

WOMEN'S AID

Submission to the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland

January 2018



WOMEN'S AID

Making Women and Children Safe

WOMEN'S AID

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1. Introduction

Women's Aid is a leading national organisation that has been working in Ireland to stop domestic violence against women and children since 1974. In this time, the organisation has built up a huge body of experience and expertise on the issue, enabling us to best support women and share this knowledge with other agencies responding to women experiencing domestic violence. Our services and expertise are outlined below.

National Freephone Helpline

Our National Freephone Helpline (1800 341 900) operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and provides support and information to callers experiencing abuse from intimate partners.

It is the only free, national, domestic violence Helpline with specialised trained staff and volunteers, accredited by The Helplines Association and with a Telephone Interpretation Service facility covering 170 languages for callers needing interpreting services. In 2016 the Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline responded to 15,952 calls.

One to one support visits and Court Accompaniment

We also provide face to face support visits and Court Accompaniment in the greater Dublin area. Court Accompaniment is a specific service providing support to the particular needs of women seeking legal redress in the Courts regarding violence by a current or former husband or partner. In 2016 Women's Aid provided 748 support visits and 240 court accompaniments.

Dolphin House Family Law Support and Referral Service

Women's Aid also operates the Dolphin House Family Law Support and Referral Service, in partnership with the Inchicore Outreach Centre. This is a free and confidential drop in service for women who are experiencing abuse in a relationship, located in the Dublin District Family Law Court.

Training and Development

Women's Aid is a centre of excellence in training to statutory, voluntary and community organisations as they develop and maintain organizational responses to women and their children experiencing domestic violence. Training participants include gardai, legal, health and social care professionals, staff from community groups throughout Ireland and Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline volunteers.



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Policy and Communications work

The sum of the above contacts with women experiencing domestic violence and their supporters enable us to have a good picture of the issues that need addressing to improve systemic responses and we use that information in our policy and communication work. We provide relevant information and recommendations to government and other relevant agencies on the nature and prevalence of domestic violence, the barriers faced by women experiencing domestic violence and the gaps in existing legislation/systems. We have also compiled the Femicide Watch for the Republic of Ireland since 1996.

Women's Aid welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland. Given our remit our submission will focus specifically on policing domestic violence, provide an overview of the experiences of women dealing with the Garda in relation to this crime and offer suggestions to improve policy, practice, accountability and management of this issue.

2. Statistical Context

The latest European Union survey¹ on violence against women found that in Ireland:

- 14% of women have experienced physical violence by a partner (current or ex).
- 6% of women have experienced sexual violence by a partner (current or ex).
- 31% of women have experienced psychological violence by a partner (current or ex).
- In Ireland 21% of women who experienced physical or sexual violence by a partner, indicated that they contacted the police as a consequence of the most serious incident of physical or sexual violence since age 15.
- 28% of women indicated that the most serious incident of violence by a partner came to the attention of the Police. This include both by women reporting themselves and third party reporting.
- The Garda Inspectorate found that the Dublin Metropolitan divisions combined received 10,373 DV/SA calls between January and September 2012, thus showing that domestic violence incidents are a huge component of Garda work².

Women's Aid statistics³

In 2016:

- there were 19,115 contacts with Women's Aid, in which 20,769 disclosures of domestic violence

1 FRA gender-based violence against women survey dataset available at <http://fra.europa.eu/DVS/DVT/vaw.php>

2 Garda Inspectorate Crime Investigation Report 2014

3 Women's Aid Impact Report 2016



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against women were made (including emotional, physical, financial and sexual abuse).

- our Court Accompaniment service accompanied 133 women to court for a total of 240 times.
- the Dolphin House Support and Referral Service supported 387 women in 411 face to face drop in sessions throughout the year.
- 43% of the information, referral and advocacy work by the Helpline and One to One service in 2016 was in support of women accessing and negotiating the legal system for protection. This includes information and support on legal options, how to access expert legal advice and representation and contacting the Garda.
- 216 women died violently in the period 1996-2017. 171 cases (79%) have been resolved, 9 cases (4%) are awaiting trial and 36 cases (17%) remain unresolved. 88% of women knew their killers. **In 56% of the resolved cases the victim was killed by a current or former male intimate partner⁴.**

⁴ Women's Aid, Femicide Watch 2017 Republic of Ireland



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3. Summary of Recommendations

1. That mechanisms are put in place to monitor adherence to the Garda Domestic Abuse Intervention Policy.
2. That innovative techniques for evidence collection at domestic violence call outs are fully resourced and rolled out nationally.
3. That clear guidelines on how Garda would deal with domestic violence cases when the perpetrator is a member of (or a friend of) a Garda or Garda informant are developed and made available to the public.
4. That Barring Orders and Interim Barring orders are always served by Garda to the respondent, and the views of the applicant for a Safety or Protection Order are sought when deciding whether Garda should or not serve such orders.
5. That mechanisms to appropriately record serving of orders are put in place.
6. That An Garda Síochána develops and implements a risk assessment checklist to be used in all domestic violence call outs.
7. That An Garda Síochána, in conjunction with relevant agencies, develop strategies to manage and reduce risk for women experiencing domestic violence based on a multi-agency approach.
8. That joint work is developed between the DPSUs and relevant support services to offer a range of options to victim of domestic violence according to assessed risk.
9. That the High Risk Support Project is rolled out nationally and eligibility criteria reviewed.
10. Initial training on understanding domestic violence is retained at the Garda College and carried out in conjunction with specialist services.
11. Continuous professional development is carried out in conjunction with specialist support services for all serving members of the Garda on the complexities of domestic violence.
12. Specific training on risk assessment and management is developed and delivered to all relevant Garda.



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13. Information on how Divisions and Districts are performing in regards to domestic violence needs to be made available to the public and shared in community forums to which the Garda is part.
14. Victims' satisfaction surveys should be dis-aggregated by type of crime, and include specifically satisfaction of victims of domestic violence with Garda response.
15. Women's Aid recommends that national and local domestic violence services are consulted over the assessment, evaluation and any improvements or changes to the Protective Services Units.
16. Women's Aid recommends that the original DPSU model be implemented, including investigation after initial call out, evidence kits and 3 point risk assessment.
17. That a single point of contact/case manager for domestic violence victims is identified within either the DPSU or the VSO and their relationship and respective roles clarified to the public.
18. In all strategic and planning documents BOTH name domestic violence as a standalone key priority area with its actions and key performance indicators AND include domestic violence specific key performance indicators in all the relevant generic key areas.
19. That data on number of domestic violence incidents recorded, charges made, number of arrests, convictions and persons injured is collected and again made available to the public.
20. That data on crime committed in the context of domestic violence is collected detailing type of offences, gender of victim and perpetrator and relationship between victim and perpetrator.



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4. The Experiences of Female Victims of Domestic Violence with the Garda

Many of the women we work with have to call on the Garda for protection from their abuser. These women have often been subjected to a number of crimes, including: attempted murder, assaults of varying degrees with or without weapons, rape, stalking, theft, fraud, arson, threats (to kill, burn down the house, to harm the woman, the children or her family) and breaches of orders under the Domestic Violence Act. At times children are also the target of these crimes.

Domestic violence has a very high rate of repeat victimisation, and many women tell us that the crimes against them take many forms as well as being repeated many times.

Not all the women that experienced the crimes above called the Garda. While we do not ask and therefore cannot tell why this is so among our clients, the recent FRA report provides the following responses.

Reasons for not contacting the police after most serious incident of physical or sexual violence by partner since age 15. Ireland.⁵

Reason	Ireland %	EU average %
Dealt with it myself/involved a friend/family matter	57	39
Too minor/not serious enough /never occurred to me	13*	30
Did not think they would do anything	8*	9
Did not think they could do anything	6*	7
Fear of offender or reprisal	18*	13
Somebody stopped me or discouraged me	7*	2
Shame, embarrassment	16*	14
Thought it was my fault	8*	4
Did not want anybody to know/kept it private	22	14
Too emotionally upset to contact the police	6*	4

⁵ FRA gender-based violence against women survey dataset 2012 available at <http://fra.europa.eu/DVS/DVT/vaw.php>



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Did not want the offender arrested or to get in trouble with the police	9*	5
Would not be believed	5*	4
Afraid I would lose the children	3*	3
Did not want the relationship to end	8*	4
Somebody else reported it/police came to know about it on their own	4*	2
Went someplace else for help	2*	2
Other reason	4*	8
Went directly to a judge or magistrate to report the incident	0	0*

*means less than 30 respondents

The FRA research also found that in the EU Police has the lowest rate of satisfaction of all services that victims have contacted, with only 49% of victims of partner sexual violence and 60% of victims of partner physical violence happy with the assistance provided⁶. Unfortunately there is no published data available on user satisfaction disaggregated by Member State.

From the information collected in our work with women, we would like to highlight the following issues:

4.1 Garda Responses – From Excellent to Very Negative

In our experience, when women have contact with the Garda the response can vary from excellent to very negative⁷.

Women who report a positive experience with the Garda, have mentioned:

- being believed
- being given information on the orders available under the Domestic Violence Act

⁶ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), 2014, Violence against women: an EU-wide survey Main results, Table 3.7.

⁷ Note: The information collected here relates to details and facts disclosed by women in the process of their contact with Women's Aid. As the primary aim of these services is to provide support and information to women, Women's Aid does not solicit information for statistical purposes. This is **not** therefore a survey on satisfaction with Garda responses.



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- Garda serving the order to the respondent so the woman would not have to do it herself
- being referred to support services
- Garda looking for refuge/safe place for her (and in some cases driving her there)
- Garda providing on-going support and information on her case
- Garda bringing her to hospital
- Garda coming back and checking on her well-being after the first call out
- arresting the abuser for a breach of an order
- arresting for assault and opposing bail in court
- writing reports to assist women in Access cases
- removing perpetrator and encouraging woman to apply for BO.

The women who had a negative experience have mentioned:

- Garda not enforcing orders under the Domestic Violence Act, not arresting respondents even after a number of breaches
- Garda saying they “cannot do anything without an order” when an assault or other offence has been committed
- Garda being dismissive, dealing informally with the abuser by “having a word with him”, siding with the abuser, telling the woman she is wasting their time, minimising abuse (especially emotional abuse)
- Garda not turning up for a long time after emergency call or not turning up at all
- assault case being closed without explanation
- Garda not taking statement
- giving incorrect information about orders under the Domestic Violence Act
- Garda not attending court to give evidence
- Garda knowing the abuser and therefore not taking action
- Instances of discrimination against non-Irish citizens and Travellers
- fear regarding their confidentiality being compromised

In short, in our experience the Gardaí do not always follow the relevant Garda policy, for example, do not always provide information on services and do not always arrest for breaches of an order under the Domestic Violence Act. There needs to be monitoring mechanisms to make sure the Garda Domestic Abuse Intervention policy is adhered to consistently.



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4.2 Issues Relating to Arrests and Prosecution

In certain cases, arrests have not been made following a breach of an order, with the attending Garda choosing to deal with the breach “informally”, contrary to Garda Policy.

When offenders **are** arrested for a breach often that is the **only** charge that is pressed by the Garda, even when other offences have been committed, for example threats or assault. This obviously can have repercussions on sentencing. It also minimizes or dismisses the experience of the victim.

In other cases perpetrators of crimes in a domestic violence relationship are not arrested when there is no order under the Domestic Violence Act, with the Garda saying “there is nothing they can do without an order”, even in cases where a number of other offences (such as assault) have been committed and could be investigated. We still hear with huge frequency that the first time the Gardaí are called the only response is to tell a woman to get an order in Dolphin House despite whatever crime might have occurred.

The Garda Inspectorate Report also found that there were high number of calls to domestic incidents with low volume of arrests recorded.

Moreover, often the case relies mostly or only on the victim's statement as evidence. This places an undue burden on the victim, who may be, with good reason, terrified of retaliation.

Police forces in other jurisdictions are able to avail of specific training and initiatives on policing domestic violence, in order to improve their response in terms of victim safety, evidence gathering, and prosecution without necessarily relying on the victim as a witness. For example innovative initiatives include the use of body worn camera to record the scene of a domestic violence call out and the use of emergency calls recording as evidence.

Women's Aid welcomes the four new Divisional Protective Services Units based in Cabra, Clondalkin, Anglesea Street (Cork) and Dundalk.

Women's Aid Recommends:

1. That mechanisms are put in place to monitor adherence to the Garda Domestic Abuse Intervention Policy.
2. That innovative techniques for evidence collection at domestic violence call outs are fully resourced and rolled out nationally.



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4.3 Garda as Offenders or Friends of Offenders

In a small but important number of cases, the woman either felt she could not call the Garda, or having called got an unhelpful response, because the perpetrator was either a Garda, a Garda informant or a relative/close friend of a Garda.

We are also concerned by discovering in the Garda Inspectorate Report that there is an issue with PULSE privacy of records, as records are accessible to all Gardaí, not just the investigating ones. This means that a Garda perpetrator of domestic violence would have access to PULSE records about his partner and any incidents and would also apparently be able to modify such records.

There needs to be clear guidelines on how Garda would deal with this situation, and these guidelines need to be made public, so that women in these cases can be reassured and not prevented from coming forward.

Women's Aid Recommends:

3. That clear guidelines on how Garda would deal with domestic violence cases when the perpetrator is a member of (or a friend of) a Garda or Garda informant are developed and made available to the public.

4.4 Serving of Orders under the Domestic Violence Act

In Women's Aid experience most women have to notify an abusive partner that an Order has been granted against him. In certain cases Gardaí notify the respondent about an order having been made, and this is very supportive to the woman, protecting her from the risk of violence or retaliation.

This is particularly the case in relation to Barring Orders and Interim Barring Orders, where the respondent may be angry that they have to leave the home and may resist doing so.

Women's Aid has suggested in our submission on the Domestic Violence Bill 2017 to include a provision to the effect that Barring Orders and Interim Barring Orders are always served by Garda to the respondent, and the views of the applicant for a Safety or Protection Order are sought when deciding whether Garda should or not serve such orders.

While aware of the resource implications of this, we would maintain that having Barring Orders and IBO always served on the respondents by Garda would make this process safer for the applicant, while at the



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same giving Garda an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the area and property, should they be called there in an emergency.

We also find that defendants on breaches regularly make the defense that the breach occurred when they had not yet been served the order and therefore often do not suffer any consequences for their first breach. It is therefore essential that serving of orders is also recorded in a way that will hold up in court.

Women's Aid Recommends:

4. That Barring Orders and Interim Barring orders are always served by Garda to the respondent, and the views of the applicant for a Safety or Protection Order are sought when deciding whether Garda should or not serve such orders.

5. That mechanisms to appropriately record serving of orders are put in place.

4.5 What Works Well - Examples of Local Initiatives

We would like to highlight the following 2 examples of excellent local initiatives that could be replicated in other areas:

Ballymun Domestic Abuse Response Team

Ballymun took the initiative when they were not selected as one of the initial DPSUs and put together a voluntary team which would work with ten domestic violence victims where there had been repeat call-outs. They took an individual approach by assigning a Garda on the team to each woman to make contact, build a relationship, try understand the bigger picture and put into place any appropriate measures. These measures could include: link to support service, call backs by Garda, follow up with investigating Gardaí where further action was necessary for particular incidents or initiating investigation if there were crimes which had not yet been reported/investigated and where investigation could increase the victim's safety (this could be crimes such as theft by the perpetrator if it might bring a sentence or bail conditions with it).

When one case was closed, i.e. all appropriate measures had been offered and had an outcome or contact had ended otherwise, a new woman was added to the team's case load.

Case management

In one case a woman experienced 8 order breaches in a 3 month period, all of which she reported. She was dealing with 6 different Gardaí and this was very difficult for her to manage. It was suggested that one



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Gardaí could take on the management of all these cases and be her single liaison point, as is done with juvenile repeat offenders, which was very helpful.

When women DO want to proceed with a statement and charges, it is often the confusion of how this works, and unavailability of Gardaí that stops them. Improved and proactive communication throughout the criminal process is crucial, and women's fear of reprisal is not always only the reason they do not carry on.

This kind of case management and liaising with the victim would be a role that the new Victims Services Offices could take on a regular basis. So far however, we have not seen any evidence that this has been the case.

5. Risk Assessment and Multi-Agency Work

The EU Victims Directive and the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017 provide for risk assessment of victims by law enforcers when a complaint has been made (S 15). This is also reflected in the revised Garda Domestic Abuse Intervention Policy 2017.

Women's Aid supports these developments. Domestic violence poses a great risk to women's safety, with international research confirming separation and disclosure/support seeking as heightened risk times for severe injury or even death.

It is imperative that Garda are aware of the risks indicators and of appropriate good practice responses to minimise those risks. Risk assessment needs to be part of Garda response to domestic violence, and this includes looking at the case overall and not at the single incident, as well establishing formal ways of joint work with other statutory agencies and the community sector to respond to risk and prevent future harm. MARACs (Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference), which have been developed and evaluated in the UK, could provide a useful model for such joint work. We are aware that establishment of MARACs is not just or even primarily the responsibility of the Garda. However it is important that formal arrangements with other agencies with a focus on the safety of the victims are developed and implemented.

Moreover, standardised risk assessment tools and guidance need to be developed, to ensure consistency of response.



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Women's Aid has worked with the Gardaí since 2012 on the development and piloting of a High Risk Support Project (HRSP) in the Dublin Metropolitan Area which gives women at high risk of domestic violence enhanced access to the Gardaí and a higher priority rating for emergency response.

As part of this project Women's Aid undertakes risk assessment as well as providing support for domestic violence victims. This project has been evaluated positively and provides a good model for collaborative work in high risk cases and the Garda Commissioner agreed in 2014 that it should be rolled out nationally. However the strict eligibility criteria for this project limit the possible candidates so Women's Aid recommends that similar ways of joint working are considered more broadly to benefit more victims.

It is also recommended that Garda carry out risk assessment with all domestic violence victims and, based on the level of risk determined at assessment, victims are facilitated to either access the High Risk Support Project or a range of other appropriate services aimed at risk prevention and prosecution, delivered through further joint working between DPSUs and domestic violence support services.

Women's Aid Recommends:

6. That An Garda Síochána develops and implements a risk assessment checklist to be used in all domestic violence call outs.
7. That An Garda Síochána, in conjunction with relevant agencies, develop strategies to manage and reduce risk for women experiencing domestic violence based on a multi-agency approach.
8. That joint work is developed between the DPSUs and relevant support services to offer a range of options to victim of domestic violence according to assessed risk.
9. That the High Risk Support Project is rolled out nationally and eligibility criteria reviewed.

6. Training

The Garda Inspectorate Report found that there are a range of attitudes in the Garda towards domestic violence ranging from excellent to very negative. While some members demonstrated an understanding of domestic violence, others were unaware of the complex reasons why many domestic violence victims return to their abusive partners, the broader challenges faced by domestic violence victims, the risk of escalation and also the impact on children witnessing it.



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Our experience on the ground confirms this. In certain cases comments made by the attending Garda displayed negative attitudes to domestic violence victims, a lack of understanding of domestic violence dynamics and of the risk of the violence escalating.

It is worth noting that the first encounter with a Garda is of extreme importance for a victim of violence and may determine if she will or not call the Garda again in the future. An unhelpful response may mean that she will not call again when the violence is repeated or even when it escalates.

From the mid-1990s to 2010 Women's Aid delivered domestic violence training to all phase III Garda students at Templemore, but that training program was cancelled during the recession.

Since the re-opening of the Garda College in 2015, Women's Aid has delivered inputs and training workshops to students of the College. At present Women's Aid delivers a three hour workshop to probationer Gardaí (phase III) on the dynamics of domestic violence and the barriers women may face when leaving a violent relationship. Given the complexity of the issue of domestic violence and the large volume and nature of the crime categories associated with it, Women's Aid is of the view that more time is needed for probationer Gardaí to avail of training on the issue by specialist domestic violence services.

Women's Aid also receives requests for training from in-service Gardaí and this is delivered on an ad-hoc basis. Individual members attend our training and we also receive requests from units who are proactive on the issue. Women's Aid would like to see a coordinated continuous professional development (CPD) training programme available for all members of the force on the issues associated with responding to women victims of domestic violence. Women's Aid would welcome the opportunity to input on its content and methodology.

The EU Victims Directive emphasises the importance of training (Article 21) and in particular training in relation to the individual assessment that will have to be carried out to identify a victim's protection need:

Any officials involved in criminal proceedings who are likely to come into personal contact with victims should be able to access and receive appropriate initial and ongoing training, to a level appropriate to their contact with victims, so that they are able to identify victims and their needs and deal with them in a respectful, sensitive, professional and non-discriminatory manner. Persons who



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are likely to be involved in the individual assessment to identify victims' specific protection needs and to determine their need for special protection measures should receive specific training on how to carry out such an assessment. Member States should ensure such training for police services and court staff.

The Istanbul Convention notes the importance of collaborating with specialist civil society organisations in carrying out this work. The Garda Inspectorate also suggests that training is done with the engagement of victims and support agencies, to provide a better understanding of the needs of domestic violence victims. Women's Aid is happy to continue and extend our collaboration with the Garda in relation to training on domestic violence.

Women's Aid recommends that:

10. Initial training on understanding domestic violence is retained at the Garda College and carried out in conjunction with specialist services.
11. Continuous professional development is carried out in conjunction with specialist support services for all serving members of the Garda on the complexities of domestic violence.
12. Specific training on risk assessment and management is developed and delivered to all relevant Garda.

7. Accountability

The Garda Inspectorate Report highlighted the need for much stronger supervision and monitoring of how domestic violence calls and investigations are dealt with.

Women's Aid is pleased that the Revised Domestic Abuse Intervention Policy 2017 seems to have such a supervisory system in place within Divisions and Districts. However in order to ensure accountability to the community, there needs to be mechanism to share general information on performance relative to domestic violence cases to the public in general and to relevant NGOs in particular.

The Garda Inspectorate also recommended that the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Investigation Unit (DVSAIU) must perform a **national monitoring function** to ensure compliance with the Garda Síochána Domestic Violence Policy. This is not reflected in the revised Domestic Abuse Intervention Policy and it is not clear who will perform an overall national monitoring function to make sure the policy is adhered to. Given



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the findings of the Garda Inspectorate on the inconsistency of Garda response and attitudes to domestic abuse, it is essential that this function is carried out.

The Garda Inspectorate found that the levels of satisfaction for victims of domestic violence was lower than for other types of victims and this needs to be monitored and addressed regularly in victims' satisfaction surveys. Currently the victims' satisfaction surveys do not differentiate between victims of different crimes (i.e. satisfaction of victims of burglary as opposed to victims of domestic violence) and it is therefore hard to monitor the satisfaction of victims of domestic violence with the Garda response over time.

Women's Aid recommends:

13. Information on how Divisions and Districts are performing in regards to domestic violence needs to be made available to the public and shared in community forums to which the Garda is part.

14. Victims' satisfaction surveys should be dis-aggregated by type of crime, and include specifically satisfaction of victims of domestic violence with Garda response.

8. Structure

Under the Modernisation and Renewal Programme a number of important initiatives have commenced, which should have a positive impact on the issues outlined above

Women's Aid welcomed the establishment of the National Protective Services Bureau and the first 4 Divisional Protective Services Units. We look forward to the assessment and evaluation of these Units and the subsequent roll out of DPSUs across the country in 2018.

According to the revised Domestic Abuse Intervention Policy however, it still seems to be the case that the responding Garda will be the investigating Garda. The Garda Inspectorate had recommended to assign **secondary investigation responsibility for domestic violence crimes to dedicated investigation teams** especially in the more severe or higher risk cases and our understanding of the original DPSU model was that they would be taking on domestic violence investigations after the initial call out, that further evidence kits would be made available, and that a 3 point risk assessment process would be implemented.

We would like this promising model fully resourced and implemented.



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DPSUs could also be responsible for case management of a victim's case (in alternative to the Victim Services Offices).

Women's Aid Recommends:

15. Women's Aid recommends that national and local domestic violence services are consulted over the assessment, evaluation and any improvements or changes to the Protective Services Units.

16. Women's Aid recommends that the original DPSU model be implemented, including investigation after initial call out, evidence kits and 3 point risk assessment.

9. Victim Services Offices

The establishment of Victims Services Offices in each Garda division is also a very positive step. Our experience is that the Store Street station, where such an office was initially piloted, provides consistent good responses to victim of domestic violence. We hope therefore that the introduction of such offices in each division will improve consistency of response nationally. We also would hope they could take on a liaising role as outlined above under good practice examples.

The relationship and roles of the Victim Services Offices and the DPSU in relation to domestic violence victims needs to be clarified as it is not clear who would case manage and be the contact point for them.

Women's Aid Recommends:

17. That a single point of contact/case manager for domestic violence victims is identified within either the DPSU or the VSO and their relationship and respective roles clarified to the public.

10. Leadership and Management

Domestic violence is core policing work both in terms of volume (as demonstrated by the Garda Inspectorate Report) and in terms of the range and potential gravity of the crimes committed. It therefore needs to be named and prioritised in policing plans and long term strategies.

It is important that domestic violence is understood by all Garda as core work and it is not sidelined. Therefore, as well as having its own specific actions and key performance indicators, domestic violence needs to be also included in generic but relevant actions. Key performance indicators need to reflect this important part of Garda work.



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As an example, in the Policing Plan 2017 there are a number of actions and activities that are very **relevant but not specific** to domestic violence. For instance the Policing Plan states that the Garda will

Improve our initial response to reported crime and our management of investigations from the moment a crime is reported to the time it is brought before the courts

This is crucial in domestic violence cases and the Garda Inspectorate Report outlined various issues around how domestic violence cases were recorded and investigated. Therefore activities and indicators of success in the Policing Plan **should** include specific activities and indicators on domestic violence related crimes, but there are not any. For example along with improving detection of burglaries, robberies and assault, the Plan should have as one of the indicators improving detection of crimes with a domestic violence motive.

This should be done with all other key activities in all relevant documents.

Women's Aid Recommends:

18. In all strategic and planning documents BOTH name domestic violence as a standalone key priority area with its actions and key performance indicators AND include domestic violence specific key performance indicators in all the relevant generic key areas.

11. Data collection

In order to monitor whether interventions are effective in relation to domestic violence a system of comprehensive and accurate data is needed. However currently this data does not seem to be available. It is not possible to know the number of emergency calls to Garda in relation to domestic violence, the number of crimes committed (other than breaches of orders) or the number of arrests.

In the past An Garda Síochána published annual statistics which included the number of domestic violence incidents recorded, charges made, number of arrests, convictions and persons injured and number of breaches of domestic violence orders. Currently the only data publicly available is the number of breaches of Domestic Violence orders.

Domestic violence can include a variety of criminal charges (for example, homicide, assault, sexual assault, rape, stalking). It is the view of Women's Aid that it is essential to always record the relationship between



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the perpetrator and the victim in order to unveil the domestic violence crime that is 'hidden' within headline offences.

Women's Aid recommends that information recorded for domestic violence incidents should include gender, relationship of the accused to the victim, type of offence, existence of orders, information on any previous incidents and other relevant information.

Women's Aid Recommends:

19. That data on number of domestic violence incidents recorded, charges made, number of arrests, convictions and persons injured is collected and again made available to the public.

20. That data on crime committed in the context of domestic violence is collected detailing type of offences, gender of victim and perpetrator and relationship between victim and perpetrator.

12. Resources

Women's Aid is aware that increased resources are needed for Garda to be able to effectively respond to domestic violence. For example there is a need for better and quicker dispatching systems and for improved ITC resources.

Moreover we have noted that the issue of overtime cuts has impacted on victims of domestic violence, with Garda not being available to take statements or able to provide follow up visits.

Women's Aid supports increased resources allocation to the Garda.

