider media influence.

Support.

Everyone has a responsibility.

Role Models.

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

Response: More funding for family planning.

Providing contraception.

Multi-national

Infection controls.

Health/including children and young people.

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

Response: Appropriate funding to carry out research to collate all figures held by Statutory and Voluntary Organisations.

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: Departmental led by a working New Safeguarding Board.

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

Response: Media campaign developed on statistical response.

Collection of data e.g., Stranger/Danger Campaign

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:

(a) Proactive police investigation.

(b) Judiciary
Education delivery to public.

(c) By insuring that any complaint/interviews are recorded in a manner that reflects the nature of the crime.

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

Response: Right to be safe. UN Convention reinforcing same.

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:

Support.

Timescales.

Review of Education, Judicial system, PPS decisions making in order to protect children from Court.

Recognising.

Advocate.

A complete overhaul is required in relation to current Judicial system.

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

Response: Education - alcohol - self worth.
Awareness
Needs of young people.
Funding to provide services is one of the key requirements.

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

Response: Education
Media
Leaflets
Written material
Public awareness building.

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: Funding
Education
Early intervention
Staff awareness/training.

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: Establishment of SARC
Constant review of Policy & Procedures.

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

Response: Child victims.

Evidence in Court.

Legislation.

Training the Judiciary.

Recognising the need of all persons, victims or otherwise, who are subject to the judicial system.

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

Response: Complete overhaul of current systems.

Intergrating systems.

Recognition of the need to collate accurate information which will inevitably assess resources required and identify gaps.

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: Consideration to specific needs of victim.
Time between complaint and Court.
Keeping individuals informed.
User satisfaction.
What happened in the Court.
Measurements in place.

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: To carry out an evaluation to the needs of victims. This could be used in conjunction with collating all statistical figures.

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

Response: All therapeutic support/medical intervention.
Ongoing training for professionals.
Advocates for adults.
Housing Executive.

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 - Given the vulnerability of each individual, different services need to be identified in order to offer expertise and pitch the service at the level of the user.

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: The Care Focus Group have been looking at the provision of improved services to provide small, but meaningful differences to the victim/survivor, over a number of years. The group has experienced service providers who bring issues met by users on a daily basis in order to improve the service provided by PSNI to the users. Members are survivors, counsellors, PSNI CARE, Social Services and Voluntary Sector. This work needs to take priority.

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

Response: All organisations need to work together to improve service provision to benefit victims/survivors. People need to get a clear message that they, the service users, are top priority.

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: There are many benefits in this area:

Prevention.
Treatment.
Education/users/providers.
Awareness.
Partnership working.
User involvement.
Parent awareness.

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 - This will promote advice, support and may provide a vital service to those who are on the brink of sexual crime.

As a group we would highlight the need for prevention to prevent the crime and early intervention is necessary.

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

Response: Ongoing media awareness.
Realistic expectations in terms of services available.
Not re-inventing the wheel
Leaflet of all-in-one services available.
Human approach is necessary in order to bring service users on board.
Less use of jargon info, but user friendly.

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

Response: Regional standards should apply to all agencies involved.
Regular monitoring of services to ensure needs are met, is essential.

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

Response: Awareness.
Confidentiality.
Regular supervision.
Staff debriefing.

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

Response: Identifying workers who are committed and don't see it purely as a promotion.

Training needs to be reviewed and assurance given as to effectiveness.

Training input needs to be client centred and client led.

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, however many who are in training may be limited in their experiences. Therefore, it should begin with level of experience and then pitched at a level for those who have been around for a period of time.

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)

As a survivor and member of the Care Focus Group, I would like to comment on the document as a very positive way ahead.

I would also like to say that as an individual who has been campaigning for a number of years, and experiencing the system, I cannot begin to thank those involved in this document. It is very clear and easy reading and has been given utmost consideration.

My thanks to all individuals who contributed . I look forward to developments in the future with clear consideration for a much needed centre for those who have been subjected to sexual crime.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COMMENTS

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