

VISION ACTION CHANGE

Feminist principles and practice of working on violence against women



Women's Aid Model of Work

Acknowledgments from the Authors

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Monica O'Connor and Niamh Wilson

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FOREWORD



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Women's Aid is an organisation which has been working on the issue of violence against women for over 25 years. We are a feminist, political and campaigning organisation committed to the elimination of violence and abuse of women through effecting political, cultural and social change. We provide direct support services to women experiencing male violence and abuse. This work underpins and informs all other goals and actions of the organisation.

Women's Aid works from the principles of empowerment, collective action, self-help, mutual aid, inclusion and equality. We recognise the links between all forms of oppression, abuse of and violence against women and the interconnection between forms of discrimination which women experience due to poverty, disability, immigration status, ethnicity, sexual orientation and educational disadvantage. We continuously strive to reflect this in our responses to women and in our own organisational workings.

Women's Aid recognises all forms of violence that women can be subjected to, but works primarily with 'domestic violence'. Domestic violence is defined by the Report of the Task Force on Violence Against Women as 'the use of physical or emotional force or threat of physical force including sexual violence, in close adult relationships.'

Over the past 25 years we have developed relationships with many other groups working on the issue of violence against women. It became increasingly apparent that there was limited documentation of the approach that Women's Aid and others use to support women. This is despite the fact that this approach has been well evaluated, both nationally and internationally, and has been shown to result in services that are useful, valuable and effective for women who have experienced male violence.

Women's Aid has always been committed to the development of good practice in our work with women. We believe that documenting and recording women's experience and gathering evidence and data is critical to our knowledge and understanding of the issue. We were extremely privileged to have the two authors, Niamh Wilson and Monica O'Connor – who are experts in this field and who were central in developing the Women's Aid model of work – documenting this approach and producing this publication.

This publication documents the Women's Aid model of work and is intended to be a resource for those working to end violence against women, and as a tool for the future of the work. It has been developed by listening to women's experiences of male violence over 25 years and responding to their support needs. Women's Aid as an organisation has gained a great deal of expertise and knowledge over the years in important issues, such as maximising women's safety, for example. However, there remain areas, such as creating

equal access, that still present many challenges for us. We will continue to learn from women, by always listening to their needs and developing responses that reflect the diversity of their experiences.

This publication will be used internally in Women's Aid, to ensure quality of service and continuous development of staff and volunteers. We are conscious that it is a working document that will be further developed as we continue to learn from women's experiences. We hope also that it will be a useful resource and reference point for others in developing a response to women's experience of male violence.

Denise Charlton.
Director,
Women's Aid.

INTRODUCTION

This publication draws on feminist analysis, principles and practice, developed over the past 35 years. Whilst our own experience and knowledge essentially informs this publication, it is impossible to draw clear lines between what we have learned from our own work and what feminist activists, academics, researchers and frontline service providers have explored and documented over the years. We are constantly affirmed by what we read and hear, and what we read and hear informs and inspires the development of a deeper and richer understanding of male power and male violence. Most importantly, it is the experience and voices of women who are directly subjected to male violence, which most clearly illuminates our understanding of this complex issue.

This publication is divided into two parts. Part 1 has three sections, which we hope will be of interest and use in any context to individuals, groups or organisations wishing to develop a response to violence against women. The first section describes our understanding of a feminist analysis, provides a global perspective on violence against women and moves on to look more explicitly at violence against women within intimate relationships with men. It also examines the resistance and activism of the feminist movement against male violence and notes some of its significant achievements. It would be impossible to do justice to the breadth and richness of feminist learning, experience, activism, struggles and achievements in this publication. Therefore, we have particularly drawn from the work of feminists who have provided insight and inspiration for us in the development of our work.

Section 2 draws from Section 1 to encapsulate key principles of knowledge and beliefs about violence against women which are fundamental to the development and delivery of a good practice response. What we know and what we believe underpins all of our day-to-day interaction with women and our work to effect institutional and societal change towards the elimination of violence against women.

In Section 3, we outline good practice guidelines which are a collation of the learning gathered over many years by refuge, helpline and support service workers and volunteers in Women's Aid. In this section we attempt to bring together the elements of a response that women subjected to violence have found to be effective. They are intended to be supportive and flexible, not rigid or instructional. When working with a woman we respond to her individual and unique experience, situation and needs. The guidelines not only address how we respond on a one-to-one basis to women but also about how we work with women collectively, challenge male violence on a political level, and work for wider institutional and societal change.

Part two is a resource for those working in the community, voluntary and non-governmental sector. Whether you are engaged in establishing a dedicated and specialised service for women experiencing violence, or developing good practice principles and guidelines for workers and volunteers in your group or organisation, we

hope this section will be a useful resource. What women have consistently said is that they want autonomous, community based, women centred services. We believe that community and voluntary groups are in an ideal position to provide that response, be it through the establishment of a new group specifically set up to address violence against women, or as part of an already established group or organisation responding to wider issues in the community or society. We provide a number of case studies in this section which illustrate the effectiveness of community and voluntary responses based on feminist principles and practice.

This publication is intended to be read in its entirety to obtain an understanding of the feminist analysis that lies at the heart of the model of work. In this way the development process becomes clear and each section builds on the previous one. As people address different issues and work on different stages, we hope that each of these sections and sub-sections will become relevant, used in turn and perhaps returned to as groups and organisations evaluate, revisit, revise and reflect on their work.

We offer this publication as a contribution to accompany the many other contributions made by activists, frontline service providers, researchers, academics and most importantly, women survivors of male violence both here in Ireland and across the world.



PART 1 • WOMEN'S AID MODEL OF WORK

Section 1

A Feminist Analysis of Violence Against Women and Girls

A global overview of all forms of violence against women

Violence against women and girls is one of the most pervasive forms of human rights violations in the world. It is present in every country, cutting across national, cultural, economic, social and political boundaries. It takes many forms and its causes are located in a complex interweaving of political, cultural and social factors that both stem from and lead to unequal power relations between men and women.

The women's movement created the political, cultural and social climate in which women could speak out about men's use of violence, both in the public and private world. The systematic, endemic and sexualised nature of men's violence against women became evident as more and more women disclosed their experiences. It became clear, that the focus of men's violence against women was to maintain the privilege and power they as a class and individually had in both the public and private world. Women's stories told of how men used violence and abuse to ensure that the woman's domestic and sexual servicing and availability were secured for men's benefit. Within the private sphere of home and intimate relationships, men's violence is focused on denying women sexual autonomy, reproductive choice and economic dependence. Within the public sphere, the sexual violation of women through pornography, prostitution, sexual harassment, rape and sexual assault denies women the freedom to exercise their full human rights. Male violence prevents all women from fully participating in and benefiting from social, economic, cultural and political life.

"Victims are chosen because of their gender. The message is domination: stay in your place or be afraid. Contrary to the argument that such violence is only personal or cultural, it is profoundly political. It results from the structural relationships of power, domination and privilege between men and women in society. Violence against women is central to maintaining those political relations at home, at work and in all public spheres."¹
(Charlotte Bunch, 1992)

Feminists recognised that whilst most organised and endemic forms of violence were a means by which one group controlled another, they also understood that violence against women had two additional elements. One was that the perpetrator of violence against women was most likely to be a male intimate or other male family member. Secondly, that men's violence always objectified, commodified and sexualised women. As Lori Heise has said, *"this is not random violence, the risk factor is being female"*.²

Following thirty years of testimony, activism and research by the global women's movement, the UN declared:

*"Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to the domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of their full advancement, and that violence against women is one of the crucial mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position with men."*³

The Beijing Platform for Action,⁴ which was agreed and signed by the world's governments at the 4th UN Conference on Women in 1995, defines violence against women as:

“Any act of gender based-violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.”

The Platform for Action recognises that violence against women is a fundamental denial of women’s human rights whether perpetrated within the family, the community, or perpetrated or condoned by the state.

Forms of violence against women

By examining the life cycle of women from a global perspective we can identify the many forms of violence to which women and girls are subjected. Table 1 shows that gender based violence happens within many different contexts both public and private. Factors such as war and conflict, poverty, racism and discrimination against disabled people, intersect with discrimination against women to increase women’s risk of being targeted with violence and also create additional barriers towards accessing safety and protection.

Different cultural justifications are used to perpetuate harmful traditional practices against women and girls, such as female genital mutilation. Whilst many states have outlawed practices such as dowry-related murders and honour killings, the perpetrators largely go unpunished.

TABLE 1:
Examples of violence against women throughout the life cycle

Phase	Type of violence
Pre birth	Sex selective abortion; effects of battering during pregnancy on birth outcomes
Infancy	Female infanticide; physical, sexual and psychological abuse
Girlhood	Child marriage; female genital mutilation, physical, sexual and psychological abuse; incest; child prostitution and pornography; sexual and domestic slavery
Adolescence & adulthood	Dating and courtship violence (e.g. acid throwing and date rape); economically coerced sex; incest; sexual abuse in the workplace; rape, sexual harassment; prostitution and pornography; trafficking in women; forced marriage; partner violence; marital rape; dowry abuse and murders; partner homicide; psychological abuse; forced pregnancy; forced sterilisation; systematic rape in war and conflict situations; sexual slavery
Elderly	Physical, psychological and sexual abuse; forced suicide or homicide of widows for economic reasons

Adapted from: “Violence Against Women”, World Health Organisation, 1997

The UN estimates that about 60 million women are missing from the world's population because of sex selection abortions, female infanticide and preferential treatment of boys in terms of food and health resources.⁶

130 million women have undergone Female Genital Mutilation; two million are subjected to FGM each year.⁷

More than 5000 women are killed annually in India, by husbands and in-laws in dowry murders.⁸

In one study in Nicaragua, 52% of ever-married women had experienced violence at the hands of their partners.⁹

One in four women in the EU have experienced violence within an intimate relationship.¹⁰

It is estimated that currently 300,000 to 500,000 women are in prostitution in the Philippines.¹¹

Over 50% of downloads from 62 commercial websites in the United States over a 4 month period were of images of child pornography.¹²

42% of women in Ireland have experienced some form of sexual abuse in their lifetime.¹³

Prevalence of violence against women

The prevalence of violence against women on a global scale is alarming. When we look at figures such as these, it is clear to see that it is both systematic and endemic. These are not random acts of violence but are pervasive, ongoing and pre-meditated acts. They are violations on a global scale, which attack women's bodily and sexual integrity and maintain unequal power relationships between men and women. The prevalence, level and extent of different forms of gender based violence are inextricably linked to the position of women at a political, socio-economic and cultural level. For example, the collapse of the economic system in Eastern Europe has had an overwhelming impact on the numbers of girls and women exploited in prostitution.

"Within the predominant sexual system, articulated and reproduced in pornography, women are defined and acted upon as sexual objects; our humanity is denied and our bodies are violated for sexual pleasure; the bodies of our sisters are literally marketed for profit."⁵
(Dorchen Liedholdt, 1990)

Lack of accountability

Most European countries have introduced legislation to deal with trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and children. However, research carried out in 2000 indicates that investigation, detection and conviction rates are minimal.¹⁴ Lack of data hampers any attempts to assess whether interventions have been effective in responding to the needs of women and children who have been sexually exploited or in holding users, pimps and traffickers accountable for their crimes. Despite international condemnation of the practice of female genital mutilation, women asylum seekers are rarely granted refugee status in other countries when trying to escape from this gross violation of their human rights.

Mirroring the failure of states at an international level to protect women and to hold abusers accountable are similar failures of governments and institutions at a national level. In Dublin during a six-month period in 1998, of all the rape cases that were brought to court, only 2% resulted in a conviction.¹⁵ In the United Kingdom, whilst the number of rapes being reported has risen, the number of convictions for rape has halved in the last decade.¹⁶ Collusion with violence against women is most evident when both nationally and internationally, the world's governments fail to take steps to protect women and to condemn and hold accountable, the perpetrators of violence and abuse.

Violence against women within intimate relationships (Male domestic violence)¹⁷

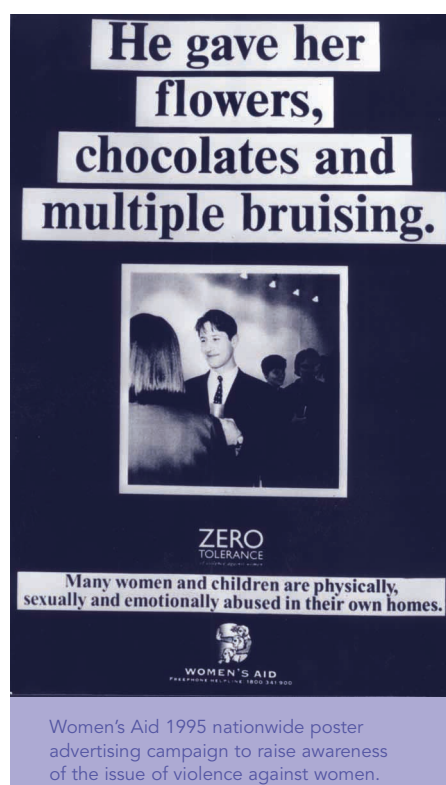
Prevalence and extent

Violence against women within intimate relationships, or domestic violence as it is more commonly known, is one of the most pervasive and widely experienced crimes against women. Responding to the increasing amount of testimonies from women, academics and activists began to document existing evidence, which recorded prevalence, forms and relationship of perpetrator to the victim. In the 1970's Dobash and Dobash studied police reports and national crime surveys in the US, Canada and the UK. What these surveys indicated was that between 90% to 97%¹⁸ of perpetrators of violence within relationships are men.^{19,20} Specific research to ascertain the prevalence of violence against women was carried out. A survey of some of this research in many countries indicates that between 20% to 50 % of women experience violence and abuse at the hands of a male partner.²¹ An Irish national prevalence study carried out in 1995 for Women's Aid, found that that 18% of women reported that they had experienced violence and abuse at the hands of a male partner. When an area-based survey was carried out in the same study, that figure doubled to 36%.²²

The definition contained within the Report of the Task Force on Violence Against Women describes domestic violence as.

".... The use of physical or emotional force or the threat of physical force, including sexual violence in close adult relationships. It can also involve emotional abuse; the destruction of property; isolation from friends, family and other potential sources of support; threats to others including children; stalking; and control over access to money, personal items, food, transportation and the telephone."²³

It is important to recognise that forms of male violence which are usually perceived to be prevalent within the public sphere are perpetrated by violent men against women within intimate relationships. Women report being forced and coerced into prostitution and the making of pornography by abusive partners.



Women's Aid 1995 nationwide poster advertising campaign to raise awareness of the issue of violence against women.

Coercion and control

Men's use of violence against women is goal orientated, the goal being to gain and maintain power and control over the woman. Abuse against women by a male intimate/partner is not about once off isolated incidents or even about a series of incidents. It is an ongoing and systematic process of intimidation, terrorisation, undermining, degradation, and domination. All the key aspects of the woman's life are targeted by the abuser, leading to an entrapment of the woman within a web of fear and domination. The intent of the abuser is to ensure that the woman is sexually and domestically available to him and compliant and submissive to his wishes and demands. The following quotes from women who have experienced violence illustrate this:

"We were in debt up to our eyes. He saw everything in the house as his property, including us. We were his property."

"No matter what I cooked for him he would rather have something else. If I cooked chicken he wanted steak, if I cooked steak he wanted chicken. Then he'd say I was no good as a cook. No matter how hard I cleaned, the place was always filthy. He didn't like my friends so I couldn't invite them home. He even stopped my family coming."²⁴

The destruction of attachments to others and the separation of the woman from sources of material, emotional or mental resources, such as work or social life, are also a key feature of men's violence and abusive tactics. Most women will be coerced and many are forced to isolate themselves from other significant people in their lives. Having managed to isolate his victim from any possible source of comfort and affirmation, the abuser can establish complete control.

"As long as the victim maintains any other human connection, the perpetrator's power is limited. It is for this reason that perpetrators universally seek to isolate victims from any other source of information, material aid or emotional support.the record of domestic violence is filled with accounts of jealous surveillance, such as stalking, eavesdropping and intercepting letters or telephone calls, ...the batterer demands that the victim prove her loyalty to him by giving up work...her friendships and even her ties to her family."²⁵
(Judith Lewis Herman, 1992)

Sexual violence

Men's violence against women in relationships is highly sexualised, being focused on the sexual availability and compliance of his partner or wife to him. The dominant belief systems about women's sexual duties and availability to men within intimate relationships can lead to women being unable to name what is being done by the man as violent and abusive. The following quotes from women who participated in research on the continuum of sexual violence illustrate the spectrum of sexual violence from coercion to rape.

"Generally in relationships I've felt I've had to do it to save myself the trouble of persuading him not to want it. I mean I would do it because it was easier than spending the whole day with him sulking about it"

"I'm not a woman's libber but I thought it was time to go out as he was going out every night. He objected strongly. To put it mildly, put my clothes in the sink, put a dirty poker over my face so I couldn't go out. The only way to get out in the end was to have some kind of sex, usually oral, before I went out."

"...He wouldn't let me get up and he was very strong. He pulled my arms above my head,..... I mean I wouldn't have seen that as rape because I associated rape with strangers, dark, night and struggle. I didn't put up much of a struggle, but I didn't want it, so in a sense that was rape, yes."²⁶

In her groundbreaking study of rape in marriage, Diana Russell found that 14% of married women had been raped by their partner or husband.²⁷ In a UK prevalence study in 1991, 1 in 7 married women have been coerced into sex or raped and this rose to 1 in 3 for separated and divorced women.²⁸ The SAVI report commissioned by Dublin Rape Crisis Centre reported that almost one quarter (23.6%) of perpetrators of sexual violence against women were intimate partners or ex-partners.²⁹

Children's experience of domestic violence

Because women are the bearers and primary carers of children, men's violence against their female partners has devastating consequences for them. Throughout childhood and adolescence, the majority of children living in circumstances of domestic violence witness the violence and abuse of their mothers. In Making the Links, women reported that 64% of children were in the same room when the abuse happened.³⁰ Other reports indicate that up to 90% of children are in the next room when the violence occurs.³¹ Witnessing the violence and abuse is itself an abuse of the rights of the child to live a life free from fear and harm.

Many children themselves are directly targeted with physical, sexual and emotional abuse by the abuser. In an overview of American studies, in 32% to 53% of all families where women are being physically beaten by their partners, children are directly subjected to violence and abuse by the abuser.³²

Abusive men exploit their power as fathers or father figures to further control women. Children are actively used and drawn into the dynamics of an abusive relationship by the abuser. Being used as message carriers, being made to watch violence, being encouraged or forced to participate in degradation or abuse of their mother and being scapegoated or favoured by the abuser, are just

some of the many tactics violent and abusive men use to control and abuse women. In most cases, children live in an open climate of fear, where the abuser exercises his control over the whole family by verbal and emotional abuse and threats and use of violence.

*"[I was].. constantly on edge. Never free, never safe. It was like, there was no safe [place]..being at home wasn't safe at all. It just that's the place where you are and you're constantly alert. You don't sleep properly, you just sit there and wait for something to happen."*³³

(Interview, Childhood Experiences of Domestic Violence, 2000)

The impacts of this experience include being fearful, withdrawn, experiencing sleeplessness, exhibiting poor school performance, isolation from friends and acting out through aggressive behaviour and depression.

When women do leave violent partners or husbands, assumptions by courts and welfare personnel that child contact with the violent partner or husband is in the best interests of the child, places women and children in further danger. Many studies have shown that men's violence escalates post separation. Women survivors who have children report that it is usually during child contact arrangements that the violence and abuse is perpetrated by their ex-partner or husband. A study focusing on child contact arrangements in England and Denmark found that:

*"Contact between children and fathers who had been violent or abusive to the mothers tended not to work in either country. In the final analysis, the overriding problem was the men's continuing abusive behaviour to their ex-partners and/or children."*³⁴



Compounding men's exploitation of fatherhood and motherhood is traditional social service responses to child abuse. Based on stereotypical views of women as solely responsible for child welfare and safety, many social service agencies fail to examine cases of child abuse in the context of the pervasiveness of male domestic violence. Despite ample evidence that "battering is the most common context for child abuse, that the battering male is the typical child abuser"³⁵, many women report that social service responses focus on them solely, as the person responsible for stopping the violence and protecting their children from the assailant. Practitioners and agencies, without an examination of who is the abuser and whether or not she herself is subject to violence and abuse, often expect this of a woman. A failure to do this is often responded to punitively, resulting in the removal of a child or children to care.

*"Her dilemma is that she cannot protect her children unless she is protected, but if she speaks about the violence she fears her children may be removed. Rather than tell this dangerous truth, women try to access child protection resources by suggesting they are 'unable to cope.' It is a bitter irony that this may result in precisely what they initially feared."*³⁶

(Liz Kelly, 1996)

Women who participated in the Women's Aid research Safety and Sanctions described the forms of violence and consequent serious injuries they suffered.⁴²

"There is a history of violence. He head-butted me and threatened me with a knife. He grabbed me by the neck and started to choke me. I fled to the neighbour's house and they called the Gardaí."

"We are married for 22 years. He has always been violent. He slashed my knee with a knife and broke my jaw. I was hospitalised for a month."

Health impacts

As well as actual injuries as a result of physical and sexual assaults, many women have ongoing health problems related to the abuse. Research indicates that pregnancy can be a time when women are at increased risk of physical violence from intimate partners. Women themselves have reported that the violence started during their first pregnancy. In a survey of pregnant women attending the Rotunda Maternity Hospital in Dublin, 12.5% of women had experienced violence and abuse during pregnancy and 75% of those women had been subjected to domestic violence during their current pregnancy.⁴³

Unwanted pregnancy, gynaecological problems, pelvic inflammatory disease, irritable bowel syndrome, skin conditions, asthma, constant headaches, back pain and in some cases, permanent disabilities, are all ongoing health problems that women suffer because of abuse and violence to which they have been subjected.⁴⁴ The targeting of women's sexual organs by perpetrators of abuse can lead to miscarriage and infertility.

The stress and trauma of the abuse can exacerbate or cause many of the health problems leading women and often their children to seek medical attention at a greater rate than those who have not experienced abuse and violence. In one study in the United States it was found that families in which the woman is being subjected to abuse use doctors eight times more often and A&E six times more often than other families.⁴⁵

Consequences for women's emotional and psychological well being

The psychological trauma that women and girls experience because of violence and abuse is often not as evident or acknowledged as the physical and health impacts. Judith Lewis Herman in her groundbreaking work *Trauma and Recovery* describes in detail the ongoing and deeply rooted effects as a result of violence and abuse.

"The traumatised person.....may find herself in a constant state of vigilance and irritability without knowing why. Traumatic symptoms have a tendency to become disconnected from their source and to take on a life of their own"⁴⁶
(Judith Lewis Herman, 1992)

The impact of violence and abuse can lead to severe and sometimes fatal consequences. 21 out of 119 admissions of women to St. James' Hospital Accident & Emergency Unit in 1993 in abuse related incidents were because the woman had attempted suicide. Young women who have experienced sexual abuse may turn to self-harm as a way of releasing some of the pain of the abuse and trauma. Depression, sleep disturbance and panic attacks are more prevalent in women who have been abused. Eating disorders and excessive use of alcohol or drugs are often rooted in a woman's experience of violence.

The psychological symptoms can be further exacerbated when they, rather than the abuse that is at the root of them, are seen to be the problem and the focus of intervention. The woman feels further blamed and the abuse of the perpetrator is compounded by being denied or ignored, by labelling of the woman and by unhelpful responses to her.

"1 in 50 non-abused women who are referred for psychiatric care receive labels such as "hypochondriac", "neurotic" or hysterical. The corresponding figure for women experiencing abuse is 1 in 4"⁴⁷
(Evan Stark and Anne Flitcraft, 1996)

Women's Resistance

Women's civil, social and economic rights

Less direct and generally unseen are the impacts on women's participation in the workforce, in community life and in society. Roxanna Carrillo of UNIFEM has written about gender violence as an obstacle to women's development and has provided some examples of how male violence is sometimes a direct response to women's growing empowerment and independence.

"...in a Mexican project funded by UNIFEM instances of wife battering increased with women's sense of empowerment through their participation. The project found that men perceived the growing empowerment of women as a threat to their control, and the beatings could be explained as an attempt to reverse this process of empowerment the women experienced in order to drive them away from the project. Similarly, ...a project of the Working Women's Forum in Madras almost collapsed when the most articulate and energetic participants started to drop out because of increased incidents of domestic violence against them after they had joined."⁴⁸
(Roxanna Carrillo, 1992)

Joan Zorza examined the impact that violence by male intimates has on a women's participation in the workforce.⁴⁹ In two studies with women who had experienced domestic violence, it was found that their abusive partners targeted the woman's work, as part of their abusive tactics. In 74% of cases, abusive partners or ex-partners harassed women at work. As a direct result of violence and abuse, 54% of women missed work at least 18 days in the year, 56% were late for 60 days out of the year and 20% of women ended up leaving their jobs altogether. Furthermore, the effects of violence on the women as workers impacted negatively on their chances for promotion and progression and thus on their capacity to gain economic independence and security for themselves and their children.

Acknowledging and taking seriously the impact of violence and abuse on the lives of women is vitally important in the work against male violence. Equally important however, is an acknowledgement that women experience violence, not as passive victims, but as people who have exercised and do exercise agency in their lives. Whilst recognising that men's use of violence against women is targeted at this very agency, choice and independence, it is all the more important to acknowledge the ways in which women resist and survive the violence and abuse they live with. Coping and survival strategies such as fighting back, taking legal action, telling someone, keeping children away from the scenes of violence, managing to put small amounts of money aside to prepare for leaving an abusive partner and leaving, are some of the things that women do despite their abusers attempts to control them. Individually and collectively, women have not passively accepted the use of violence and abuse. Dr Evan Stark, a leading researcher and academic in the US on violence against women, has described battered women⁵⁰ as feminists with a small 'f'. The very fact of the use of violence and abuse by the perpetrator indicates that the woman is not the completely compliant and submissive human being he wants her to be. In some way, be it small or large, the woman asserts her rights as an autonomous being. In the eyes of the abuser, she is resisting his control and challenging his authority. It is often at the point of leaving an abusive man or after they have left him, that women are most at risk of serious injury or homicide.

"In Denise's case the violence escalated immediately after she was granted a barring order. As she was walking from the court her husband dangerously skidded the car in front of her and threatened to kill her. When she arrived home he was waiting for her. This was a most frightening time for Denise."⁵¹
(Case study Safety and Sanctions)

Women's Aid Public Protest outside the Dáil on November 25th, 1996 to launch the 16-Days International Campaign Opposing Violence Against Women. Photograph: Collin's Photographic Agency.



Collective action for women's liberation

Women collectively have resisted male control and domination throughout the history of the human race. Records document how women have sought to live self-realised and autonomous lives.⁵²

The feminist movement that emerged in the 1960's provided the context in which women could come together and speak out about their experiences of male violence and male domination. The struggle for women's liberation is the wider context in which the struggle against male violence exists.

As Marilyn French said in 1988:

"In virtually every country in the world today, women are organising small grass-roots or professional political action groups. They are demanding to be treated as human beings with rights: the right to keep their own wages, to keep their children after divorce, to own property, to education, to paid work at a wage sufficient to ensure they can live independently, to a voice in public decisions, to marriage of choice, to bodily integrity. They are demanding that men not feel free to beat, rape, mutilate and kill them"⁵³

The women's movement recognised that whilst women who experienced the most devastating forms of violence and abuse needed support, protection and justice, men's violence restricted all women's lives and was therefore a focus for political action and change. They further recognised that the failure of the state to protect women and to hold violent men accountable for their actions effectively

gave individual men the permission to use violence against women and ensured that all men benefited. Feminists recognised that ending men's violence required action at three levels:

- A range of community based accessible services for women and children experiencing violence
- The highest level of state intervention to maximise women and children's safety and hold abusive men accountable for the violence and
- Deep rooted long term strategies and programmes aimed at political, cultural, social and economic change, for the liberation of women and the elimination of male violence.

Commonality and diversity

The feminist movement identified and developed an understanding of the commonality and root causes of women's experience of violence and oppression and of the root causes of men's oppression and violence against women. At the same time, they were deeply aware of the overlapping issues of race, class, poverty, religion and disability, which defined the conditions in which women lived their lives. Whilst the women's movement embraces diversity, it is also aware that we live in a deeply divided world where power, privilege and resources are not only allocated unequally amongst men and women but also according to where you live in the world, whether you are black or white, if you are disabled or not, gay or lesbian and on many other factors.

*"Racism, the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance. Sexism, the belief in the inherent superiority of one sex over the other and thereby the right to dominance. Ageism. Heterosexism. Elitism. Classism. It is a lifetime pursuit for each one of us to extract these distortions from our living at the same time as we recognise, reclaim, and define those differences upon which they are imposed."*⁵⁴

(Audre Lorde, 1996)

Gains of the movement against male violence

Consciousness raising and collective action has led to a worldwide movement committed to combating male violence against women. Women have set up refuges, advocacy services, rape crisis centres and housing programmes. They have challenged male abuse of power and use of violence through the media, literature, art, film and music. They have documented, recorded and researched women's experience of and men's use of violence and used this to influence policy and work for change. Women have worked within their communities, cities, countries and internationally to bring the issue of violence against women to the attention of the power holders and decision makers and to insist on accountability for violent men. Alliances have been forged with both men and women in key decision making positions both within the statutory and the NGO sector. This has brought about significant social change in the areas of legislation, police policy and practice, medical and health care responses and resources to NGOs providing services in many countries. Violence against women is increasingly recognised as a violation of human rights and as an integral part of all struggles for social justice and equality.

Opposition to change

Women's resistance to male power and male violence has also been met with different levels of opposition. In some countries women have faced threats and been imprisoned, physically assaulted, raped and murdered for their activism. In other situations, feminism has become the focus of an organised campaign of verbal abuse, aggression and derision.⁵⁵ The aim of this is to maintain men's power and privilege and to deny the gendered and sexualised nature of violence against women. The fear of reprisal and further oppression has silenced many women, such is the virulence of the attack on feminism. However, despite such opposition, women still continue to resist and to work for change and many successes have been achieved over the years. Men too have joined in

the struggle for equality and women's liberation and have recognised the benefits of this struggle not only for women, but for society as a whole.

"Changing and improving men's personal practice...means specifically... stopping, or better still not starting, violence and abuse to women. It also means giving attention to this priority in all possible social arenas- in families, at school, amongst friends, in workplaces, in the media, and throughout politics. It is our responsibility not to collude with each other, and so make such violence intolerable and simply out of the question. ...It is time that men came out against men's violence against women; it is time for men to change."⁵⁶
(Jeff Hearn, 1998)

Conclusion

Recognising that the root cause of violence against women lies in gender inequality and that it is used as a mechanism to maintain women as a subordinate class is fundamental to a respectful response to women. Failure to understand this ultimately leads to locating the cause and solutions within the individual pathology of women and men.

Engaging in the struggle to eliminate violence against women requires that we have the courage to fully adopt a feminist framework, which is about deconstructing our notions about men and women and which leads to a society in which individual men will not commit acts of violence and women and men will realise true liberation.

Section 2 Principles of Knowledge

This section outlines ten principles of knowledge that underpin Women's Aid's response to violence against women. They are drawn from the evidence, research and experience documented in the previous section.

What we know and what we believe informs every interaction that we have with a woman who has experienced violence. If we choose to engage with this issue we must hold ourselves accountable by continuing to increase our knowledge and understanding and by challenging our own belief systems and attitudes.

Principles of knowledge



Violence against women is about power and control.

The essential purpose of violence and abuse is to gain and maintain power and control of another person. Societal privilege and entitlement that is afforded to men as a class provides the permission to individual men to use violence and to sexually exploit women both within the public and private sphere.

- Men's violence against women within intimate relationships is about a pattern of coercive control centred on all aspects of the woman's life.
- Men's use of violence is intentional, purposeful and is goal orientated.
- The goals are to:
 - Establish and reinforce a system of domination, power and control.
 - Ensure that she is domestically and sexually available to him and instil fear and submission.
- A history of violence instils fear and establishes the man's power and control.
- Intimate knowledge of the victim is a source of power the abuser has and is exploited as part of a pattern of controlling tactics.

"We are trying to teach him (the abusive man) that the main issue in his relationships with women is his assumption of a right to being in charge and to expect servicing when, how and where he wants it...We work from the understanding that ...battering is a gender issue, entirely the responsibility of men. It is a political act and its underlying ideology is sexism."⁵⁷
(Adam Jukes, 1993)



Men's violence is systematic and takes many forms.

Domestic violence against women is never a single event but is a continuous, systematic pattern of multiple and overlapping forms of abuse.

Multiple forms of abuse include:

- Physical violence.
- Sexual violence.
- Emotional abuse.
- Threats of physical and sexual violence.
- Threats to harm others.
- Financial control.
- Controlling some or all of the woman's movements.
- Constant surveillance.
- Destruction of property and pets.

This is best expressed in the power and control wheel developed by women who have experienced violence at the hands of a male partner (see Appendix 2).

"Interlocking behaviours of control can be physical, sexual, emotional and economic.These may include forced sexual intercourse following physical violence, or women may be required to engage in unwanted sexual practicesEmotional abuse coexists with these more physical forms which further undermine women's sense of personal worth and competence."⁵⁸
(Jalna Hamner, 1996)



Men's violence against women is of a sexualised nature.

Sexual abuse, coercion and violence underpin all forms of gender-based violence in private and public. In intimate relationships, men's use of violence is centred on sexual ownership and domination of women.

Sexual violence includes:

- Being coerced and denied choice by the abuser.
- The abuser not seeking full consent.
- Domination and gratification.
- Rape and sexual assault.
- Denial of reproductive rights.
- Forced use of pornography.
- Forcing a woman to engage in prostitution.
- Use of sexual terms to degrade the woman.

"...sexual abuse is itself violence. This is most obviously so in rape; it applies both in the use of overt force- assault, slapping, beating, pushing and bodily invasion – and in the more subtle use of caress both within empowered (that is, acting within power relations) and abusive relationships.

Caress can be just as much a form of violence as more overt force; it can be a means of manipulation; an unwanted intrusion; a sign of power; an additional encroachment on and domination of parts of the body, that are, in this society at least, associated with personal/sexual privacy and extra-personal/sexual power."⁵⁹

(Jeff Hearn, 1996)



Violent and abusive men are dangerous to women.

Severe physical injury or homicide can be the consequences of men's violence and abuse to women. Any attempt by the woman to move away from or confront the control of the abuser greatly increases the risk and escalates the violence.

- Violence against women is the greatest source of injury to women.
- Post separation violence can account for over 70% of the most serious assaults, rapes and of homicide.

"He took up an iron bar that was on the counter top and walloped her all over her body and legs. She did not go out for two weeks. He warned her that when she did go out to wear jeans so that no one could see the bruises. Another night he held her over the balcony and threatened to let her drop five stories. He put a knife to her throat several times. He threatened that if she told anyone he would kill her."⁶⁰

(Case study, Making the Links, 1995)



The emotional and psychological impacts of violence and abuse are some of the most devastating consequences for women and create many other barriers to seeking safety and support.

- Low self esteem and lack of confidence is a commonly experienced impact of violence and abuse.
- Impacts of violence compounded by the lack of an effective response can lead to some women experiencing depression and panic attacks, attempting suicide, using alcohol or medication, having eating disorders and being hospitalised.
- Emotional and psychological impacts on a woman are often treated as the problem or as a mitigating factor in the man's violence rather than as the result of a man's violence and abuse towards a woman.
- Courts and other state agencies who focus on a woman's emotional and psychological state, drug or alcohol issues as the problem and not his violence, further compound and strengthen the power of the perpetrator. This can result in negative consequences for the woman if she tries to take back control.
- Some women will have experienced other forms of violence and abuse throughout their lifetime and therefore impacts of domestic violence can be more damaging and more deeply felt.

"The medical, psychiatric and behavioural problems presented by battered women arise because male strategies of coercion, isolation and control converge with discriminatory structures and institutional practices to make it extremely difficult, sometimes impossible, for women to escape from abusive relationships when they most want or need to."⁶¹
(Evan Stark and Anne Flitcraft, 1996)



Men's violence and control extends to the woman as a mother and indirectly and directly to children.

Violent men pose a risk to children's safety and damage children's physical, emotional and mental well-being.

Violent men further establish control and power by:

- Undermining a woman's capacity to parent.
- Using children as part of their controlling tactics.
- Directly physically, sexually and emotionally abusing children.
- Threatening to take or taking children away from the woman.
- Threatening to harm or harming children.
- Threatening to tell or telling Gardaí or social workers that she is an unfit mother.
- Using access visits with children as a means of furthering the control and abuse of women post separation.

"She (Sophia's Mum) was doing his teas, but because it wasn't ready there and then when he walked through the door, he got hold of her, dragged her on the floor, took her shoe and started whacking her on the head with the shoe. "He made her head bleed, [so] I grabbed a purse and I whacked it over his back trying to stop him from hitting my mum.. He realised what he'd done, so I'd saved my Mum's life really because he was going to kill her. I ran out of the house and asked our neighbour to call the police. I was five when I done that. What five year old would think of doing that?"⁶²

(Interview, *It Hurts Me Too*, 1995)



Institutional collusion justifies men's use of violence and blames women.

Structures and values reflecting gender inequality give men permission to use violence and abuse as a means to control women and fail to hold them accountable.

The way society and institutions collude with violence against women is through:

- Failure to hold the abuser accountable especially when there is a relationship between the perpetrator and the victim.
- Blaming the woman and focusing on her behaviour as the problem.
- When a woman has children, focusing on child protection issues in isolation from the safety and protection needs of the mother.
- Assuming child contact is in the best interests of the child(ren) without examining the consequences for the children or the woman.
- Allowing the status of the woman to influence the response to her (i.e. class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability).
- Allowing the status of the man to influence whether or not or the ways in which he is held accountable (i.e. money, social background, profession, position in society).
- Negative and damaging responses informed by stereotypical attitudes to women's roles and behaviour.
- Locating the cause of violence within the individual pathologies of the man and the woman and therefore failing to hold the man fully responsible for his violence and blaming women for choosing to stay.

"Eilis experienced severe mental and physical abuse from her husband. At one point her husband dragged her upstairs by the hair as chunks of her hair came out. He kicked and beat her on the legs. She made a decision to get the Gardaí to prosecute for assault. The judge, although sympathetic to Eilis's case, issued her husband with a warning and did not convict him of a crime, stating it was his first offense.

*"What I am asking for is not revenge but justice. I think that he should have been convicted for a crime and spent time in prison for that crime."⁶⁴
(Case study, Safety and Sanctions, 1999)*



Women are not passive victims.

They resist men's violence and control in a number of ways whilst also being aware of the risks in doing so. They use much resourcefulness, time and energy to outwit their abuser, survive his violence and protect their children.

Women use a number of survival strategies including:

- Silence, placating, obeying.
- Predicting his violence.
- Trying to manage the situation and adapting their own behaviour in order to avoid the violence.
- Telling other people and seeking help.
- Leaving, escaping.
- Confronting, fighting back.

*"I used to just turn up the radio and block him out [during access visits] and I'd concentrate on songs so I wouldn't get the full lash of what he was saying. That went on for a year. Then he left the country. I breathed a huge sigh of relief."⁶³
(Interview, Silent No More, 1994)*



The combination of sexism and discrimination, which can take many forms, can have a major impact on the outcomes for women.

For women at risk, factors including poverty, disability, rural isolation, age, ethnicity, refugee/asylum seeker status and sexual orientation can:

- Intensify risk and restrict her capacity to act safely.
- Limit her access to resources such as money, employment, legal protection and housing.
- Negatively impact on the response from individual practitioners and agencies.
- Create an opportunity for abusers to exploit her vulnerability and benefit from discriminatory practice by agencies.

"Different groups obviously experience violence differently...they differ in their vulnerability to violence, the grounds for violence, the specifics of their violations, their reactions to violence, the reactions of those around them, and the role and response of state agencies."⁶⁵
(Geraldine Moane, 1998)

"Rita is a 45-year-old woman with a disability. Her husband is physically and mentally abusive. On a recent occasion he raped Rita during the night. Because Rita is on medication which makes her feel drowsy, her husband denied raping her and blamed her confusion on the effects of the medication. He told her that the courts would never believe her if she made a complaint against him."
(Women's Aid Services)



Collective action challenges the structures of power that create the conditions in which men's violence against women exist.

Collective action:

- Breaks the isolation, shame and stigma experienced by women subjected to male violence.
- Makes visible men's violence and societal responsibility for ending it.
- Empowers women to take back control and challenge the abuse of power.
- Builds national and international solidarity by creating links from the local to the global women's movement.
- Makes it unacceptable for society to tolerate levels of violence against women.

'The solidarity of a group provides the strongest protection against terror and despair, and the strongest antidote to traumatic experience. Trauma isolates; the group re-creates a sense of belonging. Trauma shames and stigmatises; the group bears witness and affirms. Trauma degrades the victim; the group exalts her.'⁶⁷
(Judith Lewis Herman, 1992)

Section 3

Good practice guidelines

What we know and believe about male violence affects all of our interactions with women. Feminist practice is informed by the wider political philosophy and perspective we hold on gender inequality.

It demands that we demonstrate our commitment to relationships with women based on empowerment and mutual respect. It is also incumbent upon us that our practice is evidence based. This is defined as

“Practice which incorporates the use of best available and appropriate research and other sources.”⁶⁸

“When I am working with a woman who has experienced violence I have three eyes. One eye focused on her, one on the man who is invisible to us and controlling and abusing her and one on the institutions which fail to protect her or hold him accountable for his violence and abuse.”⁶⁹

(Jean O’Flynn)

1

Maximises women's safety.

Responses and interventions must maximise women and children's safety and always seek to avoid increased risk and danger.

- Focus on the woman's safety by asking questions, which will help you and her, assess risk.
- Work out a safety plan with the woman.⁷⁰
- Explore risks, consequences and the possibility of escalated violence if the woman takes action.
- Recognise that she is the best assessor of danger, risk and further violence.
- If a woman minimises the danger as a coping strategy, let her know that you are aware of possible risks and dangers and express your concern for her safety.
- Never discuss a woman's case with anyone else without her consent.
- Never use identifiable details about a woman's story in another context (e.g. training session or media interview) to illustrate what you are talking about.
- If a woman decides to discuss her situation with the media, offer to explore the consequences of this with her.
- Be aware of all possible risks for women when calling the helpline.
- Always agree any further contact with the woman, never contact her without her prior consent.
- Check with the woman if it is safe to bring information away with her. If sending information by post make sure this is done with the consent of the woman and that the envelope does not identify where it comes from.
- If the woman needs a language or sign language interpreter, make sure she agrees to have one and that she is happy with the chosen interpreter. They may know her if she is from a small or close community.
- Maximise the safety of any premises you work from i.e. outreach location or permanent base.
- Put a safety policy in place for workers and volunteers.

Helpline guidelines:

When offering support to a woman over the phone:

- Check with the woman if it is safe for her to talk to you.
- Tell her it is ok for her to hang up at any time if she needs to.
- Be prepared to end calls immediately if needed.
- If a man answers the phone, pretend that you have a wrong number. Do not hang up without speaking as this may increase risk to the woman.
- Ask a woman if there is a redial button on her phone. If there is, advise her to ring another number directly after this call so that if her abuser checks the redial, the helpline number will not come up.
- If a call is ended hurriedly because a man comes in and the phone rings again immediately, answer the phone but do not say the name of the organisation.

"The services were so accessible and totally confidential. I could phone the helpline three times a day with the same problem and I was never told go away, don't be daft or haven't we spoken about that already. I was still taken through things step by step. And I did call the helpline three times a day with the same problem"⁷¹

(Service user, Women's Aid Helpline)

The above guidelines and the following need to be included in all training programmes for women working in direct services:

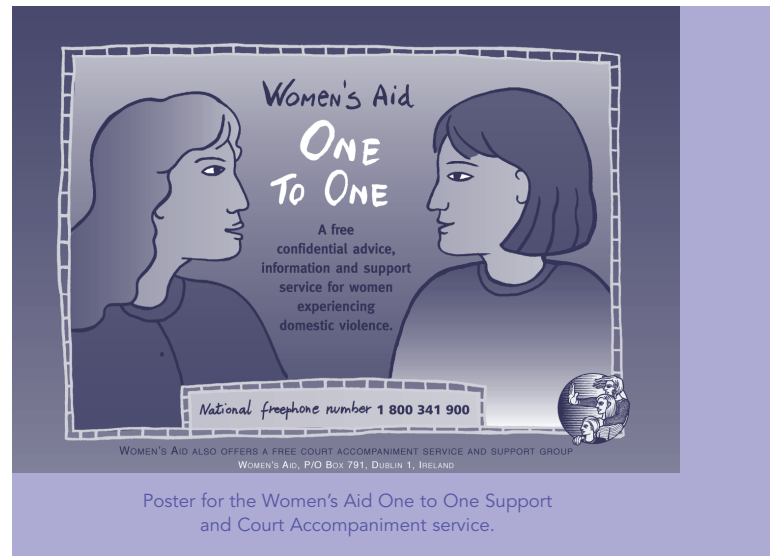
- Risk assessment, safety planning, child abuse guidelines.
- Domestic Violence Act, 1996.
- Non Fatal Offences Against The Person Act, 1997.
- Garda Síochána Policy, 1997.
- How civil and criminal law operates in the courts.
- Family law legislation (including maintenance, custody and access).

2

Understands the trauma of violence and supports women's increasing autonomy.

Demonstrate that all interventions and responses are respectful and support women's attempts to regain power and control over their lives.

- Believe and accept the woman's story.
- Support the woman to name the range of coercive tactics and forms of violence the abuser used.
- Document the woman's history of experiencing violence and abuse.
- Let the woman know that she is not to blame for the violence and abuse or for staying with the abuser.
- Whilst understanding the commonality of women's experience also recognise the unique experience, situation, resources and needs of each woman.
- Accept and be sensitive to expressions of anger and any other negative feelings the woman may have.
- Respond non-judgementally to her, regardless of what she tells you.
- Stay with the woman's story no matter how difficult it is for you to hear it.
- Be empathetic and sensitive to the woman.
- Acknowledge the woman's perceptions of events.
- Let the woman know that you believe in her ability to make the right choices for herself and that you respect her decisions.
- Ensure that decision making remains with the woman at all times.
- Assure her that your support is not conditional on the choices she makes.
- Ensure at all times that the woman dictates the pace of intervention or change.



Poster for the Women's Aid One to One Support and Court Accompaniment service.

- No information should be recorded without the knowledge and consent of the woman and should only be shared with others with the fully informed consent of the woman. You should ensure that the woman knows the information is there for her use.
- Never undermine the woman's coping strategies but rather affirm and acknowledge them as strengths.
- Understand that evasiveness and secrecy may be survival strategies that a woman has employed and do not see them as the problem.

*"There is a positive atmosphere here. I feel supported to meet my challenges. They provide a listening ear. My key worker treats me with respect. She says that I have all the answers inside of me, that we must make the choices ourselves. I would recommend Sonas to anyone."*⁷²

Resident, Sonas Housing.

3

Is informed and knowledgeable about the rights, entitlements and options for women and ensures referral is appropriate and responsible.

Information provision

- Ensure all staff are fully informed about options, rights and entitlements open to a woman, including the legal system, crisis, transitional and long term accommodation, social welfare, housing, property rights, custody and access.
- Have accessible information about these options for the woman to take with her.
- Take time to explain the options open to a woman and to explore with her possible consequences of taking action.
- Be vigilant about giving the woman accurate information.
- Check to see if a woman wants to go over some information with you again.

Referral

- Don't rush into referral of a woman to another agency or organisation and check with her that she is happy for you to explore this with her.
- Ensure that the woman is aware that the practice of some agencies will not always favour her and may expose her to further abuse.

- Be familiar with other agencies and organisations to which you refer her.
- Be informed and knowledgeable about the different forms of counselling and therapy that are available and which forms are most appropriate in supporting women experiencing violence.
- Always be careful of suggesting counselling to a woman and check with her what her understanding of your suggestion is.

When referring a woman for counselling or therapy look for the following core aspects in the counsellor's or therapist's practice:

- A focus on the woman's current emotional well-being. At a time of crisis it is more useful to work in the present, the here and now, rather than consider past childhood patterns or unconscious motivations and conflicts.
- Provision of an emotionally safe 'holding environment', that is empathetic and non-judgmental. This is very important for someone who is, or has been, unsafe and judged.
- Prioritisation of the needs and safety of the woman. It is not appropriate at this stage to consider the needs of the couple, or work systematically with the couple. The abuser who controls the woman and the relationship will attempt to control and so distort any couples or relationship therapy.
- A non-controlling and non-directive approach and practice. A woman's choices and decisions in life are controlled and directed by the abuser – it is important that the therapist understands that if she controls or directs she is not benefiting the woman.

(Felicity Kennedy, Manager of Services Women's Aid)

4

Advocates for women's rights.

A commitment to active advocacy means ensuring that your power, skills, knowledge and expertise are at the service of the woman.

- Be on the woman's side, neutrality is not an option.
- Support woman to advocate for her own rights but be available to do this with her if she asks for this.
- Speak with or on behalf of the woman if she requests this.
- Pool your skills and knowledge with those of the woman.
- Redress the power imbalance by making visible the abuse and violence of the perpetrator.
- Challenge negative woman – blaming attitudes by agencies or practitioners.
- Accompany the woman if requested to advocate for her rights and entitlements.
- Advocate for the woman with health boards, police, courts and other agencies, if requested.
- Find crisis accommodation for the woman if she requests it.
- Acknowledge the limitations of agencies and statutory bodies and the possibility of further abuse and unhelpful practices.

“The technical neutrality of the therapist is not the same as moral neutrality. Working with victimised people requires a committed moral stance. The therapist is called upon to bear witness to a crime. She must affirm a position of solidarity with the victim.”⁷³

(Judith Lewis Herman, 1992)

5

Addresses additional barriers and discriminations that women experience.

Responses to violence against women must be based on an understanding of how women can be further disadvantaged and abused because of intersecting oppressions such as racism, homophobia, age, poverty and discrimination against people with disabilities, asylum seekers and refugees.

- Ensure anti-discrimination policies and practices (including anti-racist and anti-homophobic policies and practices), are an integral part of an organisation and its response to violence against women.
- Commit resources and specific actions designated to the development, implementation and monitoring of equality policies and practices.
- Ensure evaluations assess equal access and equal outcomes for women.
- Ensure there is provision of:
 - Information in accessible formats to women with visual impairments.
 - Information and promotional materials that are visual and accessible to women with literacy difficulties.
 - Confidential sign language, lip reading or foreign language translation.
 - Services which are fully accessible to women with mobility impairments.
 - Equipment providing access to deaf women.
- Recognise that agencies and institutional practices can be affected by discriminatory attitudes and policies.
- Explore the consequences of this with women.

“Getting it right for people with disabilities results in getting it right for everyone.”⁷⁴

(National Disability Authority, 2002)

6

Is committed to ensuring justice for the victim and accountability of and sanctions against violent men.

- Examine all options of protection in the civil/family courts with the woman.
- Examine options of criminal sanctions including arrest, charge and prosecution with the woman.
- Keep accurate detailed records of the history and nature of violence, abuse, injury and trauma.
- Actively work with the civil and criminal justice systems to insist on safety for women and accountability of violent men.
- Support and accompany women throughout the court process.
- Accompany women to solicitors and barristers where appropriate.
- Be trained, prepared and competent to be an expert witness with accurate and appropriate documentation of violence.
- Make the criminality of men's violence visible in the community.
- Ensure that intervention with violent men upholds the principles as developed and agreed by the National Domestic Violence Intervention Programme.
- Ensure that perpetrators programmes are held accountable to services for women experiencing violence.
- Liaise closely with the National Domestic Violence Intervention Programme (NDVIP).

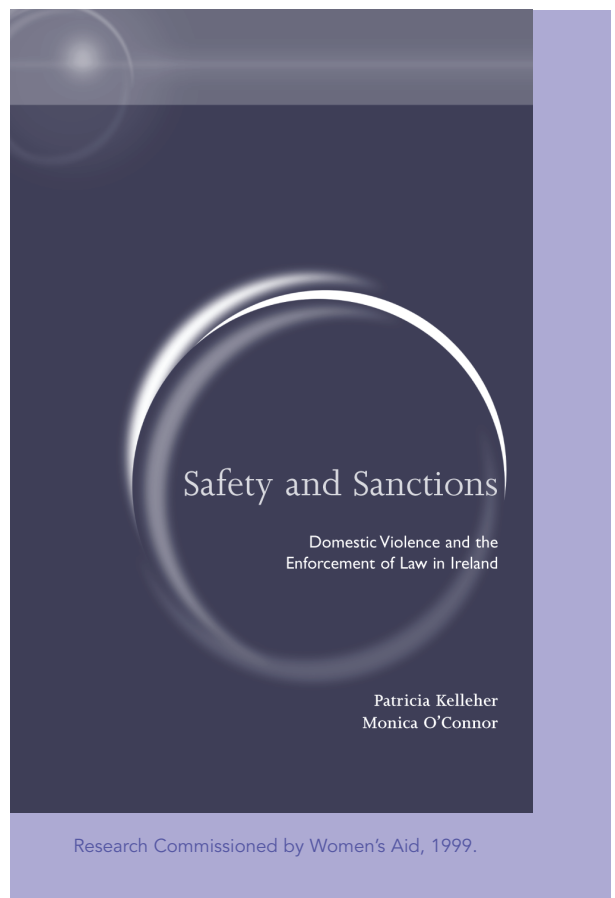
Useful resources:

- The NDVIP core principles of working with perpetrators (see Appendix3).
- Safety and Sanctions, 1999.
- Chapter 9, Task Force Report on Violence Against Women.

An evaluation of Domestic Violence Matters, a crisis intervention programme in Islington in the UK found that the responses from women users of the service were overwhelmingly supportive of the combination of police intervention and follow up civilian support.

*"This is excellent. I can't say enough praise for the police and the DVM. They worked brilliantly together. The support was invaluable. Thank God for this place."*⁷⁵

(Interview, Domestic Violence Matters, 1999)



A GOOD PRACTICE RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

7

Recognises that the best form of child protection is woman protection.

*"The protection and empowerment of women is the most effective form of child protection. This principle can encompass the fact that women and children's interests sometimes conflict, and that in some cases women may choose to give up the care of the children."*⁷⁶

(Liz Kelly, 1996)

- Don't ignore warning signs or your instincts about child abuse. If you think it is an issue sensitively approach the subject with the woman.
- If child protection is an issue, inform the woman of your responsibilities under the Child Protection Guidelines.⁷⁷
- Let her know you will support her and give her time to make a decision regarding her children's safety.
- Encourage the woman to approach Social Services herself should they need to be involved.
- Should you need to contact Social Services, inform the woman you are doing so and explain why. Show her all written documentation you are sending them.
- Continue to support the woman if Social Services become involved and advocate for her with them if requested by her to do so.
- Be aware of the increased risks of violence to both women and children post separation.
- Alert the woman to the possible escalation in violence to her and her children.
- Document and record all incidences of coercion, abuse and violence occurring in the context of child contact arrangements.
- Ensure the court receives full evidence of the risk for women and children in awarding contact to violent men.
- Commit to the development of programmes for children either within your own organisation or in partnership with children's agencies.⁷⁸

8

Supports women to move from crisis to safety and independence.

- Be vigilant about the continuing risk to the woman after she has left her abuser.
- Recognise and respond to the long term impacts of trauma and abuse which continue and may intensify for women.
- Support the development of mutual support groups for survivors of male violence.
- Be aware of the dangers for women of referral to counselling, mediation or therapy when they are still being victimised.
- Only refer to therapists and counsellors who have an understanding, knowledge and practice which is based on a in-depth knowledge and feminist analyses of violence against women.
- Actively commit to supporting women to gain sustained economic independence through creating access to training, education and employment.
- Actively liaise and network with other groups and organisations working for women's economic, educational, political and social rights.

Important contact and links:

- Therapists who work from a feminist analysis.
- Employment and training agencies and programmes, particularly those suited to the needs of women.
- Community and affordable childcare programmes.

*"We were enabled to express, explore and learn. We were enabled to access parts of ourselves that we had had to forget."*⁷⁹

(Participant, Women's Aid Butterfly Programme)

*"I have rediscovered myself again and have re-learned to value and love myself again. I have renewed confidence and now feel prepared to move on in my life and regain further independence by rejoining the workforce."*⁸⁰

(Participant, Women's Aid NOW Programme)

9

Commits to action for political and institutional change.

Responses to individual women must be accompanied by a commitment to political, cultural, social and economic change necessary for gender equality and the elimination of violence against women.

- Document the institutional barriers experienced by individual women.
- Collate and gather data for the purposes of policy change.
- Identify the changes needed in policy and practice.
- Lobby and campaign for political and social change.
- Adopt strategies which address the deep-rooted causes of gender inequality and violence against women.
- Make active links with other campaigns working for women's rights such as reproductive rights, sexual rights, economic, political and cultural rights.
- Identify and work with key individuals who are working for change within their own agency or institution.
- Carry out research which increases our knowledge on violence against women.

*"The position of agencies and statutory bodies is central to how domestic violence is perpetuated. Therefore, our targets for intervention must also include agencies, institutions, the judicial system and health-care professionals who adopt positions of minimal accountability. This represents institutional tolerance and constitutes institutional abuse of women victims of the crime of domestic violence."*⁸¹

(Colm O'Connor, 1998)

10

Encompasses key feminist principles within the philosophy and ethos of the organisation.

Organisational structures and processes should reflect best employment practices and values that are central to our work with women.

- Provide women with an opportunity to overcome barriers to employment created by discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, age, class, racism, poverty, lack of childcare, educational disadvantage, disability and other intersectional issues.
- Active steps must be taken to include a diversity of women as workers and volunteers.
- Create transparent decision-making mechanisms which involve workers and volunteers in decision making and consultation.
- Create clear, supportive and consistent management structures.
- Develop internal policies that result in consistent practice throughout the organisation.
- Implement good employment practice which promotes experience, knowledge, skills, equality and respect for employees.
- Facilitate regular, effective communication systems and information flow.
- Provide opportunities for learning and development for all workers and volunteers to increase their understanding of gender and violence.
- Have a transparent progression route and pay scale.
- Promote and facilitate trade union membership for employees.
- Ensure the financial viability of the organisation and develop transparent accounting mechanisms.
- Provide opportunities for workers and volunteers to engage in political action.⁸²

*"There is no greater challenge for any social movement than to live the vision of the change it seeks. A woman's group does not merely prepare women for a future experience of liberation. The group itself is an act of empowerment or liberation."*⁸³

(Ellen Pence, 1987)

FEMINIST ANALYSIS & UNDERSTANDING OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

PRINCIPLES OF KNOWLEDGE



Violence against women is about power and control.



Men's violence is systematic and takes many forms.



Men's violence is of a sexualised nature.



Violent and abusive men are dangerous to women.



The emotional and psychological impacts of violence and abuse are some of the most devastating consequences for women.



Men's violence and control extends to the woman as a mother and indirectly and directly to children.



Women are not passive victims.



Institutional collusion justifies men's use of violence and blames women.



The combination of sexism and discrimination, which can take many forms, can have a major impact on the outcomes for women.



Collective action challenges the structures of power that create the conditions in which men's violence against women exist.



GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES

1)

Maximises women and children's safety.

2)

Understands the trauma of violence and abuse and supports women's increasing autonomy.

3)

Is informed and knowledgeable about the rights, entitlements and options for women and ensures referral is appropriate and responsible.

4)

Advocates for women's rights.

5)

Addresses additional barriers and discriminations that women experience.

6)

Is committed to ensuring justice for the victim and accountability of and sanctions against violent men.

7)

Recognises that the best form of child protection is woman protection.

8)

Supports women to move from crisis to safety and independence.

9)

Commits to action for political and institutional change.

10)

Encompasses feminist principles within the philosophy and ethos of the organisation.

DEVELOPMENT OF A RESPONSE



ACTION AT THREE LEVELS

State intervention to maximise women's safety and men's accountability

Services to women experiencing male violence

Political and social change for the elimination of violence against women



**PART 2 • RESOURCE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT
OF RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN IN THE NON-
GOVERNMENTAL, VOLUNTARY
AND COMMUNITY SECTORS**

Section 1

The response of the non-governmental, voluntary and community sectors to violence against women within intimate relationships

The Irish context

Women's organisations in the non-governmental sector play the most central role in the response to women experiencing violence as service providers, as educators and trainers, as lobbyists and as motivators of public condemnation of violence against women. Recognising that women's basic right to shelter, money and physical safety were denied by male intimates, the initial focus of action in the 1970s and 1980s was primarily on the development of refuges, which encompassed support and information services to women residents and non residents alike.⁸⁴ The first refuges were set up in Dublin, Limerick and Cork in 1974 and 1975. Although establishing sustainable and high quality services absorbed much of the resources and time of these first groups, feminists also recognised that there was a need to effect change at a wider institutional and societal level. For example, groups campaigned to influence legislative change within family law, which brought civil remedies (barring and protection orders) for violence within marriage into Irish law for the first time.⁸⁵ Organisations also sought to promote good practice amongst agencies and practitioners in the statutory and voluntary sector. At the same time, bodies such as An Garda Síochána began to seek the expertise of the non-governmental sector (NGO's), working on the issue of violence against women. Training programmes in the 1980s subsequently developed to promote the introduction of policies and models of good practice.

During the 1990s, a greater diversity of responses began to emerge as groups and organisations began to access more resources and to develop a deeper understanding of the needs of women seeking help. During this decade, community based support, information and advocacy services developed, sometimes augmenting or taking on this work for refuges and in other areas, providing a much needed support to women experiencing violence that had previously not existed. As these community based, women run services provided a space for collective action, a parallel development in community education, awareness and activism began to emerge and develop.

Policy context

The 1990's also saw the development of a number of policy contexts, which provided the NGO's responding to violence against women with an opportunity to become more involved in influencing social policy in relation to the issue. Most significant amongst these developments was the setting up of the Task Force on Violence Against Women (1996) and the subsequent establishment of the National Steering Committee and the Regional Planning Committees (1997). With the emergence of a strong economy during the 1990's and the establishment of these structures, there has been an increase of resources channelled in to the voluntary and community organisations delivering services and responses to violence against women. Also significant was the introduction of a policy on Domestic Violence by An Garda Síochána and the 1996 Domestic Violence legislation. Rape, sexual assault and domestic violence have been addressed by the Second Commission on the Status of Women (1993), the National Anti Poverty Strategy (1995),

the Report of the Working Party on the Legal and Judicial Process for Victims of Sexual and Other Crimes of Violence Against Women and Children (1996) and the Social Partnership Process (2000). The current Partnership agreement, the Partnership for Prosperity and Fairness, contains specific objectives in relation to tackling violence against women in intimate relationships as well as rape and sexual assault. Women's Aid and the NGO sector responding to violence against women were centrally involved in campaigning for the establishment of these policy initiatives and have committed much time, expertise, resources and energy to their development and implementation.

The presence of a strong community development sector in Ireland and the centrality of women's rights and women's development to it's work, is one of the unique features of the Irish response to all forms of violence against women. The complementary nature of feminist and community development principles and the commonalities between them have led to the developing integration of these two bodies of thought, analyses and practice into some current responses to violence against women.

Feminist and community development principles

- Ensuring the active participation of women who experience violence in all responses.
- Working to ensure equal access and equal outcomes for all women at every level of the organisation.
- Standing in solidarity with others who experience oppression and discrimination, at local, national and international levels
- Supporting collective action, which breaks the isolation of the women who have experienced violence and challenges the unequal and unjust power structures in society.
- Making the links between individual women's experience of violence and the wider political, social and economic realities that exist.
- Working for institutional and societal change and being accountable for how the work benefits individual women and the community.

Community based responses

Because community development groups positioned themselves in solidarity with those experiencing oppression and discrimination; were autonomous from the state; local; largely accessible and took practical measures to address poverty and social exclusion, they were identified by women as safe spaces in which they could disclose experiences of male violence. Community activists and workers were required to respond to individual women's support and safety needs and at the same time look to their role in addressing violence against women and the strategies and responses needed. In some areas, where no specialist responses such as refuges or support and information services existed, community based groups took up the challenge to support the development of such frontline services. In other areas, fruitful partnerships have developed between NGO's and community groups.

Women's Aid worked in partnership with St Michael's Estate Family Resource Centre in Inchicore in Dublin to develop an innovative and integrated community response to violence against

women. The Family Resource Centre has gone on to create an internationally recognised model of work in this area (see case study on page 43). In 1997 the Department of Social Welfare appointed Women's Aid as a Specialist Support Agency to the Community Development Programme, which enabled the organisation to support the development of community responses in a more focused and strategic way. The needs identified by groups, organisations and networks were:

- Increasing knowledge and understanding.
- Developing an analysis and framework.
- Learning about the rights and options and access issues for women.
- Developing their capacity to act as advocates.
- Defining the role of the group or organisation and agreeing, developing and implementing specific strategies and responses to male violence in their community.
- Influencing policy and practice at both a local, regional and national level.
- Challenging male violence in the community.

Women's Aid's work with the community sector has brought many returns and benefits into the organisation. Women's Aid have always incorporated elements of development support into its training and education work. However, having the resources to accompany organisations and networks throughout the development process has enabled the organisation to gain a deeper understanding of needs and how development can be progressed. Women's Aid have been involved in addressing issues of poverty, racism and homophobia as intersecting issues in women's lives for many years and more latterly have sought to address disabled women's experience of violence. Being a specialist support agency has meant working in greater depth with groups addressing these issues. This has increased knowledge and capacity to respond to the intersection of these realities in women's lives.

Section 2

Key components in developing a response to violence against women within intimate relationships.

A guide and a support for the development of a safe and effective response in the non-governmental sector.

Some points to consider when using this section:

- The authors do not see these components as stages, which should be followed in a linear process, but rather as actions and strategies that can be progressed in parallel throughout the development and delivery of a response.
- It is helpful to think of these as constituents of a whole process of visioning, development, action, reflection and regeneration.
- It is also helpful to break up the development of a response into achievable, manageable pieces of work. In this way a group, organisation or network will prevent against feeling overwhelmed by the work and will be able to mark and celebrate their achievements – most importantly the difference they make to women’s lives.
- The components are divided into critical questions that are useful to ask when addressing this area of work; suggested actions for groups, organisations or networks to consider, some outcomes which can help a group focus on what it wants to achieve.
- A detailed guide to good employment practice, (see guideline 10, section 3) is critical to the development of a response to violence against women. Resources on good practice in this area have been published by other organisations and individuals and are referenced at the back of the book. (See appendix 5, pg 63)⁸⁶



Increasing knowledge and understanding.

Critical questions:

- What does the group need to know?
- What actions will the group take to gain this knowledge?
- Who will the group engage with to develop this knowledge, information and understanding?

Suggested actions:

- Distribute and read key texts on violence against women and facilitate discussion on them.
- Gather an overview of responses to violence against women in Ireland and internationally by reading available documentation and publications.
- Link with and meet advocates and activists on violence against women and other related women's human rights issues such as reproductive rights, sexual orientation, lone parent rights.
- Engage in awareness raising, education and training delivered by practitioners or organisations with relevant, specialist expertise.
- Learn about women's experience of violence by reading testimonies of women and by meeting with survivors of male violence.

Developing our understanding, knowledge and skills to respond effectively to violence against women is a dynamic process, which is never complete. Whilst training and education can contribute towards this process, there is also a need to use the vast resource of publications and documentation which have been built up over 30 years of service provision, activism, research and learning. Many of these texts are referenced in this publication.

Desired outcomes:

- A clear analysis and an in-depth understanding of violence against women is shared.
- The group recognises that other oppressions impact on women and on their work to address male violence.
- Key principles inform all aspects of the work.
- Close links with specialist NGO's responding to violence against women and survivors of male violence are developed.

Case study – St Michael’s Estate Family Resource Centre. An integrated community response.

St Michael’s Estate Family Resource Centre is situated in Inchicore in Dublin. It was established by local people to address some of the crucial issues which affect their lives. Its passion and drive comes from a commitment to social justice and social change. The resource centre works to address many issues including poverty, housing and estate management, educational disadvantage, drugs and the social economy. It has gained an international reputation for the use of art and creativity in highlighting issues and motivating public opinion and has a close working relationship with the Museum of Modern Art, which has resulted in the exhibitions “Once is Too Much” and “Manifesto”.

As a group that openly addresses abuse of power and situates itself with people who experience oppression, women began to identify the Resource Centre as a safe space in which to disclose experiences of abuse and violence. The issue was tragically highlighted in the community with the death of a local woman, who was killed when she intervened to protect a friend from her partner’s violence. Workers and activists were anxious to develop a response, recognising it as an urgent issue for many women in the area. Initially, they stepped into the gaps created by an inadequate state response and acted as police, social workers, counsellors, welfare officers and locksmiths. They soon realised that this way of working could not be sustained and that a coordinated response that brought together all of the key actors who had a responsibility to address male violence was needed. St Michael’s Estate Resource Centre acted as the motivator of this coordinated strategy and continues to be the central agency in this area.

St. Michael’s Estate Resource Centre recognised the importance of developing a response, which was informed and knowledgeable. In their work against poverty and social exclusion they saw how different frameworks and belief systems impacted on the day-to-day work to address these issues. In developing their knowledge and understanding they tapped into the knowledge, expertise and skills that had been developed by the women’s anti violence movement over the previous 20 years. Initially they sought the expertise and support of Women’s Aid and worked over a period of years with them in developing their own integrated strategy. They also accessed resources to work with internationally renowned experts on the issue such as Ellen Pence and Liz Kelly. Having developed their own knowledge base and an analysis on gender based violence, they then brought together key agencies in the community to promote good practice and an inter-agency response focused on protecting the woman. They continue to work to develop relationships with these key agencies to ensure an effective integrated response to women.

Central to this strategy was the creation of a safe supportive atmosphere and environment for women experiencing violence. They trained women in the community to act as supporters and established an autonomous community based support and information service located outside St Michael’s Estate to maximise safety and confidentiality. Parallel to this was the development of a community-based counselling service where counsellors were trained to understand the dynamics of domestic violence and the trauma that women and children experience. The expertise that they have gained in working directly with women within a community setting is used to influence policy and decision making at all levels.

Contact details: St Michael’s Estate Family Resource Centre,
70 St Michael’s Estate, Inchicore, Dublin 8. Phone: 01-4533938



Finding out what exists as a response to violence against women in the community or area and assessing unmet needs.

Critical questions:

- What responses and services exist?
- Who is involved in delivering these?
- What is the role, remit and responsibility of state agencies in responding to violence against women?
- What are the unmet needs of women experiencing violence in the local area or community?
- How will this information be found?
- How will the group respond to some of those unmet needs?

Suggested action:

- Read and assess documentation and publications about existing services and responses.
- Carry out an audit of what exists in the community or area.
- Consult with survivors of male violence about their experience of seeking support and protection and about what they want and need.
- Read about and/or visit good practice services in other areas.
- Take time to define the role of the group in responding to women's needs.

Desired outcomes:

- A clear overview of responses to violence against women and responsibilities of state agencies is established.
- The gaps in services and responses in the area or community are identified.
- Women's experience of seeking support and protection and knowledge of what constitutes good practice is understood.
- An understanding of the type of role the group or organisation can play is developed.

What women consistently say they want is woman centred, accessible, confidential services. They want to be believed, respected and allowed to make their own decisions. These services are the focus from which women's stories and voices emerge and influence the development of any other response.

Case study – Sonas Housing Association. Responding to women’s unmet needs.

Housing is one of the main concerns of women leaving violent men. It is not always possible and often very unsafe for a woman to return to the home she shared with her abuser. Therefore, many women accessing frontline services such as refuges and support and advocacy services seek local authority housing or rent assisted private rented accommodation. However, housing shortages in both of these sectors act as one of the main barriers to women accessing safety and autonomy. Women also face additional barriers when they are housed by local authorities in areas where they are isolated. In these areas there may not be access to services or support for them or for their children, if they have children, and sometimes they may face re-victimisation because of levels of violence and intimidation in the community. Such were the barriers and difficulties that women faced in these situations that some women chose to return to the abuser rather than face these obstacles alone. Often these women would come back to frontline services seeking support and protection, and it is at this stage that workers and activists in Women’s Aid identified that the provision of adequate and supported housing had to be addressed as a central need for many women. In response to this need, Sonas Housing Association was set up as a sister company to Women’s Aid in 1991.



Sonas Housing Estate

The aim of Sonas is to provide safe, supported, transitional housing to women and children who have left their homes because of violence. Sonas recognised that women and children have ongoing support needs because of the trauma they experienced as a result of the violence and abuse. Thus, central to this response is one-to-one support for women and group support programmes and activities for children. A main aim of Sonas Housing is to support women to access permanent housing in a place where they can live autonomously and safely.

In the same year that Sonas was established (1991) the Department of the Environment launched A Plan for Social Housing, a programme that supports the development of social housing. Sonas accessed funding from the Department and built its first houses on the north side of Dublin. This mini estate comprises 25 houses, two of which are designed for women with physical impairments, a communal meeting centre and children’s playrooms. A recent evaluation of its supported housing programme in the North Dublin site indicated a high level of satisfaction from women who live or used to live there. As a learning organisation, Sonas is incorporating many of the findings and recommendations of this evaluation into their current strategic plan.⁸⁷

Sonas actively engages in policy development as part of bodies such as the Homeless Forum Initiative and has effected policy change in relation to the housing needs of women survivors of male violence. They have successfully lobbied Local Authorities to include the provision of housing units for social housing in their new developments and have now expanded their housing stock to 44 units over 4 sites in Dublin. Two additional sites are currently being developed. In partnership with three refuges outside of Dublin, Sonas has supported the establishment of three supported housing schemes for women who have left violent and abusive partners in Navan, Dundalk and Castlebar.

Contact details: Sonas Housing Association, 148, Phibsboro Rd., Dublin 3.
Phone: 01-8309088, E-mail: info@sonashousing.ie



Planning a response.

Critical questions:

- What is the group trying to achieve or change?
- Does the group hold a common vision of this?
- How is the work directed towards the achievement of this vision?
- Who needs to be involved in this?
- What resources are needed?
- How will the group ensure that the response is centred on the needs of women experiencing violence?
- How will the group maximise the safety of women accessing the service and of workers and volunteers?

When we place ourselves in solidarity with victims of violence we can be seen as a threat to violent men's control over and access to women. Community projects need to put in place safety measures which afford protection to their frontline staff.

Suggested actions:

- Access seed funding to support the planning and preparation stage.
- Engage in a strategic planning process with a facilitator who has expertise on the issue of violence against women.
- Consolidate the group's formation to ensure that the planning and action maintains its direction and focus.
- Carry out a safety audit and develop a safety policy.⁸⁸

Desired outcomes:

- An agreed vision for the future is formed.
- A strategic plan is developed with clear goals and a work plan.
- This strategic plan is achievable, measurable and reflects the core vision.
- Responsibilities and tasks are clearly assigned to and understood by members of the group.
- The required resources are identified by the group.
- Evaluation is an integral part of the plan including mechanisms to assess the impact on women experiencing violence.
- The safety and protection of women and children is central to the main objectives of the plan.
- There are guidelines for the safety and protection of workers.

Case Study – WAVES Coalition. Planning a response.

The WAVES Coalition is a coalition of community workers, service providers, women's rights activists and women who have experienced domestic violence and who have come together to develop frontline domestic violence services in the Sligo, Leitrim and West Cavan area.⁸⁹ They established themselves as a group in October 2001 in response to the lack of dedicated and specialised services for women in this area. As a new group, setting up services from scratch, they have been careful to take a step-by-step and planned approach. They are at all times aware of the need to ensure that their work and the impact of it must benefit women who experience violence and be tailored to their needs.

The group initially set out to gain a shared understanding of the nature and root causes of violence against women and agreed a common vision of what change they wanted to see in Sligo, Leitrim and West Cavan. They agreed that whilst working for the elimination of violence against women their immediate goals were to provide accessible, community based, women centred services for women subjected to domestic violence. Through a process facilitated by Women's Aid they established key principles, core values and desired outcomes for women accessing their services. They then identified what they had to know, believe and understand to ensure these outcomes for women. Central to their agreed principles and values is inclusion of a diversity of women and the recognition of additional barriers to women such as socio-economic status, racism, homophobia, discrimination against disabled women and rural marginalisation.

The next step the group took was to develop a model of service provision that they felt should be available to women in the three counties. They contacted and invited input from other groups engaged in frontline work such as the National Network of Refuges and Support Services, Mayo Women's Support Services, Boyle Family Life Centre and Sonas Housing Association. Through exploring the different models in operation and ongoing facilitated sessions with Women's Aid they designed a four-tier model, which outlined the broad brushstrokes of their response to violence against women. This model included a range of services responding to women at the crisis stage and throughout their struggle for safety and independence, whilst also working to address institutional and societal change through education, policy and campaigning work. With this model agreed, WAVES engaged in strategic and action planning, identifying targets and timeframes for their work which they review and monitor on a regular basis.

Throughout this process, WAVES members have been actively liaising with statutory agencies and campaigning for resources to fund their response. They have been able to approach the Regional Planning Committee, the Health Board, the Homeless Forum and Local Authorities with confidence in the model of work they intend to develop and implement.

WAVES envisage that they will open their first service, a community based support, information and advocacy service, which will also operate on an outreach basis, by June 2003. One of the unique features of this model is that the service will run from two centres, one in Sligo town and one from a satellite location in Manorhamilton in North Leitrim. They are currently negotiating a site for a purpose built refuge which they plan to open in December 2004.

Contact details: WAVES, c/o Caitriona Gleeson, Sligo Leader Partnership Company,
Women's Development Programme, Development Centre, Cleveragh Road, Sligo.
Phone: 071-41138.



Training, recruitment and employment.

Critical questions:

- What are the qualities, skills and areas of knowledge a worker or volunteer needs to have to work in the service or respond?
- What criteria will be set for recruitment and how will this be assessed?
- What kind of training and induction needs to be put in place?
- What terms and conditions are needed?
- What is needed to ensure that the specific impact of responding to violence against women as a worker or volunteer is addressed?

Suggested actions:

- Establish a volunteer and employee sub group.
- Access already developed criteria, policies and guidelines in this area.⁹⁰
- Liaise with other organisations or practitioners with expertise in support and supervision of workers and volunteers dealing with the trauma of violence and abuse.
- Explore existing training and induction manuals and programmes as developed by specialist NGO's on violence against women.
- Engage someone with feminist and community development organisational expertise for this stage of development.

Even people who have experience in handling trauma, such as Accident and Emergency nurses, find intentional cruelty, injury and sexualised violence very difficult to deal with. Being confronted with the traumatic reality of rape and sexual violence can disturb our deepest beliefs and experience of sexuality and relations between men and women. Workers need specialised support and supervision where they can explore their own fears, anger and sadness.

Desired outcomes:

- Criteria and a recruitment policy for workers and volunteers which reflect key principles and values are established.
- Good employment policies and practices are developed and consistently applied.
- The training and development needs are assessed on an ongoing basis.
- Support and supervision structures are centred on the needs of workers and volunteers responding to male violence.
- Key principles of the organisation are understood by the volunteers and workers.

Case Study – Women’s Aid National Freephone Helpline. Training, development and support for workers and volunteers.

The Women’s Aid National Freephone Helpline was set up in 1992 to respond to women who are living in abusive relationships. Its goal is to provide safe, confidential and anonymous support to women, which is free and accessible in all parts of Ireland. The Helpline works to empower women to make their own choices and decisions about their own lives whilst being supported by a worker who is trained and skilled in understanding a gender analysis of violence and who is aware of the options and support needs available for women experiencing abuse. This Helpline response is based on the Women’s Aid analysis of violence against women and employs the model of work as documented in this publication. The Helpline receives an average of over 10,000 calls per year. In the period of January – June 2002 the Helpline received 8,886 calls. It is open seven days a week from 10am – 10pm. A facility stops the Helpline number from appearing on the household phone bill, to protect women’s safety. The statistics show that women who use this service are from all walks of life and from all socio-economic groups.

One of the key characteristics of the Helpline is the nature of the intensive initial and ongoing training and support for its staff and volunteers. It is Women’s Aid’s experience over the years that a feminist analysis of violence against women is the most effective way of working. Therefore initial training focuses on this analysis and supports volunteers and workers to explore this framework as a basis

from which to respond to individual women. Initial training also covers all the key areas that are necessary to the delivery of a good practice response. Ongoing training continues to bring workers and volunteers back to key principles and understanding about the issue of male violence, and also covers further issues of importance such as child protection, disability equality and anti-racist practice. Emerging issues and needs are also addressed through ongoing training and development. On the job training with more experienced staff is facilitated through ‘headsets’ where new or less experienced workers and volunteers can listen to calls.

As well as having a training strategy, the Helpline sets out clear criteria for the selection of workers and volunteers. Once engaged to work on the Helpline, a system of support and supervision, both from the manager and project leaders is implemented. A strong environment of mutual support is created for everyone to share their experiences of the issues and to de-brief from stressful calls. Regular support meetings are held for all staff and volunteers to discuss concerns and gain mutual support. Documented policies and procedures in relation to all aspects of staffing and running a Helpline are also an important factor in supporting staff and volunteers to do their job well.

Initially, new workers can be very stressed as they do not have all the information in their heads when working with women. Whilst it is vital for anyone to have an appropriate level of knowledge to inform women of the choices available to them, Women’s Aid places the emphasis on deep listening and understanding whilst consistently supporting the Helpline worker or volunteer to increase their knowledge, skills and expertise.





Creating equal access and equal outcomes for all women.

Critical questions:

- How does the group gain knowledge and understanding of additional barriers faced by women because of intersecting discriminations including racism, poverty, ageism, homophobia and discrimination against disabled women, refugees and asylum seekers?
- How does the group integrate responses to women that will create equal access and equal outcomes for all women?

Suggested actions:

- Read materials produced by groups working to address these issues.
- Link and consult with groups and activists organising around other equality and social justice issues.
- Consult with women who have experienced violence and further discriminations as identified above.
- Examine additional barriers to participation and employment for a diversity of women.
- Support employment and participation in the group/organisation of a diversity of women.
- Ensure the strategic plan has goals, actions and targets focused on equality.

Diversity and equality are challenging but the richness of different women's experiences enhances an organisation's responses to women experiencing violence. In particular, embracing the spectrum of women's sexuality – lesbian, bisexuality and heterosexuality – enables us to fully engage with feminism without fear.

Failure to do so basically undermines the feminist struggle for women's sexual liberation and divides women one from the other.

Desired outcomes:

- The group or organisation reflects the diversity of women in its composition.
- Records demonstrate that a diversity of women access the service.
- Evaluation indicates equal outcomes for women who access the service or response.
- Equality and social justice organisations are supported by the group to address violence against women as part of their work.

Case Study – Pavee Point Traveller Centre. Addressing Traveller Women’s Experience of Violence.

Pavee Point Centre is an organisation which is a partnership of Traveller and settled people working together to address racism and for the attainment of Traveller people’s human rights. Established in 1983, the organisation works at local, regional and national level to influence political and social change. Pavee Point Centre also provides practical support and programmes which support Travellers to overcome the impact of racism and discrimination in our society. Its work is based on community development principles and on intercultural development models.

Pavee Point Centre initiated a Programme called Pavee Beoirs in 1998. The aim of the programme is to break the silence about domestic violence and to develop culturally appropriate and effective responses to Traveller women experiencing violence. Pavee Point consulted with NGO specialist organisations responding to violence against women and accessed EU funding under the NOW initiative. They carried out research on Traveller women’s experience of violence and ran an 18 month training programme for Traveller women. The aim of the programme was to support the capacity of Traveller women to address the issue of domestic violence within their own communities. As a result of this programme, Traveller women are central as workers and activists to the continuing work in this area.

With Women’s Aid, Pavee Point Centre is now developing an integrated strategy to address domestic violence. Central to this work is the piloting of an outreach service for Traveller women and the upskilling of Traveller women to work as support and advocacy workers in the service. Another key aim is to influence the practice in frontline services by supporting anti racist practice through the promotion of policies and guidelines and the delivery of training.

Pavee Point Centre is working to develop a strategy to challenge the wider attitudes and values which underlie the prevalence of violence against Traveller women and to build a movement against male violence within the Traveller community. One of the ways they are doing this is to identify key people within the community to support the work on violence against women and create the context in which Traveller women and organisations can develop and implement appropriate and effective responses.

Contact details: Pavee Point Centre, North Great Charles St., Dublin 1.
Phone: 01- 8780255, E-mail: pavee@iol.ie



Implementing, monitoring and evaluating.

When evaluation, reflection and analysis become part of the core work of a worker, volunteer or team, we avoid it being seen as something we do when our 'real' work is done. If we can find ways to build in evaluation to our day to day work, we can create a context in which individuals and groups can become more accountable and expert in responding to violence against women.

Critical questions:

- How does the group respond to the needs of women experiencing violence on a day to day basis?
- Is the work benefiting women; is it making a positive difference in their lives?
- Are good practice guidelines being followed?
- Are there any barriers to implementing good practice and what can be done to address them?
- Is the day to day work informed by the agreed principles and values?
- Does the daily work fit with the agreed core vision?
- Are the core vision and goals still relevant to the needs of women experiencing violence?
- Is the service or response effecting any change at a wider level and, if so, what is it?

Suggested actions:

- Support workers and volunteers to examine the above questions in support and supervision and team meetings.
- Integrate evaluation into all work of the organisation and include the views of service users or women participating in a response.
- Revisit the targets and timeframes at regular stages.
- Review the strategic plan and integrate the learning of the organisation in its delivery of a service or response.

Desired outcomes:

- A good practice response is consistently delivered.
- Women report that they have experienced positive change as a result of the response. This change might be increased safety, autonomy or a shift in the woman's perspective e.g. not blaming herself for the abusers behaviour.
- Workers and volunteers experience an empowering, supportive and accountable work environment.
- The organisation is responsive to emerging needs and changes in the external environment.

Case Study – Mayo Women’s Support Services. Reviewing and evaluating.

Mayo Women’s Support Services were developed by a partnership of organisations including St.Vincent de Paul, the Claremorris Social Services Board and the Western Health Board. The organisation was set up to respond to the needs of women in Mayo experiencing domestic violence. Since 1994, a range of services have been developed including a crisis refuge, transitional housing and an innovative outreach programme to women in rural areas. This means that as well as providing support, information and advocacy from their premises in Castlebar, the workers and volunteers from the project go out to meet with women in their own communities or areas, thus helping to break the isolation of many women experiencing violence.

In 2000, Mayo Women’s Support Services decided that they wanted to review and evaluate their work. They commissioned an independent researcher to carry out an evaluation of their services and a report of this was published in May 2000 called *Going the Extra Mile*.⁹¹ The researcher carried out a holistic evaluation, examining the model of work used, the structures of the organisation and the external environment in which they operated by examining the response of other key agencies such as the Gardaí, the Courts and the Health Board to women experiencing violence. Most importantly, the researcher asked women about their experiences of Mayo Women’s Support Services and was able to gather valuable information and insights into how the work of the group made a difference to women’s lives. The evaluation with women service users indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the service being offered and it was described as a ‘lifesaver, brilliant and excellent’. Women described how the workers went the extra mile with them in their journey, hence the title of the study.

As a learning organisation, Mayo Women’s Support Services were anxious to find out what gaps women experienced in trying to access support and protection and to also reflect on their own experience in identifying the needed changes in responding to violence against women in Mayo. They agreed a number of recommendations with the researcher, both for themselves as an organisation and for other agencies and institutions who have a role in responding to women.

The recommendations have been integrated in the organisation’s current strategic plan ‘Integrity, Dignity, Safety’. Mayo Women’s Support Services can now progress with their work, confident that their good practice has been affirmed by the experience of women, that they have identified areas for change and renewed focus in their own organisation and that they have a clear picture of the needed changes in the other key agencies and the community. In this way, the organisation is remaining accountable to women who are subjected to male violence by ensuring that their voices and experiences remain central to their work.

Contact details: Mayo Women’s Support Services, Phone: 094-25409,
E-mail: mayowomensrefuge@eircom.net,
Website: www.mayowomenssupportservices.com



Effecting change towards a good practice response in agencies and institutions.

Critical questions:

- Who are the agencies from whom women seek help?
- What do women need from them?
- What is the role and responsibility of that agency?
- What is the existing response and women's experience of it?
- What changes should be brought about?
- How does the group influence practice in those agencies?

Suggested actions:

- Gather, record and analyse women's experience of seeking support and protection from agencies and institutions.
- Identify the agency(ies) or institution the group wishes to work with or influence.
- Identify key individuals within that agency and institution who will be allies.
- Establish working groups within the agency made up of management, trainers, frontline staff and advocates of women who experience violence.
- Support the agency or institution to carry out an audit of existing policies, guidelines and practices.
- Promote the development of a gender analysis of violence against women.
- Facilitate the development of good practice principles and guidelines which will include indicators and monitoring mechanisms.

Desired outcomes:

- Women experience a safer more effective response from that state agency or institution.
- Men are held increasingly accountable for their violence and abuse.
- The agency or institution has implemented good practice guidelines and principles and a roll over training and development process that supports staff to deliver this.
- Monitoring and accountability structures are in place to assess the effectiveness of the agency or institution's policies and practice.

Protection, welfare and permanent housing are necessities for abused women which cannot be provided by the NGO sector. We therefore have a responsibility to engage in institutional change. However, partnership with the State should not demand the loss of a critical stance. NGOs have a responsibility to remain autonomous and continue to represent the voices of abused women.

Case study – Women’s Aid. Effecting legislative and policy change.

One of the most vital state systems for the protection of women and children from male violence in the home is the legal system. Women’s experience of civil and criminal justice remedies however, is that they fall very short of providing them with safety and protection to which they have both a need and a right. Women have talked about their experiences of accessing protection, justice and redress through the legal system to workers and volunteers in the Women’s Aid services. Because of the importance of court proceedings to women experiencing violence and the difficulties women experienced, Women’s Aid set up a court accompaniment service in 1994. They witnessed the difficulties women faced and were able to clearly see the gaps in legislation and policy that placed women in greater danger. For example, women who were not married to their abuser could not get barring orders and instead had to apply for an injunction in the circuit court. Injunctions do not carry powers of entry or powers of arrest in the same way that barring orders do. If an abuser ignored the injunction and continued to abuse and threaten the woman, the onus was on her to return to court to apply for a court sanction against the abuser. This and many other inadequacies were placing women in greater danger and were failing to hold violent men accountable for their actions.

Women’s Aid workers documented the experience of women and then began a campaign to have domestic violence legislation changed and updated. They set up a number of meetings with key agencies such as the courts, the Gardaí and the Probation and Welfare Service, to hear their views on the required changes and to ensure that whatever Women’s Aid recommended would have the support of those agencies. They set up a working group comprised of women’s advocates and legal personnel to formulate and assess the feasibility of the desired changes.

Women’s Aid made a submission to the Department of Equality and Law Reform in 1995. They organised a parallel media campaign highlighting the issues and outlining the submission. They met with the Minister and opposition spokespeople and these meetings were widely covered by the media. The Minister was invited to meet women survivors of male violence who were living in Women’s Aid’s second stage refuge. He heard at first hand the experience of women who had tried to access protection through the courts but who remained at risk from violence because of inadequate legislation, lack of enforcement and in some cases, discriminatory practice based on a lack of knowledge and understanding of the issue of domestic violence.

The Department of Equality and Law reform drafted new legislation and published a white paper. Women’s Aid and other non-governmental organisations made submissions to the Department and the new legislation was finally enacted in 1996. Whilst it contained many of the needed changes, Women’s Aid cautioned that it was still not fully adequate to protect women and children. For example, women who have a child in common with a man but do not live with him, or who co-habit with a man but cannot prove an equal interest in the home, can still not avail of court orders.

Two months after the enactment of the new legislation, the President of the District Court announced that applications for court orders under the domestic violence legislation were up by 161%.



Organising political action.

Critical questions:

- What are the wider issues which underpin male violence and gender inequality?
- What kind of changes are necessary towards the elimination of violence against women?
- How does the work of the group contribute towards these changes?
- Who else needs to be involved?
- How is the experience of women central to the work for political and social change?
- How will women survivors of male violence be included as activists for change in the group's strategies and campaigns?

Suggested actions:

- Create opportunities and time for the workers, volunteers and survivors of male violence to identify the remaining obstacles to eliminating violence against women.
- Identify key goals, objectives and actions specifically focused on collective, political action for change.
- Use existing campaigns and opportunities such as the 16 Days of Action Against Violence Against Women and International Women's Day to carry out public actions.
- Organise a Reclaim the Night March or public vigil for victims of male violence.
- Make links with community art organisations who can provide expertise in the use of art and creativity in actions and strategies.

Desired outcomes:

- Workers, volunteers and survivors of male violence experience empowerment through participation in collective, political action.
- Women increase their knowledge of the overlapping issues of sexual and reproductive rights, women's economic independence and cultural and political equality.
- International and national solidarity is created across campaigns and struggles for social justice.
- There is an increasing condemnation and lack of tolerance for violence against women within the community or society.
- The work contributes to equality and justice for all women.

As long as the victims of abuse carry the shame and stigma, true healing or justice cannot happen. In our society, crimes of violence against women remain deeply infused with blame, isolation and silence for the victim. Collective action affirms women's experience whilst clearly placing the responsibility with violent men and with societal collusion with this violence. As well as being a channel for political action, it is part of the healing process for many women who have experienced the trauma of male violence.

Case Study – 16 Days of Action Against Violence Against Women Campaign. Organising Political Action.

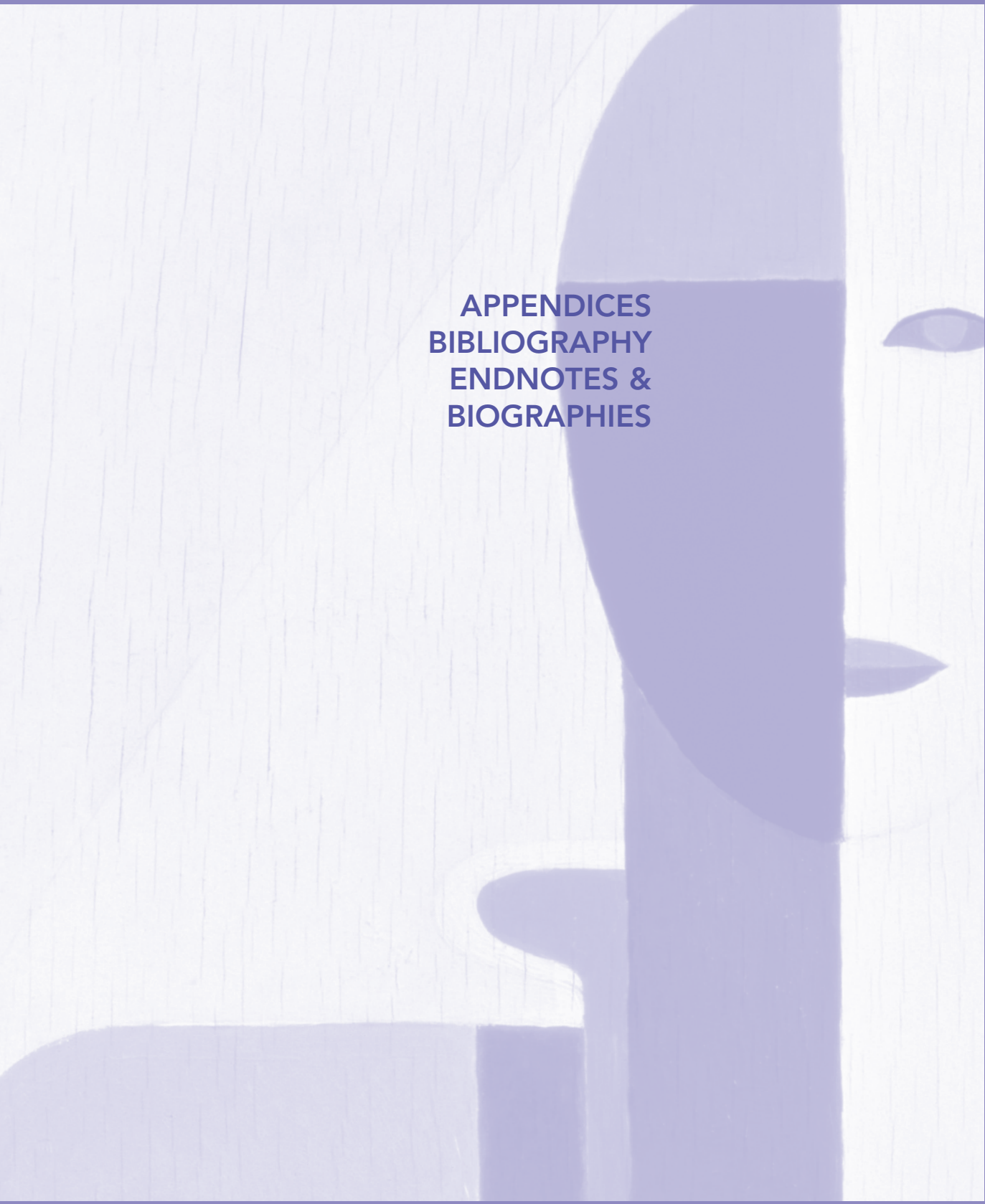
The 16 Days of Action Against Violence Against Women Campaign is a global campaign and runs from November 25th, International Day Against Violence Against Women, to December 10th, International Human Rights Day. The 16 Days Campaign was envisioned and initiated by the Centre for Women's Global Leadership in Rutgers University in the United States. Monica O'Connor, who was a refuge worker in Dublin at the time participated in the first International Institute run by the centre and brought the idea of the Campaign back to Ireland in 1990. In 1991, Women's Aid held its first 16 Days Action at Dáil Éireann and has continued to organise demonstrations outside of the Dáil on each 25th November every year. The aim of the 16 Days Campaign is to promote women's leadership in addressing violence against women, to highlight violence against women as a human rights issue and to provide opportunities for political activism and protest.



One in Five women: Women's Aid volunteer viewing an installation of broken tiles depicting violence against women outside Leinster House in 2000. Each tile has a woman's name on it and every fifth tile is broken to represent that one in five women are abused.

Photograph: Mr. Matt Kavanagh, the Irish Times

Women's Aid produces an information and action pack and disseminates this to community and voluntary groups throughout Ireland. 16 Days events are designed to facilitate the involvement of community groups who do not address violence against women as part of their core work but who wish to join in protest and political action. It also provides an opportunity for workers and volunteers in many frontline services to step back for a short time from the day to day work of supporting women and to engage in action for political and institutional change. As a result, the 16 Days Campaign is now a noted event on the community and NGO calendar and many groups and organisations around the county run their own 16 Days Campaigns. These include awareness workshops, seminars, public vigils, art exhibitions, political protests and media work. The use of art and creativity has been a defining characteristic of the Campaign in Ireland, with groups and organisations using drama, music, poetry and visual arts to communicate, motivate and protest.



**APPENDICES
BIBLIOGRAPHY
ENDNOTES &
BIOGRAPHIES**

Appendix 1 – Women’s Aid understanding of the gendered nature of violence within intimate relationships.

Women’s Aid understand violence against women as a manifestation of unequal power relationships between women and men at all levels of society and as a crucial mechanism by which those power relations are maintained. Unequal power structures and sexist attitudes and values, which afford power, privilege and entitlement to men as a class, underlie the prevalence of men’s use of violence, sustain male violence by minimising, justifying and denying their behaviour and place many barriers in the way of a woman seeking protection and support. The systematic oppression of women and denial of their full human rights accounts for the fact that violence within intimate relationships, or domestic violence as it is more commonly known, is largely perpetrated by men against women.

Women’s Aid are aware that in a minority of cases, domestic violence does not reflect the conventional power structures i.e. is perpetrated by a woman against a male or same sex partner. A woman may be violent as a response to the man’s violence and abuse e.g. self-defence, fighting back, pre-empting violence by hitting out first. In this case the power dynamics remain the same and the man still exerts power and control over the woman. We do not define the woman’s use of violence as domestic violence in this case. When a woman systematically uses violence and abuse with the intention to gain and maintain power and control over her male/female partner, she is then a perpetrator of domestic violence. However, it is important to recognise that male domestic violence and a woman’s use of violence against an intimate partner may differ in one or more of the following ways.

- They are not equally supported by conventional power structures.
- They may not be experienced in the same way (e.g. men’s violence to women is highly sexualised whilst women’s violence against men is rarely so).
- There may be different access to social supports for male and female, heterosexual and lesbian victims.
- There may be different institutional responses to the violence, the victim and the perpetrator.

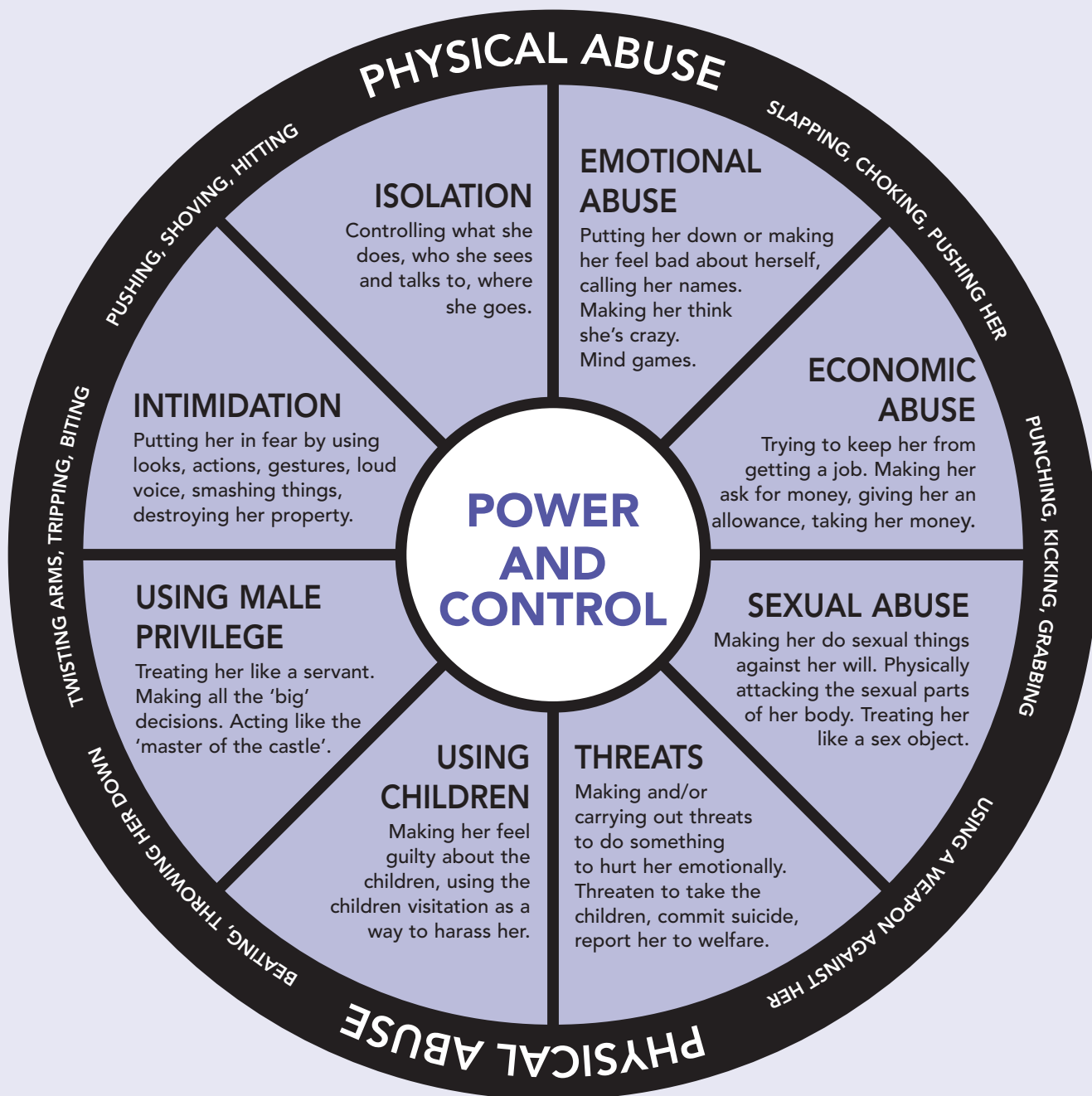
For these reasons, Women’s Aid only addresses male domestic violence against women as a particular form of violence which is endemic in our society. We believe that male victims of domestic violence must be supported and protected through specific responses designed to meet the needs of men who experience domestic violence, at the hands of a female or male partner. Women’s Aid is a member of the National Domestic Violence Intervention Programme, which will respond to the needs of all victims of domestic violence and develop appropriate responses to male and female perpetrators.

Violence within lesbian relationships:

The experiences and needs of women who experience violence and abuse at the hands of female partners must also be addressed by tailored and appropriate strategies. Women’s Aid has always worked in partnership with lesbian organisations to explore the issue of abuse within lesbian relationships, engaged in joint training and encouraged the development of responses, which fully recognise homophobia and discrimination. Women’s Aid services continue to provide one to one confidential support to lesbians experiencing abuse.

Appendix 2 – Power and control wheel

Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, Duluth, Minnesota.



Appendix 3 – The National Domestic Violence Intervention Programme.

Following the recommendations of the study, *Safety and Sanctions (1999)*, a Working Group, led by the Cork Domestic Violence Project (CDVP) and including Women Aid Dublin, Womens Aid Dundalk and Clare Haven Services, was set up by the National Steering Committee (NSC). The Working Group received seed funding from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to set out core principles and a framework for the introduction of a Domestic Violence Intervention Programme into the Irish civil and criminal justice system. The Working Group produced a manual outlining the principles to underpin intervention programmes and a framework in regard to the operation of programmes. These are based on the Duluth Programme in the United States, which is considered a best practice model of inter-agency work with perpetrators. As with the Duluth model, the NDVIP has two core focuses:

- To hold the perpetrator accountable for his actions and give primacy to the safety of the victim in domestic violence case management procedures.
- To develop a multi agency approach involving the civil and criminal justice systems, the courts, the probation and welfare service (P&WS), the Gardaí and women's groups.

Objectives of intervention programmes should include the need:

- To ensure that all actions increase victim safety at all times and in all interventions.
- To protect the victim by bringing the perpetrator into the judicial system through reducing the screening out of cases and by offering a graded level of sanctions to the perpetrator including a perpetrator intervention programme which will report to the court regularly.
- To increase the information available to the courts by tracking cases through the civil and criminal justice system and by gathering and co-ordinating interagency information flow.
- To protect the victim by providing access to support services, safe housing, legal advocacy and education.
- To evaluate the impact of the programme from the standpoint of the safety of victims of domestic violence.

The National Domestic Violence Agency will have two main functions:

- To pilot an intervention programme in three areas.
- To establish a structure to co-ordinate and support other intervention programmes operating in Ireland which adhere to the principles and core values outlined above and which would become part of a national programme.

In order to ensure that interventions with men are safe, the agency will:

- Provide training programmes for personnel working with violent offenders.
- Set up systems of monitoring, support and supervision.
- Develop standards for evaluation and accreditation.

The NDVIP has secured approval and backing for the project from:

- The National Steering Committee on Violence against Women.
- The Garda Commissioner, who has appointed two senior Gardaí to the project.
- The Probation and Welfare Service.
- The Courts Service.

Appendix 4 – Information directories and national organisations responding to violence against women in Ireland.

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- 2) **The Directory of Eastern Regional Service Provision for Women who Experience Violence**, Compiled by Ruth Breslin for the Eastern Regional Planning Committee on Violence Against Women, 2000
- 3) **Women's Aid**.
Phone: 01-8684721, E-mail: info@womensaid.ie,
Website: www.womensaid.ie
- 4) **National Network of Refuges and Support Services**.
Phone: 0902-79078, E-mail: admin@nnwrss.com
- 5) **Rape Crisis Network Ireland**.
Phone: 091-563676, E-mail: rcni@eircom.net,
Website: www.rcni.com
- 6) **National Women's Council of Ireland**.
Phone: 01-6615268, E-mail: info@nwci.ie,
Website: www.nwci.ie
- 7) **Dublin Rape Crisis Centre**.
Phone: 1800 778 888
Website: www.drcc.ie

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- ¹⁵ *Dublin Rape Crisis Statistics*, 1998.
- ¹⁶ *Carnal Knowledge: Rape on Trial London*: Sue Lees, 1996, Hamish Hamilton.
- ¹⁷ While the term " domestic violence" is most commonly used and understood, Women's Aid believe that it wrongly implies a lesser form of violence than that experienced outside of the domestic sphere and also obscures the gendered nature of violence within intimate relationships. For this reason we use the term 'male violence against women within intimate relationships' or 'abuse of women by male intimates/partners.'
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- ⁸⁶ Many readers will already have much knowledge and expertise in this area. The development components described here would be best used when accompanied by good employment guides and guides on volunteer recruitment and support, also referenced in the back of this publication.
- ⁸⁷ Learning to Live Again, A Review of the Supported Housing Service of Sonas Housing Association Ltd., Katherine Zappone, Unpublished.
- ⁸⁸ In carrying out audits and developing specific policies, the expertise of groups and organisations that have developed services for women is invaluable. Many have written safety policies and Adapt House Limerick has published a guide to safety planning in Lean on Me, an information guide for women living with domestic abuse, 2002.
- ⁸⁹ Groups/organisations in the WAVES coalition are Sligo Social Services Council, Sligo Rape Crisis Centre, Sligo Leader Partnership Company, Sligo Women's Network, WEAVE Support Programme, MAEVE Support Group and North Leitrim Women's Resource Centre. A number of women are involved as individuals.
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- ⁹¹ Going the Extra Mile, Patricia Kelleher, Mayo Women's Support Services, 2000.

Biographies

Niamh Wilson has worked in the area of domestic violence since 1987. Initially she worked as a refuge worker in Women's Aid. She was then involved in establishing other responses to domestic violence including the National Freephone Helpline. She became Education and Awareness Coordinator of Women's Aid in 1994 and was appointed as the manager of the Community Development Support agency within the organisation in 1998. She left Women's Aid in 2000 and now works in an independent capacity to support groups and organisations developing responses to violence against women. Much of her work is devoted to providing training and development support to groups and organisations in the community and voluntary sector. She has also been involved in supporting strategic planning, policy development and capacity building with statutory agencies and interagency fora. Niamh has represented Women's Aid at both national and international conferences and was involved in the Irish Non Governmental contingent at the 4th UN Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Her recently published report is a feasibility study on further research into violence against women with disabilities.

Monica O'Connor worked with Women's Aid for fifteen years and is now an independent consultant working on the issue of violence against women. In this time, she has worked in direct service provision to women experiencing violence, worked extensively in training of statutory and non-statutory groups and has been involved in research and policy development on the issue. She was a member of the Irish Government Task Force on Violence against Women for three years. In 1997 she was appointed to the European Observatory on Violence against Women and has contributed to the development of guidelines for medical and health practitioners at the World Health Organisation. She is the co-author of:

Identification and Treatment of Women Admitted to an Accident & Emergency Department as a Result of Assault by Spouses/Partners, St. James' Hospital, Dublin. Cronin & O'Connor 1993.

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