PROTECTION
PROVISION
PREVENTION
A Manifesto to End Domestic Violence

Election 2007 is an important opportunity to secure real change for women experiencing physical, sexual and emotional abuse within intimate relationships.

Why Domestic Violence in Ireland Matters for Election 2007:

• 1 in 5 women in Ireland have experienced domestic violence.

• 1 in 4 perpetrators of sexual violence against adult women are partners or former partners.

• Since 1996, 126 women have been murdered in Ireland. Of all the resolved cases 47% of the women were murdered by a partner or former partner.

• 1 in 8 women surveyed in a Dublin maternity hospital had experienced domestic violence while they were pregnant.

Women’s Aid asked over 110 local groups and frontline domestic violence services what needed to be done locally and nationally to end domestic violence – their responses inform this manifesto.
1. PROTECTION

the justice system and domestic violence

The justice system is the only system that can protect women from violence in the home. International research has demonstrated that an effective response from the justice system can reduce violence against women. Conviction rates are alarmingly low; only between 1% and 6% of domestic violence offenders receive a prison sentence and many women experiencing domestic violence report that the legal system has failed to protect them from their partner’s violence. Throughout the Women’s Aid consultation respondents reported serious concerns about the inconsistent and inadequate response of the legal system to domestic violence crime.

Facts

- Almost 1 in 4 perpetrators of sexual violence against women are partners/former partners yet there has only been 1 conviction under marital rape legislation since its introduction 17 years ago.
- In the Dublin region waiting times for hearings for barring/safety order hearings are 12 weeks.
- Only 29% of women who had experienced severe abuse from a partner or former partner had reported it to An Garda Síochána.
- Married persons can apply for orders under the domestic violence with no restrictions. Unmarried parties often find that they are not covered by the legislation or must remain with the violent party for a certain period before being eligible.

“"The Garda response needs to be improved – giving misinformation to women, not clear on their powers of arrest, women often left waiting weeks to give a statement"
(Support Service)

""When orders are breached we often see the injustice for victims with men getting a fine or caution even on the fifth or sixth breach"
(Women’s Refuge)

Actions

1. Amend the Domestic Violence Act 1996/2002 to allow non-married parties better access to protection and Develop guidelines on the granting of protective orders.
2. Monitor and Evaluate the effectiveness and implementation of An Garda Síochana domestic violence policy on an ongoing basis.
3. Introduce training for the Judiciary and legal personnel on the dynamics and impacts of domestic violence.
4. Develop a coordinated response of the civil and criminal justice system to domestic violence crime.
2. **PROVISION**

**access to services for women experiencing domestic violence**

Women who experience domestic violence may need a range of services including: emergency accommodation, transitional housing, and support services. Frontline services have suffered from neglect of this area and the 5 year funding cap. In the Women’s Aid consultation, 83% of services said that they were not resourced to meet current demands. A lack of local services and difficulties in access for some groups of women such as disabled women, rural women, Black and minority ethnic women were noted.

To counter the under-funding of violence against women services Budget 2007 included a commitment of €4.5 million for the sector. This allocation will not bring funding levels up to date and will be divided between 55 services. Lack of annual funding and inadequate funding levels has hindered the development of both current and new responses to domestic violence. Without commitment to the long term development of services and secure, multi-annual funding, frontline services will not be able to respond to women experiencing domestic violence.

**Facts**

- In 2005, the Women’s Aid National Helpline was unable to answer 2 out of 5 calls due to lack of resources. 25,843 calls were made to the line and only 10,504 could be answered.

- In 2004 the 3 refuges in the Eastern Region refused more than twice as many women as they accommodated. 1,144 women were refused refuge as the refuges were full.

- The single greatest reason why women in Ireland do not leave violent relationships is because they have nowhere to go.

**Actions**

1. **Increase** the Health Services Executive budget for frontline violence against women services by €2.5 million to bring funding levels up to date and to ensure access to services for all women.

2. **Introduce** separate budget lines for violence against women in the 6 relevant government departments and **Develop** a national funding framework to ensure multi-annual funding.

3. **Commit** Health Services Executive resources to ensure that marginalised groups of women such as disabled women and Black and minority ethnic women can access domestic violence services.

“**The nearest refuge or support service is a round trip of 100 miles and there is very little public transport.**

(Community Development Project)"
PREVENTION
domestic violence awareness and research

Domestic violence has been defined as a public health issue as it is preventable. At present, there is no government strategy to prevent violence against women and work in schools is carried out on an ad hoc basis from region to region, with little or no funding.

Quality research is required to inform the development of responses and policy in this area. Key areas are domestic violence and mental health, the health burden of domestic violence and violence against Black and minority ethnic women.

**Facts**

- 1 in 3 women who have experienced domestic abuse have never told anyone.
- A study carried out in Irish schools found that 19% of young women and 34% of young men do not think being forced to have sex is rape.
- In Australia it is estimated that the cost to Australian businesses of domestic violence is $1.5 billion.
- Australian research found that in the State of Victoria domestic violence is the leading contributor to death, disability and illness for women under 45, being responsible for more of the disease burden than many well known risk factors such as high blood pressure, smoking and obesity.

**Actions**

1. **Develop** a 5 year awareness raising strategy to target:
   - women experiencing domestic violence
   - disabled women, Black and minority ethnic women
   - perpetrators of domestic violence
   - the general public
   - statutory systems – e.g. health system, judicial system

2. **Commit** resources for research into violence against women to inform policy and practice. Critical areas are the health burden of domestic violence and violence against Black and minority ethnic women.

3. **Develop** a schools programme addressing domestic violence and healthy relationships through the resourcing of NGOs working on the issue by the Department of Education and Science.

**Thank You**

We would like to thank all the groups who contributed their experiences locally and nationally to the development of this manifesto.

We would definitely witness the effects domestic violence has had on women who attend our project. We have had to give women time off due to physical marks such as black eyes, burst lips etc and they cannot go to classes in this condition as they are embarrassed.

(Community Development Project)