



**SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON GENDER EQUALITY
IN RELATION TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE CITIZENS ASSEMBLY
ON GENDER EQUALITY. MARCH 2022.**

A: INTRODUCTION:

Men's Aid welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Joint Committee on Gender Equality as part of the Committee's examination of the recommendations made by the Citizen's Assembly on Gender Equality.

Men's Aid is Ireland's national dedicated domestic abuse support service for men and their children / families experiencing domestic violence/coercive control. Men's Aid has a victim centric and provides a national service underpinned by a victim centric and human rights proofed approach aimed at ensuring all male victims receive the required support.

In 2020 our domestic abuse frontline service supported 5,500 contacts and in 2021 we supported a 42% increase in contacts to almost 8,000 contacts, including 25 nationalities. Sadly we are seeing the increase continuing in 2022, supporting 19 nationalities and 853 contacts in February 2022. The emerging situation in terms of the escalation of DSGBV and associated crimes shines a spot light on how DSGBV services meet the needs of the victim.

B: OUR OBSERVATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS:

"The Citizens Assembly on Gender Equality set out 45 recommendations; the committee would appreciate your specific response to the recommendation/s that is most relevant to your own work/ the work of your organisation, including an outline of how those recommendations could be implemented".

I note that on page 82 'although domestic, sexual and gender-based violence was not included in the Oireachtas resolution, the Chair, in consultation with the EAG, decided early on in the process that it should be considered by the Assembly, given its importance as a gender equality issue'.

This is very welcomed - of note it is well established that there is scarcity of research capturing true figures representing the reality for victims/survivors (impacted by DSGBV) across all spectrums including the Female, Male, LGBTI+ and other hard to reach communities and victims.

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Men's Aid Ireland shall in this submission focus on three particular areas including -

- a) The absence of a proper data/research/analysis system on which an evidence based approach may assist in the delivery of key recommendations in the Citizens Assembly report on Gender Equality.
- b) In regard to combatting crimes associated with DSGBV and the commitment to assisting the victim in terms of support to report and delivering on Governments commitment to supporting the victim on their journey.
- c) In the area of the provision of safe accommodation and necessary supporting wrap around services for all victims. The need to consider the specific needs of hard-to-reach victims of DSGBV including the man and other gender victims, children, traveller, Roma and other ethnic groups, those with disabilities, those with mental health, substance mis-use or other health issues.

I will refer in particular to **chapters 10 and 11** and recommendations **37- 45** inclusive.

- The recommendation from Men's Aid is for a National Domestic Violence prevalence study to be undertaken as a priority as part of the data gathering recommendation of the Citizens Assembly Report number **43**. This we believe will assist significantly in the delivery of recommendations number **37** and **38** both of which are strong in their support for the victim/survivor of DSGBV.
- We respectfully request that Chapter 11, **recommendation 43** might be further expanded to include research to be undertaken by the Department of Justice to explore and examine the situation regarding the apparent reluctance of the male victim to access criminal justice system * (Please see foot note below).
- A further recommendation in terms of recommendation **40** includes the need for "further research is necessary to understand the needs of particular groups that may have additional vulnerabilities and/or specific needs – children, members of ethnic minority communities: including Traveller and Roma, people with disabilities, those experiencing mental health, and substance misuse issues and men" (Tusla February 2022 review of provision of accommodation for victims of domestic violence).

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With this in mind Men's Aid support all the recommendations as set out in chapter 10 and chapter 11. It is visible how the Citizens Assembly Report compliments the new Five Year DSGBV National Strategy (draft).

Finally, Men's Aid Ireland would like to acknowledge and compliment each and every member on the Citizens Assembly for their well thought through, articulated and supported recommendations.

Yours sincerely,

Kathrina Bentley

Kathrina Bentley

22nd March 2022.

Foot Note:

*We note that the Citizens Assembly Report references the fact that there are "significant data deficits in the area". Indeed, Watson and Parson's 2005 tell us that 6% of men suffer severe domestic violence, 1 in 3 suffer some form of domestic abuse and only 5% of men report to Garda Siochana leaving 95% of abuse unreported.

In more recent times we can refer to some current data in the area of domestic violence and indeed accompanying National developments. Domestic Violence is a high volume and a high impact crime. In 2021 the Garda Siochana responded to 48,400 Domestic violence incidents. This is an increase of 10% on 2020. There were 4,250 criminal charges for breaches of Domestic Violence Act orders in 2021 an increase of 6% on 2020. In the corresponding years Men's Aid witnessed almost 8,000 contacts to its service for support, an increase of 42% on 2020.

Operating parallel to this emerging situation in terms of the escalation of DSGBV and associated crimes is the needs of the Victim. The Government established a "Support to Report" initiative along with The National Victims charter to assist the victim as they endeavour to journey through a crime which has impacted them. The Protective needs for the Victim and commitment to meet minimum standards for victims are enshrined in law, in particular the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2015 along with the Victims directive EU 2012/29 have reference. Domestic Violence can encompass a wide range of **crimes** including – Physical assaults/Controlling or Coercive behaviours / Forced marriage/Sexual Assaults/Rape /Cruelty to Children/ Cruelty to Animals / Economic Crimes / Technological crimes / Emotional and Psychological abuse / Verbal abuse /Spiritual abuse and Honour Based abuse.

Conneely / O' Shea / Dempsey Report 2019 – Regarding Dolphin House / DV orders, in which under 8% of male victims make applications for domestic violence orders. At the core of each of these crimes is a desire on the part of the perpetrator to exercise power and control over the victim.

ENDS. (22nd March 2022).

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