

News Aid

October 2000

Issue 4

Newsletter of the
Northern Ireland
Women's Aid
Federation



The Common Selection Scheme and Domestic violence

By Maurice Rooney (NI HE)

The Housing Executive and housing associations in Northern Ireland are currently preparing for the introduction of a Common Selection Scheme on 1st November 2000.

In addition to more relaxed rules governing who might be considered for housing, as well as more defined allocation criteria regarding the matching of individual need to the most appropriate accommodation, the most fundamental changes centre on how an applicants housing need will be assessed.

Under the existing Scheme, applicants who have been the victim of domestic violence and accepted as statutory homeless, are placed in a single priority group which does not address the differential

need among such applicants. The new Common Selection Scheme is a more comprehensive points based system and while the new Scheme does not include a specific category for victims of domestic violence, such applicants are likely to accumulate a substantial level of points, under the various points categories of the New Scheme.

If an applicant applies to the Housing Executive indicating domestic violence, they will invariably be assessed in accordance with the terms of the Housing (N.I.) Order 1988, that is homelessness legislation and, if accepted as statutory homeless, will be awarded a fixed and substantial level of points in recognition of this

In addition to their Full Duty Applicant points however, such applicants may also be entitled to further points depending upon their particular personal circumstances in relation to housing conditions such as, sharing, overcrowding, lack of amenities and also under a range of social factors in the Health and Social Well Being aspect of the Scheme.

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The views expressed in this newsletter should not necessarily be taken as Women's Aid policy.

If you would like to contribute to Newsaid, please let us know your views, ideas, comments or queries by email, fax or post to Charlene at NIWAF.

Children's needs, coping strategies and understanding of woman abuse

What do children and young people think and feel about domestic violence? This study, conducted by the Universities of Warwick, Bristol, North London and Durham, set out to discover how children and young people understand domestic violence and how those who have lived with it cope with, and make sense of, their experiences.

The research found that:

- ◆ Children's understanding of the term 'domestic violence' revealed much confusion.
- ◆ Boys are more likely to excuse the actions of the perpetrator, particularly older boys.
- ◆ The vast majority of children at secondary school, and just over half at primary age, want to learn in school about what to do about domestic violence and how to stop it, as well as to understand why it happens.
- ◆ Children report a wide variety of responses to living with domestic violence but distress and disruption feature prominently. Some children find

comfort with siblings, but many are alone with their fear.

- ◆ Children who live with domestic violence use a wide range of coping strategies. These range from keeping themselves safe and trying to protect their mothers and siblings, to obtaining help and intervening directly in violent situations.

- A shared experience reported by those who have witnessed domestic violence is displacement and loss of the familiar. For some, this is compounded by recurrent moves.

- With the exception of refuge workers, children who had lived with domestic violence said most other professionals either ignored or disbelieved them. Children want to be listened to, to be taken seriously and to be involved in decisions about their lives. They want support, understanding and reassurance, to be in safety with their mothers and to have their own belongings around them.

E • S • R • C

Research Published April 2000

ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

For Further Information or to get a copy of the Research briefing contact Charlene at NIWAF.

The Family Homes and Domestic Violence Order (NI) 1998

Tell us how it's working

The Office of Law Reform needs professionals working with domestic violence in Northern Ireland to tell it how the Family Homes and Domestic Violence Order is working.

When the Order came into effect on 29th March 1999, it had an immediate impact on all of those working in the *family law* system. It was introduced as an important plank in the drive for effective best practice laws and procedures to fight domestic violence in Northern Ireland. But just over one year on, how is it working?

The Office of Law Reform's job is not just to bring in new law - it is also to make sure that those new laws are functioning as they are *meant* to. That is why the Office is *carrying out* a review of the Family Homes and Domestic Violence Order. In deciding how best to carry out this review, the Office lawyers were strongly influenced by the valuable feedback received so far from those who replied to the original consultation, or who attended the training days held on the new law throughout Northern Ireland in October and November 1998. Whether criticising or praising, that feedback gave information which could not otherwise have been accessed.

That is why the Office has decided to begin the review by sending out a questionnaire to all those professionals working with the

new legislation in order to find out how the legislation is working out on the ground. The replies will be the raw material which will be used to decide what the important issues are, as well as whether, and what, amending legislation might be needed to make sure the legislation works as well possible.

Judena Goldring, Director of Law Reform, said: "We really need everyone's help for this project to work. The professionals on the ground are very well placed to tell us how the legislation is doing in practice."

You can obtain more information from the Office of Law Reform on (026) 9054 2900 or emailing claire.archbold@dfpni.gov.uk.

The Day to Count

Many thanks to all our local groups for participating in the national day count of domestic violence in the UK organised by Betsy Stanko and the Metropolitan Police.

The results will be posted out to you when finalised and you can use them at training events or for press releases.

NIWAF News...

The NIWAF Annual Report 1999-2000 is at print at the moment—but here is a wee taster of some of the regional statistics...

A little bit of stats....

Over one third of the women who stayed in refuges last year spent at least one month there. Another 10% (more than 100 families) stayed for more than 5 months.

While living in a refuge for such a long period of time may be difficult for some families, there can also be advantages. Many women appreciate the extended support from workers and volunteers. Children continue to benefit from talking, playing and getting involved in a variety of recreational and educational activities.

Women's Aid believes in self-help and that women who have experienced domestic violence are often best at supporting and understanding each other. Women who stay in refuges for long periods of time frequently

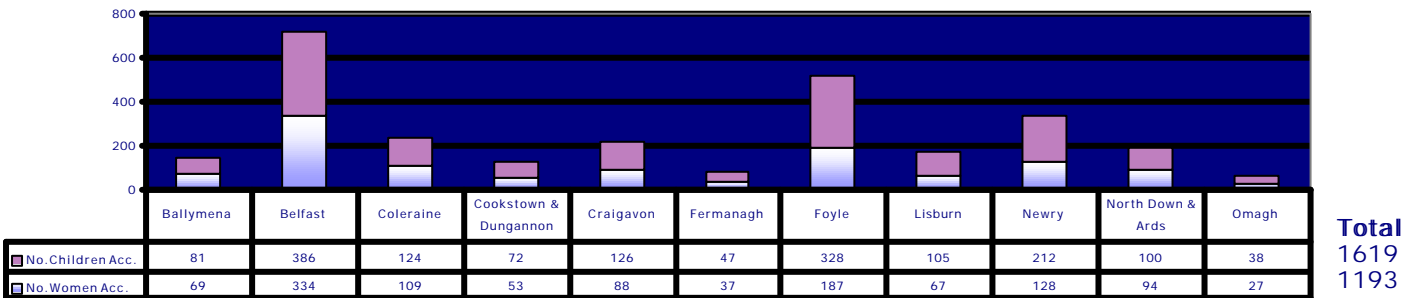
become involved in groupwork, training and personal development opportunities.

The length of time families spend in refuges must be taken into account in the discussions and plans about Supporting People. Funding to continue to provide safe and supportive accommodation for abused women must be identified and secured without a loss of provision or confidence.

One of the main reasons why families have to spend so long in refuges is the high demand on social housing in some parts of Northern Ireland. With changes to the housing selection scheme due to be implemented later in 2000, it will be important to monitor how women intimidated out of their homes by abusive partners are supported to rebuild their lives in houses of their own.

AGM postponed

The NIWAF AGM and Conference which usually takes place around the first weekend of October has been postponed. You will be informed of the new date when finalised.



How many women and children stayed in refuges?

78% of women who stayed in refuge say that their abuser was their husband, boyfriend or live in partner and 11% say their abuser was another family member

In 1999/2000
there were 25,547 requests
for support, advice or
information.

NIWAF's Training Calendar for regional workers from Sept–Dec 2000

September

- 7th Regional Childworkers Meeting
- 19th Stratagem Seminar
- 21st Making A Difference

October

- 2nd, 9th, 27th, 30th New Worker Training
- 3rd Depression Seminar
- 12th Equality For All
- 13th Health & Safety in Playroom
- 16th Self Harm Seminar
- 20th Deaf Awareness
- 25th Cultural Diversity Information Day
- 28th Equality For All

November

- 2nd Girl Power
- 7th Suicide Seminar
- 11th Children Under Stress
- 8th Using Interpreters
- 9th Child Protection
- 13th, 20th New Worker Training
- 14th Health & Safety
- 15th Children Under Stress
- 21st Regional Trainers Meeting
- 25th Child Protection
- 27th Supporting Distressed Women
- 30th Human Rights Information Seminar

December

- 5th Women & Alcohol Seminar
- 7th Training the Trainers in Children Under Stress
- 9th Making A Difference
- 11th The "F" Word and Women's Aid

For further information on any of these training events—please contact Fiona or Maureen at NIWAF or visit our website www.niwaf.org.

And there's more... Love Should'nt Hurt...

Foyle Women's Aid has launched a new set of posters and leaflets advertising their services and youth programme. These can be obtained from;

Pathways
24 Pump Street
Derry
BT48 6JG
Tel: 028 71280060

The helpline.....

Carol Burns a Temporary Helpline Worker has left after many years of volunteering and working for Women's Aid. We would like to thank her for the great work she has done throughout the years.

We would also like to welcome two new workers to the Helpline. Sonya Lutton is now employed as a full-time Helpline Worker and Seanagh Turner as part-time Helpline worker.

Congratulations Sandra



Our congratulations goes to Sandra Corrigan NIWAF's Young Person's Development Project who recently got married to Steve McNamee. It was a great day out for all the staff..... and we won't mention the aftershocks or pogo stick!!!

Dear Sisters,



Changing attitudes in our Youth

Dear sisters,

For the past two years we at North Down & Ards women's Aid have been working with 15 year old pupils at a number of high schools in the Ards Peninsular Area. The response from both pupils and teaching staff has been extremely positive and they have encouraged us to return to the schools and continue the work.

The staff accept the need for pupils to learn about healthy relationships and so they have incorporated sessions on domestic abuse into the PSE (Personal Social Education) Programme. Pupils are informed of how abusive relationships affect those involved, emotionally, physically, verbally etc.

They are also encouraged to think about the effect these relationships have on children.

As many of the students are at the age when they themselves are entering relationships, the sessions also address issues such as jealousy, possessiveness, power and control within their own experiences.

This work within schools has been very successful and we would hope that it can continue as preventative work is vital in our goal to eliminate domestic violence.

*Mandy Cowan
(North Down & Ards
Women's Aid)*

Please send your letters or contributions to Newsaid at NIWAF

*The Common selection Scheme
continued from page 1*

The Scheme will also be instrumental in identifying the support needs of such applicants which will enable the Executive in turn to determine how such needs might be met in allocating properties. In this respect information gathered by the Housing Executive will enable better targeting of resources and will enable people not only to take up but sustain tenancies.

It is the Executive's firm view that this more comprehensive and sensitive means of assessment, will effectively embrace the needs of all applicants to social housing including those who might under the current arrangements apply separately to housing associations for specialised accommodation providing care and / or support.

The Common Selection Scheme will represent a single gateway into social housing in Northern Ireland, whether owned and managed by the Housing Executive or any of the housing associations operating in Northern Ireland.

The new system will provide a 'one stop shop' for applicants and will further promote equitable treatment by using common criteria to assess the housing needs of all applicants, including women and children suffering domestic violence. Such families will of course continue to be entitled to their rights under homeless legislation but the New Scheme, will it is hoped enable them to have their overall needs assessed in a more sensitive and comprehensive manner than perhaps might be the case under the existing arrangements.

News an' stuff from other organisations...

**COMIC
RELIEF**

GET CONNECTED: A new funding initiative for domestic violence projects.

The aim of this project is to give internet access to groups whose prime focus is work on domestic violence. The programme will provide such groups with a PC, modem and training (if required) for internet use—everything needed to get online. This will be a nationwide programme as Comic Relief aims to spread its money throughout the whole of the UK. Although the project aims to get projects online and cover preliminary training, it will not be able to fund ongoing costs, such as telephone charges.

The closing date for completed applications is the 27th October 2000. For an application pack and further details of the initiative please send an A4 SAE with 27p postage to the address below. Please mark your SAE with the reference "DV".

Please note: You are welcome to apply even if you are currently in receipt or in the process of applying for a Comic Relief Grant or if you already have some computer equipment.

**UK Grants Team
Comic Relief
5th Floor
89 Albert Embankment
London SE1 7TP**

If you have any news or information that you would like share, please send it to Charlene at NIWAF. The next edition of Newsaid will be printed in December.



Approaches to working with Family Violence & Child Focused Practice

A 2-day workshop 28th & 29th November at the Armagh Theatre Centre.

The workshops will be of interest to Social Workers, Counsellors, Psychologists, Therapist, Psychiatrists and families.

Fee

2 days = £110

1 day £60

For more information contact:

Barnardos
Diamond House Family Resource Centre
3 The Square
Moy
Dungannon
Tel: 028 87789681

Music, Music Therapy & Trauma

**A one day conference in association with Music Department, University of Ulster
Saturday 25th November 2000**



Dalriada Complex university of Ulster, Jordanstown

Guest speakers include

Dr Mercedes Pavlicevic, Johannesburg, South Africa

Marie Smyth, Costs of the Troubles Study, Belfast

Music Therapy Team, Pavarotti Music Centre, Bosnia

This unique event offers different perspectives on music and trauma. There will be an emphasis on music therapy in several countries showing a rang of approaches. As well as plenary sessions a choice of presentations and practical workshop seesions will be available. It will be of interest to anyone with an interest in a creative response to trauma in the community, from professional and voluntary sectors. For more info contact : Julie Sutton: Music Dept, University of Ulster at Jordanstown, Newtownabbey, Belfast or email ray&julie@hunt-sutton.freeserve.co.uk



need help
now!

Information on contraception and sexual health is now available 24 hours a day via the Family Planning Associations new customer focused website. The new site deals with some of the most common 'panics' around contraception. It also provides more detailed information on sexual health. Professionals can keep up to date with regular news items, details of fpa training courses, press releases and campaigns. The website address is

www.fpa.org.uk

Contact us:

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Web: www.niwaf.org

News an' stuff from other organisations...

Courses & Conferences

Health & Happiness— A Woman's right ' Are you healthy, fit happy and balanced? Or stressed, tired, under pressure, worn out? Topics: How to identify depression, a survivors story, image & self-confidence , living a healthy lifestyle- Join us at the Belfast Boat Club 7th October Fee ; £7.50 available from Margaret Goulburn. More info tel: 02890 878625

Include Youth Annual Conference

'Between a rock & and a hard place—young people, social exclusion and social control' 18-19 October Slieve Russell Hotel Cavan Fee: £120—£185. More info tel: Marin McCurry 028 90244436

Domestic Violence: Enough is Enough!

An international conference organised by the Metropolitan Police Service to examine the human, financial and resource implications of domestic violence. 29-30 October 2000. Fee: £585. More info tel: 020 79405555 or email: reg@event.org.com

PlayBoard Conference '2020 vision—Child's Play in a Changing World' 9-10 November, Belfast. The theme is to explore the crucial role that play has in healthy children's development and to highlight the need for children to have access to their local communities through quality play. More info tel: 028 90803380

Responses to male violence against women and children—a decade of developing effective inter-agency action 16-17 November at Leeds Town Hall.

Fee: Voluntary Sector 1 day £95+ vat or both days £150+ vat

Non-Vol Sector £125 + vat one day or both days £200+vat

More info tel: 01709 828181 or

email: whiterose.conferences@virgin.net

Child Contact and Domestic Violence—Making a difference, Breaking the Cycle 22nd November 2000 at the Europa Hotel, Belfast. This full day seminar organised by SLS is for the judiciary, legal and social work professionals in Northern Ireland to further develop strategies to tackle the problem of contact in violent families. Fee : from £50 -£100. More info tel: 028 90335224

**Women's Aid - Working to end violence in the home
24 hour domestic violence helpline 028 90 33188**