

A Response to: Development of a Community Safety Strategy-Pre-Consultation

Issued by the Department of Justice

August 2010

Introduction

- 1.1. The Women's Support Network (WSN) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department of Justice's pre consultation on a Community Safety Strategy
- 1.2. The Women's Support Network (WSN), established in 1989, is an infrastructural umbrella organisation, which provides support services to, and represents 61 community based Women's Centres, women's groups and projects, and women's infrastructure groups and 21 associated members across Northern Ireland (see Appendix 1).
- 1.3. Our members provide a wide range of women-centred front line services across Northern Ireland, including:
 - Specialist Advice
 - Childcare and Family Support
 - Counselling, Support and Advocacy
 - Complementary Therapies
 - Training & Education
 - Health & Wellbeing Programmes
 - Personal Development & Employment Support
 - Volunteering, Leadership & Empowerment
- 1.4. WSN aims to achieve social, political and economic justice through the promotion of the autonomous organisation of women. The Network aims to strengthen the collective voice of women's groups and to promote and develop networking opportunities, to enable collective action and to impact upon policy and decision making processes. WSN provides an accessible, feminist, relevant and high quality support service and resource for its member groups. The Network is also an important information resource on issues relevant to community based women's organisations and for other infrastructure groups, nationally and internationally.
- 1.5. Over the past 30+ years, the community based women's sector has developed a range of childcare, support, advice, and education & training services in response to the needs they identified at a grass roots level. Women's groups continue to meet the particular needs of women and their children living areas considered to be some of most

affected by the conflict, and recognised as some of the most disadvantaged areas across Northern Ireland today.

- 1.6. Network members are actively engaged with their local communities, cross-community initiatives and regional structures throughout Northern Ireland.
- 1.7. WSN is represented on the Policing Board Women's Reference Group

2.0 Comments

- 2.1 WSN welcomes the opportunity to assist the Department of Justice in the development of a new community safety strategy in this pre-consultation exercise. WSN notes that the discussion paper lacks specificity and contains general statements rather than concrete proposals. WSN recommends that a consultation on the community safety strategy includes concrete proposals that are specific rather than general statements.

- 2.2 WSN notes that the document commits to partnership working between statutory agencies, voluntary groups, communities and individual citizens. The discussion document also states on page 5 that "achieving a safer and shared community is the responsibility of many agencies and a co-ordinated approach will help ensure a more effective strategy." WSN believes the discussion paper lacks clarity as to whether the Department will retain a co-ordinating role for a new community safety strategy. WSN recommends that the new strategy clearly states who will have responsibility for over-seeing and co-ordinating the delivery of the Strategy.

- 2.3 WSN notes with disappointment that there are only scant references to domestic and sexual violence in the document. Recent Statistics published by the Police Service of Northern Ireland has shown an increase in domestic violence statistics from 23,591 in 2008/09 to

24,482 incidents in 2009/2010.¹ Statistics also demonstrate an increase in rape offences from 404 to 461 in 2009/2010.² The Northern Ireland Policing Board and the Police Service of Northern Ireland “Policing Plan 2010-2013” has targets to increase the detection rate for domestic violence with injury crimes by 10%.³

- 2.4 Recent research on women’s experiences of domestic violence by the Women’s Centres Regional Partnership highlighted a number of issues for policymakers to consider. The research found that 50% of the women profiled indicated professionals and the legal system are unable to compel the perpetrator of domestic violence to co-operate; legal sanctions such as non-molestation orders are not taken seriously; women experience difficulties in participating in the legal system; and that procedures are not ‘women- friendly’.⁴
- 2.5 WSN recommends that reduction of domestic violence is given greater emphasis within a community safety strategy which would complement the policing plan in meeting its objectives in the reduction of domestic violence.
- 2.6 The discussion paper highlights a previous consultation on local partnership working which aims to merge Community Safety Partnership and District Policing Partnerships and reduce Partnerships to eleven in line with proposed number of councils under the Reform of Public Administration. As the reduction of councils from 26 to 11 appears unlikely to happen in the near future, we would again seek clarity in the consultation document whether these proposed arrangements will go ahead. Furthermore, WSN recommends that the new community safety strategy makes a commitment to ensure any new models replacing the community safety partnerships and district

¹ PSNI Annual Statistical Report No 2 Domestic Abuse, Incidents and Crimes, 1st April 2009 to 31 March 2010, http://www.psni.police.uk/2_domestic_incidents_and_crimes_final.pdf

² PSNI Annual Statistical Report No 1 Recorded Crimes and Detections 1st April 2009-31st March 2010

³ The Northern Ireland Policing Board and the Police Service of Northern Ireland “Policing Plan 2010-2013 is available at http://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/final_pdf_-_policing_plan_2010-2013_b_.pdf

⁴ A McMurray (2009) “Women’s Experiences of domestic violence: A Pilot Study”, compiled on behalf of the Women’s Centre’s Regional Partnership, Pg 5.

policing partnerships are gender representative. This is particularly important given that research shows gender based violence such as domestic violence disproportionately affects women.⁵

Conclusion

WSN welcomes the opportunity to respond to this pre-consultation document. Whilst welcoming this opportunity, we have offered some constructive recommendations as to what we believe should be contained in a consultation document. We are happy to further discuss this response if required.

For further Information, contact:

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⁵ Statistics recently published by the PSNI show that in 2009/10 there were 5929 domestic abuse incidents were recorded for women compared to 1954 for men, see PSNI Annual Statistical Report No 2 Domestic Abuse, Incidents and Crimes, 1st April 2009 to 31 March 2010, http://www.psnipolice.uk/2_domestic_incidents_and_crimes_final.pdf.

Appendix 1

MEMBERSHIP 2010

	<u>Member Group</u>
1	All Ireland Mother's Union
2	An Munia Tober (Travellers)
3	Antrim & Ballymena Women's Aid
4	Ardmonagh Women's Group
5	Ardoyne Women's Group
6	ATLAS Women's Centre
7	Al Nisa Women's Group
8	Ballybeen Women's Centre
9	Ballymurphy Women's Group
10	Belfast & Lisburn Women's Aid
11	Belvoir Women's Improvement Group
12	Carrickfergus Women's Forum
13	Carew II
14	Causeway Women's Aid
15	Chrysalis Women's Centre
16	Clan Mor Women's Group (Sure Start)
17	Derry Well Woman
18	Derry Women's Centre
19	Falls Women's Centre
20	First Steps Women's Group
21	Footprints Women's Centre
22	Foyle Women's Aid
23	Foyle Women's Information Network
24	Granaghant District Women's Group
25	Greenway Women's Centre
26	Kilcooley Women's Centre
27	Lesbian Advocacy Services Initiative
28	Lesbian Line
29	Lenadoon Women's Group
30	Ligoneil Family Centre
31	Link Women's Group
32	Manor Women's Group
33	Markets Women's Group
34	NI Women's Aid Federation
35	NI Women's European Platform
36	Fermanagh Women's Network
37	Newry & Mourne Women
38	Newtownabbey Women's Group
39	Older Women's Network NI
40	Omagh Women's Aid
41	Rape Crisis Centre
42	Rasharkin Women's Group
43	Shankill Women's Centre
44	Strabane & Lifford Women's Centre
45	Strathfoyle Women's Centre
46	The Learning Lodge

47	Voices Women's Group
48	Walkway Women's Group
49	Waterside Women's Centre
50	Windsor Women's Centre
51	Women Connect Project
52	Women into Politics
53	Women's Information Group
54	Women's News
55	Women's TEC
56	Women 2 Gather
57	Women's Resource & Development Agency
58	WISPA (Women in Sport & Physical Activity)
59	Ardcarn Women's Group
60	OIYIN Women's Group
61	Mossley Women's Institute
	<u>Associate Members</u>
1.	Ballymena Community Forum
2.	CiNI
3.	Community Relations Forum
4.	East Belfast Community Partnership
5.	Employers for Childcare
6.	HIV Centre (Women's Support Group)
7.	Mencap
8.	National Women's Council of Ireland
9.	Playboard
10.	RNIB (Women's Group)
11.	Good Morning Newtownabbey
12.	Monkstown Community Association
13.	WAVE Trauma Centre
14.	WEA
15.	Parents Advice Centre
16.	Templemore Community Action Group
17.	Gingerbread
18.	Larne Community Development Project
19.	Community First Coaching
20.	Changing Faces
21.	Sands NI