

22<sup>nd</sup> September 2021

## Accommodation Review

We have read through the 'Somewhere Safe' paper written by Abigail Flynn and Dr. Louise Crowley, January 2020. The research is excellent and very useful however clearly focusing on women and children given how silent it is regarding men, dads and their families.

We note and agree with their recommendation on page 11, "Scope of the study: A note on Men as Victims of Domestic Violence". "The needs of men as victims of domestic abuse is a topic that should be strongly considered for future research".

The research is silent on the views, data, impact, status, on the effects for the male victim in terms of safety in the form of refuge, shelter, safe house, temporary arrangements, transitioning from emergency safety to more long term.

Dr. Crowley recognises from the outset that this area should be under pinned by a Human Rights approach, in line with **Section 42 of our Irish Human Rights legislation** were we have a duty in law to deliver equality of service. (Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty – FAQ - IHREC - Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission).

Worth noting also that there is no reference to gender in definition of a victim in our **Victims of Crime Act 2017** victims legislation, (<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2017/act/28/enacted/en/html>).

Nor is there reference to gender in **Article 14 European convention on Human Rights** which also requires non-discrimination. <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/human-rights-act/article-14-protection-discrimination>

We also would like to add the importance of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**, given the importance of article 19, the right to be protected from all forms of harm.

We have read the draft version of the document circulated by Ross "*Review of the provision of Accommodation for Victims Domestic Violence July 2021*" ahead of our meeting tomorrow Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021, sadly we have huge concerns regarding the gaps in regard to service delivery for the thousands of victims who are male. The document does not address the services needed to keep our communities safe. Vulnerable victims including children would remain at risk of abuse and neglect.

Best practise demands that domestic violence service provision is viewed through a human rights lens. As stakeholders we have a responsibility, legally and morally to provide supports for all victims. Everyone has the human right to live a life free of violence, the right to shelter and the right to life, knowing that domestic violence can be fatal. Noting the children are all too often embroiled in domestic violence, they too have a right to be free from harm.

Of particular concern are points made on page 20 which could be interpreted as men being classified as having additional vulnerabilities? Men are not a particular group given that 1 in 3 victims are male \*(ONS UK 2020). Reading on page 22, the last bullet point “Men” was also alarming to read. We are also very concerned to read the definition of “a Family Place” on page 23. ***This is a unit that can accommodate one woman and a number of children.***

Men’s Aid has been amplifying the issue of IPV for vulnerable males in particular for the last 21 months, through intense and difficult times for thousands of families.

Sadly, here today in 2021, Ireland has yet to deliver any provision of domestic violence emergency accommodation for victims who are male. Thus leaving children in danger.

When a woman arrives to a refuge she is assigned a key worker, a childcare support worker and an outreach worker, all who will discuss with her what she needs and assess whether she needs medical attention. Similar to women’s services, we need to start to provide same for victims and children escaping a female perpetrator.

We are eager to work in a collaborative manner with all stakeholders to start addressing this in order to nurture safe communities.

Men’s Aid’s clients are 18 years to 88 years old, all religions, all races, all classes and walks of life across our community.

We are currently supporting almost 30 men every day through Helpline, Community Response Hubs, Court accompaniment and counselling support service. We expect to support approx. 8,000 contacts to our service in 2021.

Our service is victim centric, supporting vulnerable male victims and their families including:

- Heterosexual men
- The 18 year old ‘adult’ in his school uniform
- The older men (Recent UK research shows 1 million people or 1 in 5 people over 65+ are victims of abuse each year. With financial abuse most common, physical and emotional follow). We have an aging population.
- The LGBTQI person
- The Traveller men
- The suicidal men
- The homeless men
- The men with addictions
- The men with mental health challenges
- The parents with abusive adult children
- The Roma men
- The men from ethnic minority groups (We supported 25 nationalities in Q1, 2021).
- The men with disabilities
- The isolated farmers

## Recommendations:

- Men's Aid to be invited to be included in the Stakeholder Advisory Group as listed on page 42.
- Research – The last national research that we quote is “COSC 2005”. 1 in 3 victims are male. 1 in 4 women, 1 in 7 men will experience an abusive relationship in their lifetime, only 5% of men report abuse to Gardai.

Quoting 16 year old research does not inform us on the current, real prevalence across our communities. Further research needs to be commissioned to provide recent up to date, valuable insights, necessary to better understand the needs of particular groups, including children, ethnic minority, traveller men and women, people with disabilities, people with mental health issues, especially the link between suicide and domestic abuse.

- Specific strategy to give confidence and encourage the boys and men to start reporting abuse, to come forward with disclosures.
- Funding – To grow our **Community Response Hubs** nationally.
- The next 5 year strategy 2022 – 2027 to be victim focused, in line with all legislation regarding Human Rights, Victims of Crime, Domestic Abuse & Coercive Control legislation.
- Perpetrator programme and support for female abusers.

## Conclusion:

The current “Accommodation Review” report offers little if anything to assist the vulnerable male victim as he journey's to safety, which leaves only options for court protective orders, AGS protective assessment if a crime is reported. He literally has nowhere to go.

The invisibility of help and support must be challenged and changed in order to safe guard our family, friends and community. Our work to be gender inclusive and victim centric.

As long as Government / stakeholders label the issue of domestic abuse as “gendered issue”, or “disproportionately affecting women”, the narrative will not help to create real affective change, representation matters, language really does matters.

Violence is violence, a victim is a victim. Thousands of victims will continue to be silenced, perpetrators not held accountable and thousands of children left at risk if the current review was to be implemented.



Minister Helen McEntee,

*“there needs to be a greater focus on male victims of domestic violence.*

*She pointed to figures stating up to one in seven men have been a victim of domestic violence but only 5 per cent of official reports come from men.*

*“It’s an issue that’s more prevalent against women and families. But it’s very much there with men as well. The approach needs to be victim centric. It can’t just be about men or women.*

*“The more we talk about it, the more we encourage men to come forward.”*

21<sup>st</sup> April 2021. Irish Times.

