Draft National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence
2022-26
Summary Report
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Overview and Summary of the strategy

This is Ireland’s Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (DSGBV). It recognises that while both men and women can be victims/survivors, women and girls are affected disproportionately, as a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women. As a result, there is an emphasis within the strategy on meeting the needs of women and girls.

The strategy also recognises and acknowledges the need to provide support for all victims/survivors of gender-based violence, (irrespective of any characteristics they might have), the need to reflect the lived experiences and particular victims/survivors, including Migrants, Travellers and Roma, People with Disabilities; LGBTI+ and acknowledging the additional risks factors created by overlapping forms of discrimination.

Detailed consultations and analysis for Third Strategy began in April 2021. A key element of the process of the third strategy development was the establishment of an Executive Group (made up of a representative of the Department of Justice, The National Women’s Council of Ireland, and Safe Ireland respectively).

This group met at least fortnightly as a team working to develop the Third Strategy. The approach to the development of the strategy marked a new way forward to work in a genuine collaborative way between the Department of Justice and civil society organisations. The partnership process between the Department of Justice, with NWC and Safe Ireland in the Executive Committee overseeing the development of the strategy, showed a clear willingness on all sides to develop a strategy that was co-designed and one of co-ownership.

The achievement of the goals, actions and outcomes in the Third Strategy are dependent on all state actors adopting a similar approach. The agreed actions must be taken forward in a process of genuine collaboration, where those most affected are at the centre of the planning, design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of the strategy. There is a shared understanding on the part of all state actors to this strategy that a model of co-design and co-production will be embedded in all actions and that civil society organisations and NGOs will hold the government to account on the realisation of this new way of working.

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The Third Strategy was developed using a theory of change approach, which means that the end goal for the overall strategy is kept clearly in mind – that of zero tolerance in society of DSGBV.

The problem to be tackled, through an integrated approach across all sectors of society, is that DSGBV is an expression of historical unequal power relations resulting in coercive control and sexual violence.

The purpose of the Third Strategy is to deliver an enhanced understanding of the root causes and impacts of DSGBV across society, ensure significant and ongoing reduction in incidence of DSGBV and support changes in behaviour so that Ireland becomes a place where survivors receive integrated quality service supports and justice, with the end goal of zero tolerance in Irish society of DSGBV always in mind.

The strategy itself uses the four Istanbul Pillars of Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Policy Coordination as the levers for change to deliver the goal. Each pillar has its own interventions, outputs and expected outcomes which are set out in detail in the Strategy. Finally, the strategy provides for improved oversight structures to ensure greater clarity around and accountability for delivery of key actions. This includes a shared approach to research and evaluation in relation to DSGBV issues across all relevant Departments and Agencies.
How the strategy was developed

Detailed consultations and analysis for Third Strategy began in April 2021 following the completion of the consultation for the ‘Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence: Audit of Structures’ to avoid any overlap or confusion between the two consultation processes. Key elements of the process of the third strategy development included:

An Executive Group (made up of a representative of the Department of Justice, The National Women’s Council of Ireland, and Safe Ireland respectively) was established. This group met at least fortnightly as a team working to develop the Third Strategy.

Implementation of the Second Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence was reviewed, and progress to date is summarised in the full draft strategy.

One-to-one and group interviews were carried out with members of the Second National DSGBV Strategy Monitoring Committee including Government Departments, State Agencies as well as members of the community and voluntary sector. (A total of 30 such consultations, involving over 50 individuals were completed)

One-to-one interviews were carried out with academics and individuals with specialist expertise in the area, (12 such interviews were completed). 17 online workshops took place, attended by more than 300 individuals registered participants. These included five geographically focused workshops (these workshops were advertised in the national newspapers and on the Department of Justice website) and 12 thematic workshops organised with the support of community and voluntary sector organisations.
Focus of the new strategy

The overall goal of the new strategy is clear – zero tolerance in our society for domestic, sexual and gender based violence.

The new Strategy is structured around the four pillars or goals of the Istanbul Convention which are

- Prevention
- Protection
- Prosecution
- Co-ordinated Policies

The final strategy will be accompanied by a detailed action plan setting out how each if the aims under these pillars will be achieved, who is responsible for them and the timeframe for delivery. This action plan is currently being drafted with the sector so that it is targeted, ambitious and deliverable.
Structures for coordination and delivery

To ensure coherent delivery of services, effective support for implementation of this Strategy and dedicated support for the Minister and Department of Justice in removing blockages and in development of successive National Strategies, we will create the following coordination and delivery structures:

• DSGBV oversight responsibility within the Cabinet Committee on Social Affairs and Equality,

• A High Level Oversight Board, co-chaired by the Secretaries General of the Departments of the Taoiseach and Justice

• A statutory Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence agency under the aegis of the Department of Justice

A key principle Department of Justice in the detailed design phase of the set up for the Agency will be to work with the NGO service providers in a spirit of co-design to ensure that the new structure avoids the issues that limited effectiveness in the past. This will ensure that issues of mutual concern in relation to service delivery standards, evaluation of services and agility in responding to new and emerging needs are addressed in a spirit of collaboration and with the benefit of external academic and other expertise as appropriate. Other aspects of the necessary Government response to DSGBV will continue to be the responsibility of a range of Departments, agencies and bodies.
Zero Tolerance in Society for DSGBV
Pillar 1 - Prevention

The goal of the first pillar is:

Working towards the eradication of the social and cultural norms that underpin and contribute to gender-based violence.

The objectives of this pillar are set out below:

- Enhance the understanding of adults of all forms of DSGBV and educate society to recognise the harm and prevent the human rights abuse that is DSGBV while making clear the pathways to safety and sanctions.
- Within Higher Education enhance understanding of consent and support the implementation of a victim/survivor centred approach to responding to incidents of DSGBV.
- Enhance the understanding of children, and young people of what on what creates gender inequalities and what constitutes gender equality and healthy relationships.
- Enable frontline professionals and support staff to have the necessary analysis, skills, and expertise to identify potential DSGBV dangers and make appropriate preventative interventions and referrals.
- Make spaces safer to reduce opportunities for SV and gender-based violence as well as creating awareness of the harm caused by online abuse, pornography and of prostitution and commercial sexual exploitation.
- Make workplaces spaces safer reducing opportunities for SV and gender-based violence and promote public awareness of existing legislation that is in place.
Pillar 2 - Protection

The goal of the second pillar is:

To protect the safety and meet the support needs of adults and children who have experienced DSGBV.

The objectives of this pillar are set out below:

- Ensuring availability of accessible quality specialist and general DSGBV services across the state so that all people who experience DSGBV have access to integrated services.
- Enabling victims/survivors of DSGBV to live in safe accommodation as a priority.
- Ensuring a victim/survivor centred approach through the creation of clear integrated local pathways (building on the mapping of the victim/survivor journey work) for adults and child (female and male) victims/survivors to access the DV and SV information, services and supports they need.
- Ensuring women in prostitution have access to safety, health care, support and exit routes.
- Recognising the child as an individual victim/survivor impacted by DSGBV.
Pillar 3 - Prosecution

The goal of the third pillar is:

To support effective law enforcement and judicial proceedings that enable victims/survivors access the justice they deserve.

The objectives of this pillar are set out below:

- Ensuring professionals/front line workers involved in DSGBV work in the courts, and in the justice, legal and policing systems have the skills and analysis of DSGBV to equip them with the necessary expertise they require.
- Working to reduce attrition rates and enhance access to the legal system for individuals experiencing DSGBV
- Reducing demand for prostitution.
- Strengthening the policing and prosecution of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence
- Ensuring perpetrators of DSGBV are held to account and prevented from victimising/re-victimising.
Pillar 4 – Policy Co-ordination

The goal of the fourth pillar is:

Support effective policy coordination and implementation at both national and local level.

The objectives of this pillar are set out below:

• Creating a central focal point for DSGBV Strategy, services, Implementation & Monitoring with regional interagency structures to oversee and delivery services on the ground.
• Ensuring an effective, robust research and evaluation strategy
• Developing enhanced coordination of data collection strategies
• Progressing the development of comprehensive legislation and policies (to cover all forms of DSGBV)
• Ensuring issues of policy intersectionality are highlighted and prioritised
• Ensuring there is a priority focus on DSGBV services being accessible to everyone who needs them
• Recognising the voice of the victim/survivor both adults and children and young people) and provide an opportunity for their voices to be heard at different levels
• Developing standardised funding structures and processes across governmental departments to allow for adequate funding for the sector and avoid duplication of funding
Public Consultation

The Department of Justice is now seeking the views of members of the public on the objectives and framework for action set out in this draft strategy.

We are asking those with an interest in this area of work, and in particular those who have experienced domestic, sexual and gender based violence, to fill out a short survey to give us your views.

We expect the survey will take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

To take part in this survey, please visit

https://justiceiresurveys.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0BXal9JMGUXK6i