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Combating domestic violence against women

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Summary:

Following the Council of Europe awareness-raising Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence (2006-2008), this report stresses the key role of regional and local authorities in addressing the issue of domestic violence.

The majority of victims of domestic violence are women. However combating domestic violence contributes to community safety and the reduction of crime levels as a whole and promotes social cohesion.

This report makes proposals on how local and regional authorities can take action efficiently and safely within their areas in three fields simultaneously: prevention, protection of victims and provision of services. It provides examples from several countries, which have developed a co-ordinated community response.

R : Chamber of Regions / L : Chamber of Local Authorities
ILDG : Independent and Liberal Democrat Group of the Congress
EPP/CD : Group European People's Party – Christian Democrats of the Congress
SOC : Socialist Group of the Congress
NR : Member not belonging to a Political Group of the Congress



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Introduction

On 27 March 2007, during the Spring Session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the Chamber of Local Authorities held a debate on violence against women and invited towns and cities across Europe to become actively involved in the Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence (2006-2008).

The Congress appointed Mr Chris Green, Chair of the White Ribbon Campaign and Senior Lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University (United Kingdom), to be its representative on the *Council of Europe Task Force to Combat Violence against Women, including domestic violence* set up by the Action Plan adopted by the Third Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe, in May 2005.

Many towns and regions in Europe carried out varied and innovative activities under the Congress' patronage and with the help of Congress and Council of Europe campaign material, including poster campaigns in the streets, buses, bus stations and public buildings and on municipal websites, as well as public debates with various actors in this field.

The Congress members and its network of contacts (mainly associations of local and regional authorities) spread a targeted message available in 17 languages through their newsletters, websites and other means, thereby reaching as wide a public as possible.

The involvement of national bodies in activities organised at local and regional level and co-operation generated between different sectors (education, sport, art, transport, social protection) raised the impact of the campaign. The campaign provided a launching pad for concerted actions and enabled the creation of partnerships to form between local and regional authorities, specialised bodies and civil society, including the private sector. It also reached out to young people through school, sport and art events.

As a follow-up to the Council of Europe campaign and based on the Congress' experience and achievements, this report¹ outlines possible action to be undertaken by local and regional authorities to prevent and combat domestic violence against women.

1. The extent of the problem

1.1 What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence – that is, violence occurring within the family or domestic unit – should be understood within the wider context of violence against women generally, and as an attack on women's human rights. Violence against women is here defined as any act of gender-based violence, which 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 life². Violence occurring in the family or domestic unit therefore includes, *inter alia*, physical and mental aggression, emotional and psychological abuse, rape and sexual abuse, incest, rape between spouses, regular or occasional partners and cohabitants, crimes committed in the name of honour, female genital and sexual mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, such as forced marriages³.

1.2. Prevalence

Domestic violence occurs in every Council of Europe member state. Estimates as to the extent of the violence vary. It is, however, widely accepted that one in four women experience domestic violence in their lifetimes, and between 6-10% of women in any one year; and as many as 45% of women have experienced some form of violence within their lifetimes^{4,5}.

¹ The Secretariat would like to thank Ms Nicola Harwin and Dr Jackie Barron, Women's Aid, for drafting this report.

² In accordance with United Nations (1993) *Declaration on elimination of violence against women* (New York, Washington Free Press).

³ Council of Europe. Recommendation Rec(2002)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the protection of women against violence adopted on 30 April 2002 and Explanatory Memorandum.

⁴ *Combating violence against women: Stocktaking study on the measures taken and actions taken in Council of Europe member states*, Council of Europe. Strasbourg, 2006. Council of Europe publications are available at: http://www.coe.int/t/dc/campaign/stopviolence/default_en.asp.

1.3 Costs

The financial and human costs of domestic violence are even harder to estimate. One study, based on collating figures collected across various European states⁶, concluded the range is between €20-60 per head each year across Europe. For the entire Council of Europe area, this would amount to at least €33 billion per annum. One of these national studies (covering the United Kingdom) estimated the total annual cost for England and Wales to be in the region of £23 billion (i.e. €34 billion)⁷; this covers not only the cost to the criminal justice system, health and social care, emergency housing, and civil legal costs, but also lost economic output and human and emotional costs – hence it is significantly higher per head of population than the overall European figures. Arguably, however, this larger figure represents a more complete and realistic recognition of the true overall costs to communities and individual victims.

2. How to address the issue

2.1 Local and regional authorities' responsibilities

Regional and local authorities play a key role in addressing the issue of domestic violence and combating violence against women generally. While their responsibilities will vary to some extent from country to country, all regional and local authorities should lead and support a multi-agency response (see 4.2.1 below). They will also aim (in conjunction with the police) to promote community safety and reduce levels of crime and promote social cohesion within their areas⁸, to support the social, economic and environmental well-being of their communities, and to protect individual human rights. In all cases, they will have responsibilities for social care (including child protection), emergency and temporary housing, and the commissioning of independent specialist service provision for abused women and children from non-government organisations (NGOs). In some states (e.g. Spain) regional authorities have legislative powers; and in all cases, the lost economic output and human costs will have impact at local and regional levels.

2.2 Key strategic priorities

Local and regional authorities aiming to take effective action to address domestic violence, and other forms of gender violence, need to approach the issue from three directions simultaneously:

- **Prevention** which may include public awareness raising campaigns, and education of children and young people in schools, colleges, youth services and elsewhere.
- **Protection** – which includes the existence of and access to civil and criminal legislation, effective and fast response from the police and other criminal justice agencies to protect victims, measures to hold perpetrators accountable, procedures for child protection, and ensuring the safety of women and children through family court proceedings and elsewhere.
- **Provision** – of a wide range of advocacy and support services to meet victims'/survivors'⁹ immediate and long-term needs. These include specialist emergency accommodation (including

⁵ Women are the majority of victims of multiple incidents of abuse, and of sexual violence. In those cases where men report as victims, the nature, extent and impact is significantly different See Walby, Sylvia and Allen, Jonathan (2004) *Domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey* (London: Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate). Research conducted with male respondents to the Scottish Crime Survey 2000 also found that men were much less likely to have been repeat victims of domestic assault, much less likely to be seriously injured and much less likely to report feeling fearful in their own homes – and a majority of men who had said that they were victims of domestic violence were in fact also perpetrators of violence or said later they had actually never experienced any form of domestic abuse (Scottish Executive Central Research Unit, 2002, *Domestic Abuse Against Men in Scotland. Crime and Criminal Justice Research Findings No. 61.*) Evidence from the United Kingdom Male Helpline for male victims also concurs with this and suggests that a high proportion of reported victims are actually perpetrators.

⁶ States included in the study were: Switzerland, Finland (which included all violence against women), England and Wales, the Netherlands, Spain and the London Borough of Hackney; *Stocktaking study* (2006), *ibid.* (pp.10-11).

⁷ Walby, Sylvia (2004) *The cost of domestic violence* (London: Women and Equality Unit).

⁸ Lucas, Ann (2007) *Prevention of gender violence* (Presentation given at seminar *Prevention of gender violence* organised by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and regions in Brussels November 26th 2007).

⁹ The terms 'victim' and 'survivor' are both used within this report, largely interchangeably. The term 'survivor' is often used alongside the term 'victim' as this recognises that many women living with violence and abuse are not passive victims, and do use a variety of strategies to survive and to protect their children. Many survivors prefer the term as it is more empowering.

refuges/shelters), local and regional helplines, outreach services, intervention centres, counselling services, temporary and long-term accommodation support groups for survivors, and perpetrator programmes.

Many – but not all – of the above will be the responsibility of local and/or regional authorities; for example, the provision of housing and other direct services. Others may fall within the remit of both national and regional/local authorities – for example, the inclusion of the issues of gender inequality and violence against women within school curricula. Awareness-raising campaigns can be undertaken effectively at national, regional and local levels. And - while the development of the legal framework of criminal and civil law is more likely to fall within the remit of national governments – its effective implementation will more often than not be undertaken and monitored at local and regional levels.

Underpinning the above is the need for regional and local strategies, developed within a multi-agency context and in line with each member state's relevant National Action Plans¹⁰. Regional and local strategies should set out specific aims and objectives, which should be monitored against agreed targets.

2.3 Regional variation

All action to be undertaken by local and regional authorities should be seen within the context of victims'/survivors' needs. While these needs do not all fall within the remit of local and regional authorities, they need to be seen as a complete package, as their effectiveness is dependent on this. For example while a local authority may not have jurisdiction over the law or over the operation of the criminal, civil or family courts, effective protection through the law will be a crucial element of the effective management of risk and the safety of women and children who are victims of abuse, and will impact on their other needs, for example where they can live safely and what accommodation they may need. Therefore local authority strategies should address all aspects of victims' needs and should aim to influence the development of new laws and services, as well as work in co-operation with parallel authorities and jurisdictions.

3. What victims/survivors need

Domestic and sexual violence must be seen within the context of coercive control which may permeate the whole of a woman's life. The impact of this is wide-ranging, and will, for example, mean that survivors will often be unable to talk about the abuse they are experiencing, or to ask for the help they need. They may feel unable to trust anyone, and the perpetrator may deliberately isolate them from potential sources of support. It is therefore crucial that – when victims approach support services – they are listened to, believed, and receive an appropriate response. Some of victims' specific needs are detailed below.

3.1 Safety

Safety is always the first consideration. Victims of domestic violence will be living in fear for much of the time – and with good reason. Many of them will be seriously injured or killed by their partners, former partners and in some cases other family members, if they are unable to access appropriate reliable and effective protection at the right time.

In an emergency situation, women are most likely to call the police – and have a right to expect a rapid response. The police should always treat domestic violence as seriously as an assault or threat from a stranger. Their first priority should be the safety and well-being of the victim and her children. This involves:

- protecting everyone present from injury or further harm;
- removing the risk of further violence – ideally by arresting and removing the perpetrator¹¹;
- finding out what has happened – by talking separately to the victim and the perpetrator;
- offering support, reassurance, and arranging medical help if necessary;
- helping the victim to access other agencies.

¹⁰ These may, for example, be aimed at promoting equality between women and men, preventing domestic violence, and/or combating violence against women.

¹¹ In some countries (e.g. Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Spain and Poland), legislation allows the police to take positive action to exclude a perpetrator of violence from the home. This is separate from arrest, and is intended to provide an interim period of safety for the victim and her children – usually between 10 and 14 days. For an overview of the different types of protection orders and various issues surrounding such measures, please see *Final Activity Report, Council of Europe Task Force to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2008, p.40.

Neither the police nor any other agency should take any action which could put the victims in further danger – such as attempting to mediate between the parties - nor should they ever treat any incident as trivial or a waste of their time. It often takes great courage for victims to report abuse and disclose what is happening as they may be in constant fear of reprisals – it is vital to treat survivors with respect at all times.

3.2 Access to legal protection

Victims of domestic and sexual violence and other gender-based violence need access to legal protection with the aim of ensuring their safety both immediately (in an emergency) and in the medium- and long-term. This requires -

- the existence of a comprehensive legislative framework;
- free or low cost legal advice;
- ability to take legal action further where appropriate – including free or low cost representation in court.

Legislation should cover:

- prosecution of the abuser (usually through the criminal law);
- personal protection for the victim (usually through protection under civil legislation);
- where relevant, arrangements for children after separation from the abuser, decisions regarding occupation of the family home, joint finances, etc., (usually within the remit of family law – see 3.6 below).

Women who have experienced violence will be concerned about safety when attending the court: separate waiting areas should always be provided, and screens, video links and other special measures should be offered to survivors. Support while attending court - from an independent advocacy worker, legal adviser or other support worker - should also be provided to victims in both criminal and civil cases.

3.3 Information, advocacy and support

While a strong legal framework, supported by an effective criminal justice response, is essential in combating violence against women, by itself it has only a limited effect. Research in the United Kingdom and elsewhere demonstrates that women who have experienced domestic violence have a variety of short- and long-term support needs¹², in order that they can both escape from the violence and rebuild their lives. Some of this support must be given by specialist domestic and sexual violence services; other complementary services can or should be provided within the statutory sector.

When the violence first starts, women may be bewildered and uncertain whether what they are experiencing is in fact abuse; and – once they have recognised the perpetrator's behaviour as abusive - they may not know where to go or whom they can safely turn to. It is important not only that support services are available, but that they are promoted. Information on how, when and where survivors can access advocacy and support should be freely available and displayed widely; for example, in libraries, health centres and hospitals, on public transport, in community centres and workplaces. Survivors often appreciate such services to be provided via a "one-stop-shop" in which a range of different services share the same premises and can be accessed at the same time¹³, provided adequate safety measures are in place, including safe,

¹² See Abrahams, Hilary (2007) *Supporting women after domestic violence: Loss, trauma and recovery* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers); Logar, Rosa (2006) *Bridging the gaps – from good intentions to good co-operation* (Vienna: WAVE Co-ordination Office); Humphreys, Cathy and Thiara, Ravi (2002) *Routes to safety: Protection issues facing abused women and children and the role of outreach services* (Bristol: Women's Aid); Bossy, Jeanine and Coleman, Stephen (2000) *Womenspeak: Parliamentary domestic violence internet consultation* (Bristol: Women's Aid Federation of England); Parmar, Alpar, Sampson, Alice, and Diamond, Alana (2005) *Tackling domestic violence: Providing advocacy and support to survivors of domestic violence* (London: Home Office Development and Practice Report 34).

¹³ See Hester, M. and Westmarland, N. (2005) *Tackling domestic violence: Effective interventions and approaches* (London: Home Office Research Study 290): <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs05/hors290.pdf>. One such centre in the London Borough of Bromley is staffed by representatives from the police Community Safety Unit, the local Homeless Families Unit, Women's Aid, Victim support and a local solicitor who specialises in family law.; and Croydon's Family Justice Centre (established through a collaboration between the local council, police and primary care NHS trust) includes representatives from more than 30 separate agencies: <http://www.croydon.gov.uk/community/dviolence/fjcentre>. See also the report of a feasibility study undertaken in Northern Ireland: Deloitte MCS Ltd (2006) *Feasibility study on One Stop Shop for domestic violence* NIO Research and statistical series Report No. 16 (Belfast: Criminal Justice System of Northern Ireland):http://www.nio.gov.uk/report_no_16_feasibility_study_on_one_stop_shop_for_domestic_violence.pdf.

confidential access. In addition to face-to-face services, local and regional helplines may be used by survivors both to talk through their options, and to signpost them to appropriate specialist support.

Support and advocacy services for abused women and their children should present a range of options for protection and support, and allow victims to choose which (if any) is right for them at that time. Independent specialist advisors can also help women to develop safety and support plans. The information given will not necessarily be acted on immediately but may be invaluable at a later date. Getting free of abuse is a long process, and survivors may need support at different stages in this process, and are likely to make use of different services and take different actions at various times.

3.4 Housing

Survivors who decide to leave their abusers need safe, secure housing for themselves and their children. In many cases, they will be living with or have lived with the perpetrator of the violence. Even if a woman has never lived with her abuser, he is likely to know where she lives, and therefore it may not be safe for her to remain in her own home.

Women experiencing domestic and sexual violence need to be able to access:

- safe supported emergency accommodation, ideally in a refuge/shelter – in the immediate aftermath of an incident of violence;
- temporary accommodation – until it is safe to return home, or while they wait for permanent accommodation;
- secure permanent accommodation, if it is unsafe to return to their original home.

Emergency and temporary accommodation is ideally provided through a refuge/shelter (see below 4.1.1 and 4.1.2). Some victims of violence may choose to remain in or return to their own homes if additional security measures and support can be provided or if effective legal protection has been put in place¹⁴. Permanent accommodation should be appropriate to the needs of the survivor, should be affordable and secure, and survivors should have some choice of location, so that they are not relocated close to the perpetrator's family or friends.

In some cases, depending on access to effective protection from legal remedies after separation, it may be possible for survivors to stay in or return to their own homes, preferably with the additional support of 'sanctuary schemes' – which include enhanced physical protection of the property coupled with support through ongoing contact with outreach services.

3.5 An income

Victims of domestic and sexual violence may have concerns about how they can support themselves and any children they have with them, once they separate from their abusers. If they are employed, they may no longer be able to continue in their current jobs - perhaps because they have had to move to a different area, or because the abuser is harassing them at their place of work. Some women may have been prevented by their abusers from taking paid work, or from having access to any income or resources of their own. Survivors who have never been allowed control of their own finances or alternatively whose income has greatly reduced since escaping domestic violence may be concerned about how they will manage in future.

State welfare benefits must be available, when needed, for all women escaping domestic and sexual violence. In the longer term, support to enter or return to employment – including retraining, and affordable childcare – will empower survivors and enable them to move on to a life free from abuse.

3.6 Safety and security in family proceedings

Many victims who have children with their abusers may need to use the family courts in order to make arrangements for the children. They may also need to attend court for matters such as legal separation, divorce, and division of shared financial assets (such as a family home).

It is crucial that both attendance at court and its outcome ensure safety for those who have experienced abuse – and their children. For example, when an abuser applies for contact with his children, this should

¹⁴ This should, however, only be offered as one of a range of options, and survivors should be free to reject it if they believe it to be unsafe or otherwise inappropriate.

only be granted after a full investigation (including risk assessment and management), and only when it is agreed that this will be safe, both for the other parent (e.g. during handover) and for the children involved. The children's own wishes should also be taken into account. The survivor will often need to ensure that her current address is not revealed to the perpetrator, so measures must be put in place to ensure confidentiality.

3.7 Support for children of survivors

Domestic violence has an enormous impact on children and young people. The vast majority of children of survivors see or hear the abuse; some of them are directly abused by the same perpetrator; and some young people may themselves also be involved in an abusive relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend. Children can experience both short and long term cognitive, behavioural and emotional effects as a result of witnessing domestic abuse. For example, they may have difficulty sleeping, have nightmares or flashbacks, complain of physical symptoms, have temper tantrums, have problems with school (and perhaps start to truant), or may engage in self-harming behaviour. Children may also feel anxious, depressed, angry, guilty, insecure, alone, frightened, powerless or confused. They may have ambivalent feelings towards both the abuser and the non-abusing parent. Any or all these will compound the difficulties experienced by the parent survivor, and because she herself is dealing with the experience of past or current abuse, she may feel unable to respond adequately to her children's issues.

Specialist support for children and young people who live or have lived with domestic and sexual violence is therefore vital, both immediately and in the long term, to address and alleviate the impact of the abuse. Such support may include one-to-one counselling, support groups, creative and play activities, educational support, help with resettlement, and other support services both within refuge accommodation and in the wider community¹⁵.

3.8 Health and mental health provision

Domestic and sexual violence has an enormous impact on the physical and mental health of survivors¹⁶. Physical effects can include broken bones, bruises, burns, recurrent sexually transmitted infections, chronic pain, gynaecological and other continuing health problems, permanent injury, stillbirth and death. Abuse can also have a devastating and long-term effect on a survivor's mental health, and that of her children; for example, domestic and sexual violence is probably the most prevalent cause of depression in women, and it can also result in self-harm, suicide and post traumatic stress disorder.

Health care professionals (particularly those working in antenatal care, and in mental health services) should always be alert to the signs of abuse, and its direct and indirect impact on the health of the survivor. More survivors use health services than any other agency, and it may be the only service a woman can attend without arousing the suspicion of her abuser. Nonetheless, she may find it hard to disclose the abuse she is experiencing – so it is important that health professionals create a safe and welcoming environment, in which she may feel able to disclose if she wishes to do so, and will receive an appropriate response (including referral to sources of specialist help).

3.9 Choice and respect for diversity

As detailed above, survivors need a range of options and services, free of charge to users, available when and where needed, and responding appropriately to individual needs. Some survivors also have specific and additional needs; for example, disabled women and children, those from minority ethnic communities, migrants, refugees, travellers, very young women or older women, and those with alcohol or substance use issues, or mental health needs. Ideally, separate specialist services should be provided to meet these additional needs but all services should take these needs into account.

¹⁵ While almost all Council of Europe member states claim to offer protection and assistance to children witnessing violence against their mothers – such support is often limited; and outside refuges, specialist services to support children who witness domestic violence are rare. *Stocktaking study (2006)*, *ibid*.

¹⁶ Karki, Freya Ulvestad (2007) "Guidelines for healthcare professionals" Paper presented at Regional Seminar organised by the Council of Europe Directorate general of Human Rights and Legal Affairs in co-operation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Skopje, 11-12th September 2007: *Protection and specialised support by the police, health care professionals and social workers for victims of domestic violence*.

4. The role of local and regional authorities

In relation to the above, regional and/or local authorities will have responsibilities for both support and provision of direct services, and for the underlying infrastructure of policy development and strategic planning. These should be seen within the national legislative and policy framework of each member state's national government.

4.1 Support and provision of direct services

The priority given to violence against women varies considerably and the provision of specialist services is extremely uneven throughout Europe, both between countries and between regions and localities within those countries. Some areas have minimal or no provision, whereas a few places (particularly within cities and other urban areas) are relatively well-served. The quality of services also varies enormously.

Local and regional authorities can help to provide support (by their commissioning procedures) for appropriate specialist service provision for women and children survivors (particularly provided through women's NGOs). Contact details and other information relating to local services should be widely publicised, and local and regional authorities should produce a directory of local violence against women services.

4.1.1 Provision of specialist support for women and children

Specialist support and advocacy for survivors of gender-based violence should include specialist refuge/shelter accommodation¹⁷, outreach services, 24-hour local and regional helplines, support groups, counselling, independent advice and advocacy projects, and specialist services for children and young people who witness or have experienced domestic violence. Within this, specialist service provision for ethnic minority and migrant women and children, disabled women, and lesbians should also be provided. Other services – such as one-to-one counselling, support groups, and drop-in services (including one-stop shops¹⁸) are also valued by many survivors. Specialist services also need to be available to address the needs of women experiencing or at risk of forced marriage or honour-based violence.

Refuge services (shelters) should provide not only accommodation but a package of support that suits women's particular circumstances, and allows their self-determination and empowerment¹⁹. All support services should adhere to agreed national service standards, such as those developed in the United Kingdom by Women's Aid²⁰. The core principles underpinning these standards are:

1. Understanding domestic and sexual violence and its impact.
2. Safety, security and dignity.
3. Diversity and fair access to services.
4. Advocacy and support.
5. Empowerment and participation.
6. Confidentiality.
7. A co-ordinated multi-agency response.
8. Challenging social tolerance of domestic and sexual violence, and holding perpetrators accountable.
9. Accountability and governance – thus ensuring effective management and the provision of a quality service from appropriately skilled staff.

¹⁷ Provision of refuge accommodation should be adequate to the needs of the population and geographically spread: at least 1 family space per 10,000 inhabitants as recommended by the Council of Europe in 1997. Council of Europe *Final report of activities of EG-S-VL including plan of action for combating violence against women* (Strasbourg, June 1997). Council of Europe Task Force to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence (2006); Logar (2006) *ibid.*; *Combating violence against women: minimum standards for support services*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2008; WAVE Co-ordination Office (2004) *Away from violence: Guidelines for setting up and running a women's refuge* (Vienna: WAVE).

¹⁸ See 3.3 above, also the appendix for an example.

¹⁹ WAVE, *Away from violence* (2004), *ibid.*

²⁰ See Women's Aid website (www.womensaid.org.uk) for latest version of *National service standards for domestic and sexual violence* <http://www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic-violence-articles.asp?itemid=1332&itemTitle=National+Service+Standards+for+domestic+and+sexual+violence+services§ion=00010001002200370001§ionTitle=Articles%3A+domestic+violence+services>. These were originally developed by Women's Aid in 2005 through extensive consultation with their national network, and have since been amended further following consultation with other domestic and sexual violence organisations.

All specialist service provision should be gender-specific to meet different needs of men and women. As women are the overwhelming majority of adult victims, services for women survivors must be established that are delivered in women-only space by all-female staff. Women-only services provide space in which women feel able to express their needs: they allow discussion of personal and traumatic experiences in a supportive environment²¹. However, separate services should also be provided for male victims of abuse; in some countries, services for the relatively small number of male victims are provided through generic victim services.

4.1.2 Housing

Domestic violence is a significant cause of homelessness, and local (and possibly regional) authorities must provide a variety of housing options, including appropriate emergency, temporary and permanent accommodation for those unable to remain in their homes due to violence. "Sanctuary schemes"²², in which additional security measures and back-up on-call support are provided for the victim's existing accommodation, also have their place as one option which may be offered – but take-up should always be voluntary, as it is inappropriate in many cases.

4.1.3 Child protection and social welfare

Local and regional authorities also have responsibility for children's services and for child protection. Domestic violence is a child protection issue: some children and young people are directly abused by the same perpetrator, and others will witness the violence. Social care services should work towards early identification and intervention, including the development of specialist children's services. These services should be integrated with other social and welfare services for adults, thus allowing the non-abusing adult to be sign-posted to appropriate specialist services, including advocacy²³, outreach, refuge and support. A system for routinely and safely checking and recording domestic violence should be developed for all new referrals to social welfare services.

4.1.4 Police and criminal justice

The police should respond quickly and effectively, following consistent arrest and charging procedures (which are not dependent on the express consent of the victim). Austrian law²⁴, for example, empowers the police to evict a perpetrator of domestic violence from a joint residence – i.e. it does not require the woman to apply for an order, nor is it dependent on arrest, charge and keeping in custody. It can be applied as a preventive measure when the probability of conviction is low – and acts immediately (rather than being subject to legislative delays.)²⁵ Such action is dependent on the existence of an appropriate and effective legislative framework – which may in some states also be the responsibility of regional jurisdictions.

4.1.5 Other statutory provision

Other statutory provision should also be available where appropriate (e.g. in some cases, regional and local authorities have responsibilities for health care services, including support and service provision for mental health and substance use issues.)

²¹ Hayes, Vivienne (2007) "Will the women's sector be mainstreamed out of existence?" *Safe Issue* 23 Autumn 2007; Women's Resource Centre (2007) *Why women-only? The value and benefits of women, for women services* (London: Women's Resource Centre).

²² As provided by some United Kingdom local authorities.

²³ This term is used in the general sense of representing the interests of victims, and supporting and empowering them to secure their rights, often dealing with a number of issues at one time. See Parmar, Alpa, Sampson, Alice and Diamond, Alana (2005) *Tackling domestic violence: providing advocacy and support to survivors of domestic violence*, London: Home Office Development and Practice Report 34: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs05/dpr34.pdf>

²⁴ Also the law of some other European states – though the exact provisions vary.

²⁵ *Protecting women against violence: Analytical study on the effective implementation of Recommendation Rec(2002)5 on the protection of women against violence in Council of Europe member states*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2007.

4.1.6 Perpetrator programmes

Perpetrators should be held to account for their behaviour and accredited perpetrator re-education programmes can be effective in some cases in reducing abusive behaviour and preventing re-victimisation of other women in the future. These should be organised separately from, but in close co-operation with, independent support services for women victims, and with a core emphasis on women's and children's safety. Perpetrator programmes should challenge violence, hold the perpetrator solely responsible for the abuse, and should be developed in line with established and agreed standards, such as those developed by Respect in the United Kingdom²⁶.

4.1.7 Public awareness and education

Regular public awareness campaigns, challenging the widespread cultural acceptance of violence against women, and emphasising that domestic and sexual violence should not be tolerated, should be developed throughout Europe, using all media including local and regional radio and television. The issue of violence against women as a violation of women's human rights should also be included within the curricula of all schools and colleges, with the aims of promoting respectful relationships, gender equality and non-violent conflict resolution, and linked to health and social education, and anti-bullying campaigns.

4.2 Strategic planning and policy development

4.2.1 Multi-agency partnerships

Multi-agency partnerships and networks should be established on a local and a regional basis, in order to provide a consistent co-ordinated response to the issue of domestic violence and violence against women generally, within a context of community safety. Partnerships should establish agreed principles and ways of working, including information-sharing protocols in order that information can, where appropriate, be shared safely with relevant statutory and NGO agencies, thus enabling more effective protection for survivors²⁷. However, it should always be borne in mind that specialist domestic and sexual violence services must also be available, as a pre-requisite: without this, multi-agency cooperation is meaningless²⁸.

Regional and local authorities should – within this multi-agency framework and in the context of agreed national and regional policies – establish strategies for addressing and combating violence against women. These strategies need to identify specific aims and objectives, and provide criteria against which progress can be monitored. The effectiveness of regional policies, and of local and regional initiatives developed to address the issue of domestic violence, should be evaluated on an ongoing basis.

4.2.2 Data collection

Partnership working should go along with effective procedures for ensuring the systematic collection of accurate statistical data from all relevant agencies, standardised so as to allow comparisons across other regions and member states, and to allow the identification and hence elimination of double-counting²⁹. Currently - while most member states keep police statistics on the sex of the victim and perpetrator and the relationship between them, these may not be linked, so it is often impossible to distinguish incidents of domestic violence from other incidents of violence; and in any case, these figures are in themselves insufficient (as many incidents are not reported to the police); nor can they usually be linked to other data which may be kept by other agencies.

²⁶ Respect Accreditation Standard (2008) includes guidance to services which stresses the needs for safety, assess and manage risk, co-ordinated community response, diversity and equal access to services, promote respectful relationships, accountability, and social change: http://www.respect.uk.net/pages/Principles_and_Standards.

²⁷ See Douglas, Nicola, Lilley, Sarah-Jane, Kooper, Liz, and Diamond, Alana (2004) *Safety and justice: Sharing personal information in the context of domestic violence - An overview* (London: Home Office Development and Practice Report 30): <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/dpr30.pdf>.

²⁸ Logar, R. (2006), *ibid.* (p.4)

²⁹ Currently, in many countries, even basic data such as number of incidents of domestic violence recorded by police are not available. *Analytical study* (2007), *Ibid.*

For an overview of the types of data collected in Council of Europe member states see *Administrative data collection on domestic violence in Council of Europe member states*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2008.

A practical guide on collecting data is: Hall, Tina and Wright, Sam (2003) *Making it count: A practical guide to collecting and managing domestic violence data* (NACRO: Community safety practice briefing): www.nacro.org.uk.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

The following recommendations apply to the local and regional level and to some extent to the national level according to the distribution of responsibilities, which varies from country to country. In most countries there is a need for a national strategy led by central government (through National Action Plans for example) which supports and underpins local and regional responsibilities for planning and service delivery, a national or regional legislative framework that addresses domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence, a national lead on public awareness and education. All regional and local authorities should lead and support a multi-agency response (see 5.1 below). They will also aim (in conjunction with the police) to promote community safety and reduce levels of crime and promote social cohesion within their areas, to support the social, economic and environmental well-being of their communities, and to protect individual human rights. In all cases, they will have responsibilities for social care (including child protection), emergency and temporary housing, and the commissioning of independent specialist service provision for abused women and children from non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

5.1 Multi-agency partnerships

Local, and regional authorities should establish multi-agency co-operation and strategic partnerships at local and regional level (within a national framework) to prioritise the issues of domestic violence and violence against women generally, and to develop a co-ordinated community response. This should include representation from all relevant agencies including police, prosecutors, probation, court services, health services, housing services, child and welfare services, social services, legal and advocacy services, specialist domestic and sexual violence services, and other women's NGOs and victim support services:

- i. Multi-agency partnerships should adopt multi-agency strategies to tackle domestic, sexual and gender-based violence including the development of clear action plans to prioritise the safety of victims and to hold perpetrators accountable.
- ii. All relevant individual statutory and voluntary agencies should develop and implement clear policies and procedures, as service providers and employers, in consultation with other agencies.
- iii. Such strategies should also be incorporated within other associated local or regional strategies, such as those addressing community safety, public protection, social cohesion, health, education, housing etc.
- iv. Regional and local authorities should ensure the establishment of appropriate Strategic Planning Groups as well as support and facilitate local and regional multi-agency domestic violence fora that should meet at least four times a year.
- v. Multi-agency partnerships of statutory and non-statutory agencies should develop joint protocols to ensure victim safety, and for effective working. These should include an information-sharing protocol, that both promotes victim safety and enhances victims' choices and empowerment.
- vi. Appropriate multi-agency training should be developed and delivered to staff working in all the agencies who play a role within a co-ordinated community response. Mechanisms for staff support and practice guidance should also be developed.
- vii. Local, regional and national authorities must establish effective procedures for ensuring the systematic collection of accurate statistical data from all relevant agencies, standardised so as to allow comparisons across other regions and member states. Procedures should be established to allow the anonymous identification across all agencies (and hence eliminate double-counting), and to produce statistical analysis in terms of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, disability, and other relevant factors.
- viii. Clear strategic targets and outcomes should be set and a framework for performance monitoring and evaluation should be established.
- ix. Local and regional authorities responsible for the commissioning or provision of services should identify secure core funding for essential specialist service provision.

5.2 Principles underlying all strategic development and service provision

All strategies and specialist service provision should be underpinned by the following principles³⁰:

- i. All services must demonstrate an understanding of domestic and sexual violence and its impact; i.e. they should recognise and understand the dynamics and impact of domestic and sexual violence, within a broader understanding of violence against women, and an equalities and human rights framework.
- ii. Services must ensure the safety and security of all those using them. Safety must be applied to all aspects of services work and to both service users and employees. Confidentiality is linked to safety both in terms of enabling survivors to disclose and protecting the safety of those delivering and using the service. The location of refuges/shelters or other services should never be revealed for safety reasons.
- iii. Services must promote the empowerment and self determination of survivors, and enable them to take control of their lives³¹.
- iv. All services must respect the diversity of service users and engage positively in anti-discriminatory practice.
- v. All services must respect the confidentiality of survivors. Confidentiality is paramount in the interests of the safety and security, and in order to facilitate survivors in disclosing their experiences. Survivors must be informed of situations in which confidentiality may be limited – e.g. in regard to safeguarding children who may be at risk.
- vi. Local and regional authorities should ensure that all domestic and sexual violence services within their areas are developed in consultation with survivors, to meet survivors' needs, and are accountable to survivors. (While survivor feedback can be difficult at a point of crisis, services should develop appropriate mechanisms for service user feedback and consultation in order to inform service review and development.)
- vii. Local and regional authorities should ensure that all services operate within a multi-agency context, enabling co-operation, collaboration and co-ordinated service delivery.
- viii. All services must challenge the social tolerance of domestic and sexual violence, and violence against women and children generally, and should hold perpetrators accountable. Services should work to promote the clear message that violence against women is unacceptable and preventable.

5.3 Specialist services to address domestic violence against women and children

Local, regional and national authorities should ensure the provision of safe gender-specific services providing specialist support for victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence (in accordance with the principles outlined below):

- i. Local and regional authorities should ensure the provision of a wide range of specialist advocacy and support services for survivors of domestic and sexual violence, and violence against women generally.
- ii. Independent non-statutory women's organisations (NGOs) providing specialist domestic and sexual violence services should be involved in the management and delivery of such services.
- iii. Services should aim to meet the diverse needs of survivors, and should include refuges/shelters for women and children, outreach services (including drop-ins, independent advocates and intervention centres), resettlement services, helplines, and specialist services to meet specific needs.

³⁰ Adapted from Women's Aid (2008) *National service standards for domestic and sexual violence*, *ibid*.

³¹ In a domestic violence relationship the perpetrator is in control therefore it is critical to enable the survivor to regain control.

iv. Services should be available in all areas, and should meet the minimum recommended needs for the population in each region/local area³².

v. All services for women survivors must be specialist services for women and children only and delivered by female staff.³³

vi. Local and regional authorities should ensure that all survivors, regardless of age, disability, gender, race, sexuality or social class, have access to safe support services. Service provision must therefore be accessible and appropriate for socially excluded women, including disabled women, migrants, refugees, and women from black and minority ethnic communities, and available to those who misuse substances (alcohol and/or drugs) or have mental health problems. Services should also be provided for male victims; either through separate specialist services, where there is a specific need, or through signposting to other victim support services.

vii. Interpreters and (for helplines) integral translation services and services which are accessible to deaf people should also be provided.

viii. Independent advocacy and support to promote the needs and rights of all survivors should be provided. Advocacy should be managed and delivered by specialist domestic and sexual violence services that are structurally independent of statutory organisations, but work in partnership with key statutory agencies (criminal justice, health and social welfare, etc.) as well as other relevant organisations.

ix. Specialist support services for children and young people exposed to domestic and sexual violence should be provided both within refuge/shelters, and in the wider community setting.

5.4 Housing

Survivors who decide to leave their abusers need safe, secure housing for themselves and their children:

i. Local, regional and national authorities should ensure the availability of sufficient emergency and temporary accommodation (ideally within a refuge/shelter) for survivors of domestic and sexual violence, with appropriate accompanying specialist support services.

ii. Secure affordable permanent accommodation, in areas of choice, should be made available to women and children escaping from domestic and sexual violence.

iii. If victims of violence choose to remain in or return to their own homes, additional security measures and support should be provided, alongside any existing measures for criminal or civil protection.³⁴

iv. Local authorities should review public housing provisions to ensure that mechanisms are in place to keep victims safe by evicting domestic violence perpetrators, as well as anyone profiting from violence against women.

5.5 Protection and criminal justice

National and regional authorities should ensure that all criminal justice agencies should provide an effective fast response to women experiencing domestic, sexual, and other gender-based violence, within the context of a robust criminal legislative framework:

i. Criminal justice agencies should always treat domestic violence as seriously as an assault or threat from a stranger, and should act at all times to prevent further violence.

³² The Council of Europe recommends at least 1 family place in a refuge per 10, 000 population. Provision should be geographically spread and accessible to women living in rural areas. Outreach and advocacy services should be provided on the basis of one service per 50, 000 population. In addition, specialist sexual violence services should be provided at the levels recommended in *Minimum standards* (2008), *ibid*.

³³ Where services are offered to men, they should be provided from separate premises and with separate staff – either male or female to respond to user preference wherever possible. Women and men also have quite different needs that require different responses and services.

³⁴ This should, however, only be offered as one of a range of options, and survivors should be free to reject it if they believe it to be unsafe or otherwise inappropriate.

- ii. Agencies should never take any action which could put the victims in further danger and appropriate safety and risk management measures must be incorporated at all stages of criminal justice intervention.
- iii. When it appears that a chargeable offence has been committed, police and prosecutors should seek to arrest, remove and charge the alleged perpetrator.
- iv. Police and prosecutors should seek evidence from a variety of sources, (including photographic evidence, medical reports, etc.) rather than relying solely on the statement of the survivor.
- v. Victims must be given appropriate protection, support and independent advocacy throughout the prosecution process and afterwards and be kept fully informed.
- vi. Court provisions should include: specialist court support through advocacy schemes and intervention centres; separate entrances and waiting areas; and special measures for vulnerable or intimidated witnesses to increase victim safety for all women and children giving evidence in court against their abusers. Protection orders and other mechanisms should also be put in place wherever possible for longer term safety.
- vii. Measures should be in place to deal effectively with perpetrators including bail schemes, sentences appropriate to the severity of the offence; alongside these there should be re-education programmes for perpetrators, provided these meet clear safety and good practice criteria ³⁵; however restorative justice schemes should never be used for cases of domestic and sexual violence as this may put victims further at risk.

5.6 The role of civil and family courts

There should be a clear national or regional legislative framework that provides protective measures through civil legislation and which prioritises safety and effective risk management in its implementation:

- i. Under civil legislation, survivors should have access through the civil courts to a broad range of personal protection orders which protect them from all forms of violence, threats and harassment, including physical, psychological, sexual and financial abuse, and for which there are robust mechanism of enforcement by the state.
- ii. Under civil legislation, victims should have access to a broad range of personal protection measures which regulate the occupation of the family home, including permitting them to enter it, or excluding anyone from whom they or their children are at risk of harm, on a temporary or permanent basis.
- iii. Family and civil legislation should ensure that children are protected from the harm of witnessing or experiencing violence. Where there are child protection concerns, not only the safety of the child but also the safety, protection and support of the non-abusing parent should be ensured.
- iv. Victims should be able to access legal aid and advocacy free of charge to enable them to get appropriate advice when using the civil or family courts.
- v. Separate entrances and waiting areas should always be provided, and special measures to increase victim safety should be offered to all women and children applying for protection against their abusers.
- vi. Safety should always be the priority consideration when making any protection orders or when granting court orders regulating contact with, or residence of, the children after parental separation. Procedures for risk assessment and risk management must be implemented rigorously by all court professionals and welfare agencies involved, and outcomes should be monitored.
- vii. Base line data on all types of applications to civil and family courts related to domestic and sexual violence, and their outcomes, should be kept and monitored.

³⁵ See above Respect Accreditation Standard (2008)

5.7 Social care, child protection and youth services

National, regional and local authorities should recognise the close correlation between domestic and sexual violence and child abuse. All those working in social care services and youth services should be aware of the direct and indirect impact of domestic violence on children and young people, including the implications for child protection, and respond appropriately and safely:

- i. A system should be created for identifying and recording all cases where domestic abuse is an issue, whether or not it is the primary reason for referral.
- ii. Social care services and youth services should work in partnership with other agencies to achieve safe and positive outcomes for children and young people who are experiencing or have experienced domestic violence within their families.
- iii. Welfare reports (for example, for the family courts, when an abuser applies for contact with his children) must take into account past and ongoing abuse, both to the child and the other parent, and the children's own wishes.
- iv. Contact between children and abusing parents should only be recommended after a full investigation (including risk assessment), and only when it is agreed that this will be safe, both for the other parent and for the children involved.
- v. Regular audits should be undertaken of the outcomes of child protection cases involving domestic and sexual abuse.

5.8 Education and prevention

Local, regional and national authorities should ensure that all children and young people are exposed to primary prevention work which promotes respectful relationships and non-violence conflict resolution:

- i. Curricula should be developed and delivered in all schools and colleges to promote awareness of gender-based violence, gender inequality and sexual stereotyping, and promote respectful relationships, gender equality and non-violent conflict resolution, in consultation with specialist women's NGOs.
- ii. A "champion" should be identified within each school/college whose role includes specific responsibility for domestic violence issues, and the integration with child protection policies and procedures, and liaison with child and adult protection agencies.
- iii. A programme of training for teachers should be developed to deliver and support this curriculum.
- iv. Appropriate support and guidance on domestic violence issues and violence against women generally should be available for all education staff.
- v. All schools and education services should be encouraged to be alert to the signs and indicators of domestic abuse, and to offer appropriate support both to children/young people affected by abuse, and to their parents.

5.9 Health service provision

All staff working in health services should have awareness of domestic and sexual violence issues, access to information and other resources, and appropriate skills to identify and respond to those experiencing abuse:

- i. Frontline health service staff should be trained to be alert to the signs and indicators of domestic and sexual violence, undertake risk assessments, and offer appropriate support and referral.
- ii. Care pathways should be developed in all healthcare settings, maximising opportunities for routine enquiry and early intervention for those affected by domestic and sexual violence.
- iii. Where domestic or sexual violence is identified, it should be recorded using a secure system which will maintain confidentiality and enable safe information-sharing and effective multi-agency co-ordination.

iv. Data on domestic and sexual violence should also be recorded systematically for monitoring purposes at local and national level.

5.10 Awareness raising and cultural change

Local, regional and national authorities should initiate education and awareness-raising campaigns aimed at challenging domestic and sexual violence, and violence against women generally, as well as promoting awareness of the specialist services available:

i. Local, regional and national authorities should make funds available to undertake high profile awareness raising campaigns challenging the social tolerance of violence against women.

ii. All such campaigns should be developed in consultation with specialist women's NGOs, publicise local, regional and national support services.

iii. Campaigns must hold perpetrators clearly accountable for their abuse, and emphasise that violence against women is preventable.

iv. Information on how, when and where survivors can access local services for advocacy and support should be freely available and displayed widely through posters, contact cards, etc., in a range of public and community settings.

v. Local, regional and national authorities should produce accessible directories of local violence against women services.

APPENDIX

Good practice examples

Example 1: Multi-agency strategy for domestic abuse, Sheffield (United Kingdom)

The first multi-agency strategy was developed in 2000-2003 by the Sheffield Domestic Abuse Forum and was then reviewed and updated for 2004 – 2007. The Forum has a Strategic Planning Group of senior managers of all statutory agencies, with a range of Domestic Abuse Working Groups which report to it including Civil and Criminal Justice, Health, Children and Young People, Specialist Domestic Abuse Services, Council Officers etc.

A specialist Domestic Violence Co-ordinator provides the secretariat for the Forum and the Strategic Planning Group, which also reports to other Strategic Partnerships within Sheffield City Council including crime reduction, community regeneration, etc.

The following were some of the achievements of the first Strategy (2000-2003):

- shared definition of domestic abuse across all agencies,
- establishment of Strategic Planning Groups and link to all other local authority Strategies,
- key targets created and monitored for crime reduction and child protection,
- production of policy statements by all key agencies, including health,
- designated 'champions' in all key agencies,
- training needs analysis and multi-agency training by the Forum for staff from all agencies,
- production of new resource packs and training packs,
- new specialist services funded and developed within different communities across the city,
- research with service users and survivors into the effectiveness of local services.

The second and updated Strategy for 2004 –2007 sets out new key targets as a focus for action planning by individual agencies and joint work across agencies. Detailed action plans have been developed for all agencies and these are themed under the following headings:

- culture change.
- legislation, policy and practice,
- protection and justice,
- support,
- recording, monitoring and reviewing.

The work of the Forum goes from strength to strength and has now incorporated a number of other new developments that are being rolled out in England and Wales including MARACs (Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences³⁶).

Example 2: Domestic violence intervention centres as part of a multi-agency approach in Austria

In Austria, there is a network of specialist women's organisations, including shelters, counselling centres, intervention projects and helplines. Government-funded domestic violence intervention centres were introduced in each of the nine Austrian provinces as an integral part of the Austrian Protection against Violence Bill. This legislation, which closely links legal and social measures, has taken an innovative approach which has become the model for other countries.

As a result of lobbying by and consultation with women's NGOs, the Protection against Violence Bill was passed in 1996, and came into force on May 1st 2007. This allows the police to act immediately in cases where violence has occurred, evicting and then barring the perpetrator from the home for an interim period until a civil restraining order can be made by the courts. Implementation involved a public awareness campaign, and a systematic training programme for all agencies involved.

³⁶ MARACs are a relatively new initiative in the United Kingdom, often co-ordinated by either the police or the local authority, and involving relevant statutory agencies and specialist NGO domestic abuse services coming together to share information on high risk domestic violence cases. The aim is to co-ordinate agencies' responses and hence reduce the risk of further harm to the woman and her children. This development, and the different and sometimes controversial perspectives on it, are currently under evaluation.

Support for the victim was also an integral part of the legislation through the establishment of specialist intervention centres. One of the core tasks of the intervention centres is to assess risks and undertake safety planning with the victims. Female staff also support women in enforcing their claims and accompany them when they appear in court. Women with few or no financial means are helped to obtain welfare support promptly, and are also assisted with re-housing, if necessary.

Working closely with other existing specialist domestic abuse services e.g. shelters, the intervention centres also co-ordinate all interventions within a multi-agency context, and work towards improving the participation of all organisations involved.

Example 3: The Centre Against Violence of Umeå (Sweden)

The Centre Against Violence is the result of an organised co-operation between the municipality of Umeå, Västerbotten County Council, Umeå University, the Swedish Police, the Swedish Board of Prosecution Authority and the National Board of Forensic Medicine. It brings together health care experts from the regional level, and social workers and volunteers from women's shelters from the local level. The different professions all work together in the Centre.

Women who have experienced violence need to go to one place, only instead of many, and they also give their testimony only once, as it is all recorded and secured for future evidence. This avoids the situation where a woman and her children have to relive the trauma every time they meet new staff or approach a new service.

When a woman comes to the Centre Against Violence, she needs to be sure she will get all the help she and her children need. The centre has three areas: one of these is for children, and one for women. The third section is completely separate, and deals with male offenders: men are directed to an entirely different location since it is of the utmost importance that the women and children feel safe when they have taken the step to seek support.

Example 4: *Frauenberatungsstellen*: Women's intervention programmes in Düsseldorf and Gladbeck (Germany)

Both organisations – which are feminist NGOs - run information/advice centres for women, and work with all women, but have slightly different specialisations (see below). Both work strategically with city and state government departments and with other NGOs. The majority of funding since they were founded in 1982, comes from city and regional governments.

Frauenberatungsstelle Düsseldorf provides advice, advocacy, therapeutic support and one-to-one counselling to all women, but focuses particularly on victims of domestic violence and female survivors of childhood sexual abuse. They also run a hotline for female rape victims, offer advice – and also language classes - to migrant women, (in particular those who have been trafficked), and support lesbians and disabled women.

In 2007, they ran 590 'public work' events, i.e. with government departments and the general public; for example, training the Düsseldorf police. They also work with two other organisations on the issues of forced marriage and "honour violence", including discussions and film showings both in schools and with the general public. In addition, they coordinate the "chain of intervention" with all the involved agencies, including regional, multi-regional, national and international women's and victims' groups.

Frauenbratungsstelle Gladbeck provides similar services to the FBS in Düsseldorf but on a smaller scale as the town is smaller. Again, their funding is primarily from the regional government, but they also have some town funding. It started in 1983 and now specialises in violence against women, divorce and separation, poverty, stress and anxiety, eating disorders, working with children. They provide advice, advocacy, therapeutic interventions, and counselling, and have a Turkish worker.

They are also involved in strategic multi-agency work: the office of the regional Women's Information Centre umbrella body was in the Gladbeck FBS offices, and they led this umbrella body until very recently.

At the town level, FBS Gladbeck sits on a number of groups, including Violence in Families and a sub-group of the town's crime and security forum. There is also a *MultiplikatorInnen* (Female Multipliers) Network of representatives from the town government, women's organisations, and religious groups. At a regional level, they are involved in the aforementioned umbrella organisation – 51 members in total. The regional Government has a quarterly roundtable on tackling Violence Against Women, and FBS Gladbeck is also part of an expert working group on improving victim protection.

Both these organisations are, essentially, women's centres, and any woman can go to them for advice. They have a very strong feminist approach, and run frontline services (although not refuges), and are involved in awareness raising, training government officials and strategic work at town and regional level.

Example 5: Multidisciplinary approach for family violence in Belgium

In Antwerp and other regions, a multidisciplinary approach has been developed to cover all kinds of family violence. This approach involves a variety of agencies, including police, social care, women's NGOs, children's services, local authorities, health care, and perpetrators' services. They focus on responding to crisis, ending the violence, victim care, help for children, perpetrator programmes, and keeping the issue of domestic violence on the political and public agenda. In the near future, they will be developing joint protocols for responding to abuse, developing training. Funding is received from national, regional and local governments but is not sufficient to develop the approach further.

Example 6: The Autonomous Women's Centre (AWC) – “Let's bond the community!”, Belgrade (Serbia)

The Autonomous Women's Centre (AWC) in Belgrade has, since 2006, been contributing to the development of a sustainable model of integral social integration (i.e. multi-agency co-operation) in the field of domestic violence, in partnership with representatives of local authorities, centres for social welfare, police, primary health care workers, the prosecutor's offices, courts, schools, and NGOs in 9 municipalities (a total of 850 professionals).

Their main activities include seminars, consultation meetings, public discussions, inter-municipal meetings, exchanging examples of good practice, planning, and lobbying. They were active in lobbying for allocation of budget funds for the prevention and protection services, and for the integration of these activities in the local plans of social protection, and they form coordination bodies for local policies for the prevention of and protection from domestic violence. All the municipalities participated in the Council of Europe campaign “Stop Domestic Violence against Women” by organising various actions and all of them also participated in the campaign “16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women”, which was coordinated by AWC on the national level.