



The National Office for the Prevention of
Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence

Cosc Strategy Statement

2008 - 2010

October, 2008

What is Cosc?

Cosc is the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence. Cosc is an Irish word and means “to stop” or “to prevent”. Cosc was established in June 2007 with the key responsibility to ensure the delivery of a well co-ordinated "whole of Government" response to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. The work of Cosc covers issues relating to domestic and sexual violence against women and men, including older people in the community.

The office is an executive office of the Department of Justice and Law Reform. It is situated within the Department but has been given a remit to address domestic, sexual and gender-based violence from a cross-government perspective rather than solely from that of the justice sector. Cosc's role covers co-ordination across the justice, health, housing, education, family support and community sector. Cosc's role to co-ordinate the actions across the 'whole of government', includes close interaction with non-governmental organisations supported by Government funds.

The primary and immediate function of Cosc is to lead and co-ordinate the preparation of the first National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence.

Cosc has been given specific tasks as follows:

- Working with Government Departments, Agencies, and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in the sector to ensure the delivery of a well co-ordinated service to support victims of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.
- Developing and delivering awareness raising strategies to ensure that victims are aware of the availability of services in their locality and that society is made aware of the extent and impact of behaviours and crimes of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.
- Developing strategies, standards for service delivery and training programmes to address the issue of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence in line with best international practice.
- Putting in place strategically based positive actions which work with perpetrators of domestic violence.
- Providing leadership and support to the National Steering Committee on Violence Against Women (NSC) and its sub-committees.
- Continuing to implement the recommendations of the 1997 Task Force Report on Violence against Women.
- Working to establish a body of research to inform future policy directions for domestic, sexual and gender-based violence
- Representing Ireland at international fora which have a remit in relation to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.
- Proposing legislative/policy change.

Mission

We work to improve the delivery of a well co-ordinated effective response to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence in Ireland. We do this by facilitating action for the prevention of these crimes, the protection of victims and the provision of services for those affected.

What are Cosc's Values?

The following values inform all of Cosc's activities.

Co-operation

We realise that in order to make progress co-operation with and between our stakeholders is critically important. Working in close co-operation with those organisations is key to successfully carrying out Cosc's functions.

Trust

We seek to develop the high level of trust we share with the organisations with which we interact.

Learning

Cosc recognises the experience of the organisations with which we interact. Cosc respects that experience and will work to build on it.

Fairness

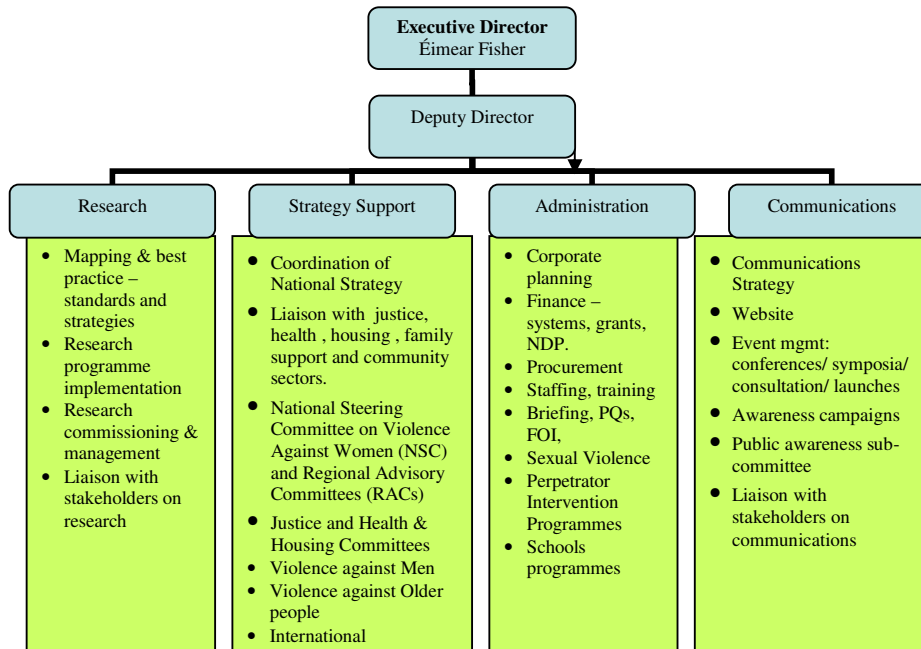
We endeavour to be fair in all our dealings with external organisations, both Governmental and non-Governmental.

Service

We respond to all queries and correspondence from stakeholders in the shortest possible timeframe.

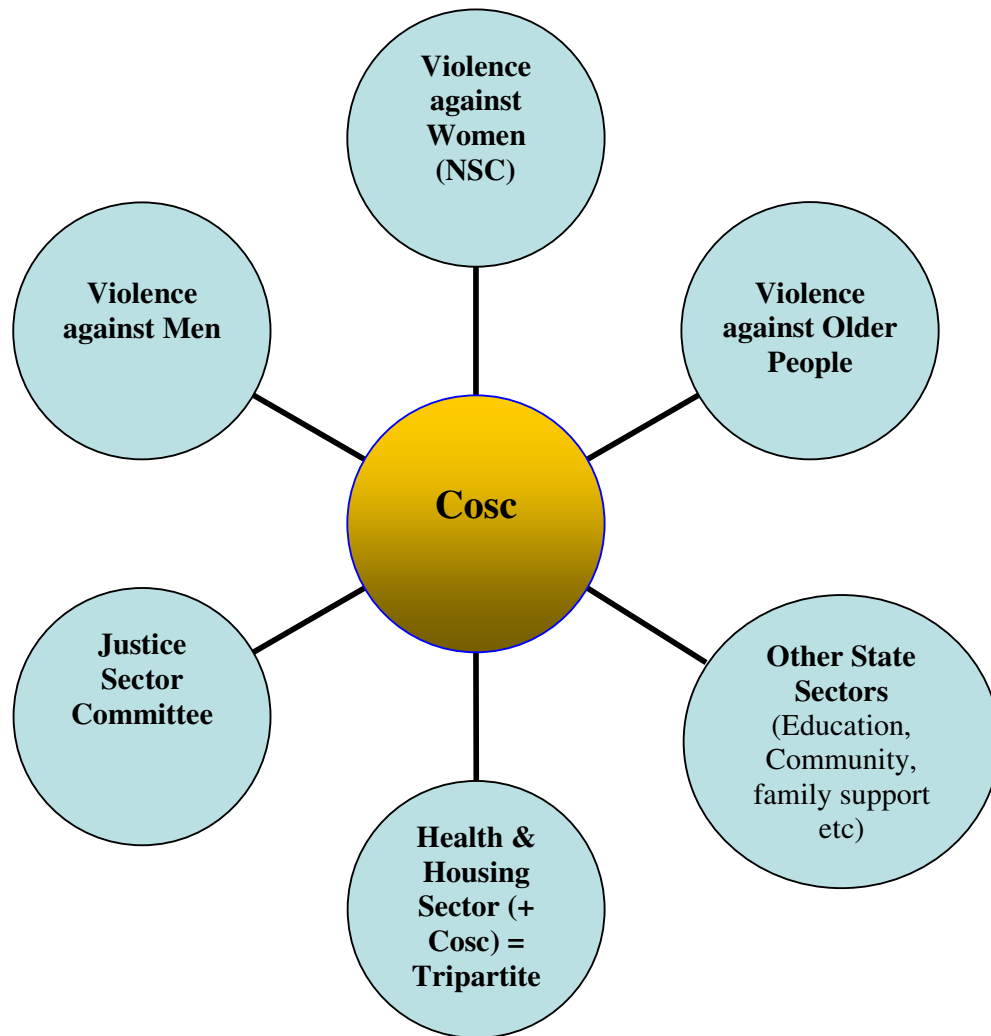
How does Cosc do its work?

Cosc is comprised of a number of units dealing with Administration, Communications, Research and Strategy Support.



The Executive Director reports to the Secretary General of the Department of Justice and Law Reform and to the Minister for Justice and Law Reform.

Cosc carries out its functions principally through interaction with interested and relevant organisations (stakeholders) either on a one-to-one basis or through a small number of committees. Cosc has identified almost 30 State organisations and over 100 non-governmental organisations with some function relevant to preventing and responding to domestic and sexual violence. The office strives to ensure a partnership approach and to work with stakeholders in a simple structure which minimises the number of committees driving effectiveness through communication and clear action. The current national consultative structure is:



Discussions are held under this structure. Cosc drives the follow-up action arising from these discussions with a view to improving co-ordination and leading exploration of feasibility of new interventions.

Interagency committees also meet on a regional basis and link with the national structure.

Cosc links with the Office of the Minister for Children in relation to domestic and sexual violence involving children.

Cosc also links with the office for Older People and with the HSE in relation to domestic and sexual violence involving older people.

Cosc's Strategic Priorities

Strategic priority 1: Development and implementation of a National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence

Strategic Priority 2: Enhance co-ordination of policies and services on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.

Strategic Priority 3: Provide a foundation for effective strategies to address domestic, sexual and gender-based violence based on sound empirical evidence.

Strategic priority 4: Development and implementation of strategically-based actions which work with perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence.

Strategic Priority 5: Increase awareness of the nature and extent of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence as well as of the services available to those experiencing these sorts of violence.

Strategic priority 1: Development and implementation of a National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence

Objective 1

Prepare a National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based violence that has the support of all the stakeholders in the sector for approval by Government.

It is intended that this Strategy will cover preventive and responsive action; that it will set out national policy to address these crimes and that it will include time-bound targeted actions to implement the strategic policy. It is currently envisaged that the Strategy will cover the period 2010-2014 with scope for a mid-term review. The preparation schedule for the National Strategy is attached at Appendix 1.

Objective 2

Drive implementation of the National Strategy in co-operation of Government and Non-Government Organisations.

Actions

- Monitor and review the implementation of National Strategy.
- Facilitate resolution of barriers to implementation of National Strategy as appropriate.

Strategic Priority 2: Enhance co-ordination of policies and services on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.

Objective 3

Facilitate the development of co-ordinated action across the sector

Actions

- Strengthen, facilitate and support the structures for interagency collaboration work.
- Lead and drive effective follow-up work to enhance co-ordination in order to ensure successful preventive and response actions.
- Ensure that domestic, sexual and gender-based violence is acknowledged in Government Strategies
- Facilitate and encourage the sharing of information of policies, procedures, guidelines etc.

Strategic Priority 3: Provide a foundation for effective strategies to address domestic, sexual and gender-based violence based on sound empirical evidence

Objective 4

Develop and implement a Cosc Research Strategy.

It is intended that this strategy will support and assist the development of policy through reliance on authoritative evidence. The strategy is developed in partnership with key stakeholders identifying areas requiring research and developing and implementing policy based on that research.

Actions

- Work with stakeholders to identify research projects to support the development of evidence-based policies and strategies.
- Develop and implement an annual Research Programme.
- Monitor and review implementation of the programme.
- Lead and drive the collation and analysis of high level data to assist the identification of trends in the incidence of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence to inform policy and practice development
- Develop relationships with research units in other organisations to ensure maximum co-ordination on research and policy development.

Strategic priority 4: Development and implementation of strategically-based actions which work with perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence

Objective 5

Ensure the availability of Perpetrator Intervention Programmes that meet or exceed best international practice.

Actions

- Engage expert to map current domestic violence perpetrator intervention programmes, to report on best practice, to assess need for expansion and to make recommendations on improving coverage of programmes in accordance with best international practice.
- Source, disseminate and facilitate consideration of best practice actions that work with perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence.
- Develop and arrange for the implementation of strategies which work with perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence.
- Fund domestic violence perpetrator intervention programmes and monitor the effectiveness of the programmes on an ongoing basis.

Strategic Priority 5: Increase awareness of the nature and extent of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence as well as of the services available to those experiencing these sorts of violence.

Objective 6

Develop and implement a Cosc Communications Strategy.

Actions:

- Develop a two-year Communications Strategy
- Engage a communications company to support the implementation of the Communications Strategy
- Monitor and review the implementation of the strategy including evaluating the effectiveness of awareness raising campaigns
- Develop relationships with other stakeholders to ensure maximum co-ordination and effectiveness of public awareness projects.

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Appendix 1

National Strategy Preparation Schedule

Action	Date
Call for submissions	April 2008
Conference to inform Strategy	May 2008
Report of Conference	July 2008
Summarising of submissions	Sept 2008
Consultations with non-State stakeholders	Q4 2008
Report of consultations	Q1 2009
Consultations with State Stakeholders on specific actions	Q1-2 2009
First draft of Strategy	Q2 2009
Further consultations with stakeholders	Q3 2009
Finalisation of draft	Q4 2009
Submission to Minister and Government for approval	Q1 2010
Printing of Strategy	Q1 2010
Launch of Strategy	Q1 2010