

PROBATION SERVICE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE STRATEGY 2015 -2017



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Introduction

The Probation Service, the lead statutory agency responsible for the assessment and supervision of offenders in the community is committed to working towards safer communities and fewer victims through offender rehabilitation. The focus of Probation Service interventions with domestic abuse perpetrators is on risk management and the safety of victims, present and future. This strategy sets out four key goals and related actions which build on existing progress and reflect the Probation Service's commitment to the provision of services and increased awareness to promote the prevention of domestic violence.

Probation Service work in the area of domestic violence is guided by;

- Probation Service Strategy 2015-2017 which commits the Service to developing victim sensitive responses: "We will ensure a victim sensitive approach".
- Joint Probation Service / Irish Prison Service Strategic Plan 2015-2017, commits the Service to "Engage with Service users to reduce the risk of re-offending, creating safer communities through improved service provision" and in responding to victims to "uphold the rights, support and protection of victims".
- Joint Probation Service / Irish Prison Service Women's Strategy 2014-2016 commits the Service to "improve outcomes for women through strengthened strategic alliances / explore how interventions with perpetrators can be maximised to ensure better outcomes for women".
- Probation Service Domestic Violence Policy and Practice Guidelines (2009).
- Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, (Department of Children & Youth Affairs 2011).
- Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender – based Violence 2015-2020 which is currently being drafted.
- Domestic Violence Act 1996, (as amended 2002) and the Istanbul Convention i.e. Council of Europe Convention on Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence.

The delivery of the Probation Service domestic violence strategy will be focused on four key goals;



1

ASSESSMENT AND SUPERVISION OF PERPETRATORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Aim: *“Through effective assessment and supervision of offenders we will target the attitude and behaviour of offenders involved in domestic violent incidents and endeavour to interrupt the destructive effects and cycle of domestic violence.”*

Context: Probation Officers in their work with perpetrators of domestic violence use the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment tool (SARA), which presents a framework within which to assess the risk of future violence in people convicted of spousal assault. Information obtained allows for the use of scenario planning and safety planning as part of case management.

ASSESSMENT AND SUPERVISION OF PERPETRATORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

We will...

1	Develop a plan to train designated staff in SARA on a team/regional basis.
2	Train an “in house” trainer to enhance and support best practice.
3	Pilot a team/regional staff mentoring system to support and develop the use of the SARA risk assessment tool.
4	Explore possibilities for cross agency training in the use of SARA with relevant agencies.
5	Develop Domestic Violence guidelines between the Probation Service and An Garda Síochána.
6	Review and update the Probation Service Domestic Violence Policy and Practice guidelines (2009).
7	Review materials for working on a one to one basis with perpetrators of Domestic Violence.
8	Introduce the use of a screening tool where Domestic Violence is not the index offence.

2

LIAISON AND COLLABORATION IN THE DELIVERY OF PERPETRATOR PROGRAMMES

Aim: “We will collaborate with and support the delivery of perpetrator programmes”

Context: Probation Officers collaborate with and support the work of agencies /initiatives delivering domestic violence perpetrator programmes. There are, at time of publication, three such initiatives, funded by the Department of Justice and Equality through Cosc that run group work programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence nationally. Support is offered to partners / ex-partners through partner support services by all three programme providers ^(2,3,4).

In addition, we continue to share information, expertise and learning with partner agencies in Northern Ireland, particularly the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI), to enhance practice and explore future collaboration.

LIAISON AND COLLABORATION IN THE DELIVERY OF PERPETRATOR PROGRAMMES

We will...

1	Work in close collaboration with the providers of perpetrator programmes and with Cosc ¹ , (including MOVE ² , SEDVIP ³ and NEDVIP ⁴) to examine and review; programme content, the outcomes for service users, and to improve protocols with organisations providing programmes.
2	Conduct an audit of Probation Officer referrals and compile relevant feedback relating to the programmes outlined above.
3	Commit Probation Staff to participate on identified programme steering groups, as appropriate.
4	Continue our liaison with the PBNI concerning domestic violence programmes.

¹ Cosc is the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence

² MOVE (Men Overcoming Violence, Ireland),

³ SEDVIP (South East Domestic violence Intervention Programme)

⁴ NEDVIP (North East Domestic Violence Intervention Programme)

3

SUPPORTING VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Aim: *“We will support the victims of Domestic Violence”*

Context: Through our work the Probation Service holds offenders to account for their actions. The needs and rights of victims are central to that process of accountability and are highlighted and embedded in practice from the assessment stage and throughout offender supervision. We will endeavour to support all victims touched by domestic violence in our practice.

SUPPORTING VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

We will...

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| 1 | Update and communicate relevant Service practice guidelines to Probation Service Staff. |
| 2 | Collaborate with Probation funded Community Based Organisations specialising in the delivery of Domestic Violence programmes for victims and explore initiatives to raise awareness of victim issues. |
| 3 | Promote and raise our staff awareness of NGOs who specialise in supporting victims of Domestic Violence, with a view to making appropriate referrals to victim services. |
| 4 | Support the development of a systemic interagency approach in our work with victims of domestic violence. |
| 5 | Contribute to the delivery of non-violent resistance programmes, a skills based programme utilised in the context of Child to Parent violence. |
| 6 | Develop an information and support service for victims through our Victim Services team. |

4

RAISE AWARENESS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ISSUES

Aim: *“We will raise awareness of Domestic Violence and related issues within our own organisation and through partnerships with other stakeholders.”*

Context: Through participation on a variety of fora and in partnership with agencies from the statutory, community and voluntary sector, we will promote greater awareness of domestic violence and appropriate responses.

RAISE AWARENESS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ISSUES	
We will...	
1	Participate on Cosc National Steering Committee on Violence against women and its relevant sub-groups.
2	Establish an internal working group to develop and support the implementation of our Domestic Violence strategy.
3	Gather and compile management information, i.e. completion of Spousal Assault Risk Assessments, types and completion of orders, and information on compliance and non-compliance by offenders on supervision to inform practice.
4	Raise awareness of services for those affected by domestic violence.