

Tusla – Child and Family Agency

Current housing issues in the context of protecting and caring for victims of Domestic Violence

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Overview of Presentation

- Background to Tusla – Child and Family Agency role
- Context – Domestic Sexual and Gender Based Violence Services nationally
- Overview of Domestic Violence services in Dublin
- Challenges of homeless situation for service users of DV services
- Issues and recommendations



Functions of Tusla - Child and Family Agency

The specific functions of the Child and Family Agency, as set out in the legislation, can be summarised as follows:

- Support and promote the development, welfare and protection of children, including the provision of care and protection for children in circumstances where their parents have not been able to, or are unlikely to, provide the care that a child needs.
- Support and encourage the effective functioning of families, to include the provision of preventative family support services aimed at promoting the welfare of children; care and protection for victims of domestic, sexual or gender-based violence, whether in the context of the family or otherwise; and services relating to the psychological welfare of children and their families.



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Overview of Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Programme

- Under legislation establishing the Child and Family Agency, the Agency has been designated with statutory responsibility for services to victims of Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV).
- Tusla – Child and Family Agency funds almost **60** specialist Domestic Violence (DV) & Sexual Violence (SV) services
 - **42** Domestic Violence services including 20 crisis refuges
 - **16** Sexual Violences/Rape Crisis (RCC) services



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Tusla Resources Allocated for DSGBV in 2015

- Over **€19.m** in funding dedicated to DV and SV services - **€15m** to DV services in 2015
- This includes €2.5m former Section 10 Homeless funding which transferred to Tusla from DECLG in 2015
- €5.3m DV Services Dublin Region
- €4.6m Emergency Refuge Accommodation and DV Support Services - Dublin



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Accommodation-based Domestic Violence Services

- 4 Crisis Refuges in Dublin Region
 - Aoibhneas Women and Children’s Refuge, Coolock
 - Viva House Refuge, Blanchardstown (Sonas)
 - Saoirse Refuge, Tallaght
 - Rathmines Women’s Refuge (Tusla – Child and Family Agency)
- Supported Domestic Violence Housing (Sonas)

Other Specialist DV Services

- Community based DV support services
 - D12 Domestic Violence
 - Inchicore Outreach Service
 - Women's Aid Support Services (including Helpline)
 - Sonas Visiting Support and Community-based Support Services

Dublin Region Emergency DV Accommodation

- 33 refuge spaces for women and their families (up to 80 children)



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Examples of Accommodation Challenges*

- Experience of Service A
 - 8 women discharged to homeless accommodation over 2014
 - 4 women Q1 2015
- Q1 2015, numbers of women/families turned away because of lack of space increased to almost 80% of those presenting (48% turned away in 2014)

**Note – the data here should be treated as indicative - there is not full and complete data available for 2015 validated by Tusla*

Refuge space availability*

Service B

- Only 10% of women/families presenting were accommodated in Q1 2015 (17% accommodated in Q1 2014)

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Typical Discharge Pattern Q1 2015*

- 10%-17% to homeless services (1.6% of women with children discharged to homeless services) (up 10% on Q1 2014)
- 47 % to family/friends because of homeless issues
- 26% returned home to abusive partner
- 10% found private rented accommodation
- Some referrals to other DV services

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Example of changes in length of stay in refuge (average stay)*

- **2011 - 16 days**
- **2012 - 19 days**
- **2013 - 20 days**
- **2014 - 21 days**
- **2015 - 24 days (Q1)**

**Note – the data here should be treated as indicative - there is not full and complete data available for 2015 validated by Tusla*

Issues identified by service providers

- The process for getting service users onto housing lists and advocating for the needs of women and children has become more difficult and resource-intensive for staff
- Procedures and responses to DV issues vary across the four Dublin Local Authorities
- Two refuges reported that for the first time this year clients who could not be accommodated in the refuge were offered sleeping bags because there was no other accommodation – in one case the client had a small child

Issues identified by service providers

- Intensive direct contact with ‘move-on’ services is perceived as the only way to achieve positive outcomes for clients – the change to direct assessment for access to supported housing post-refuge is seen as positive by other services.

Issues for Tusla

- Tusla has statutory responsibilities for care and protection of victims of DV – and resources are directed at responses that meet victims' needs. Professional and intensive support and advocacy services are in place.
- The accommodation challenges faced by service users impact on their ability to benefit from the supports provided (e.g. Parenting support)



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Issues for Tusla

- The current accommodation crisis presents challenges for Tusla around service planning, commissioning and development of Key Performance Indicators for DV refuges.
- Tusla is mindful that the experience of discharging service users to temporary homeless accommodation, to cars or to return to violent and abusive partners is difficult for DV services and particularly their frontline staff.

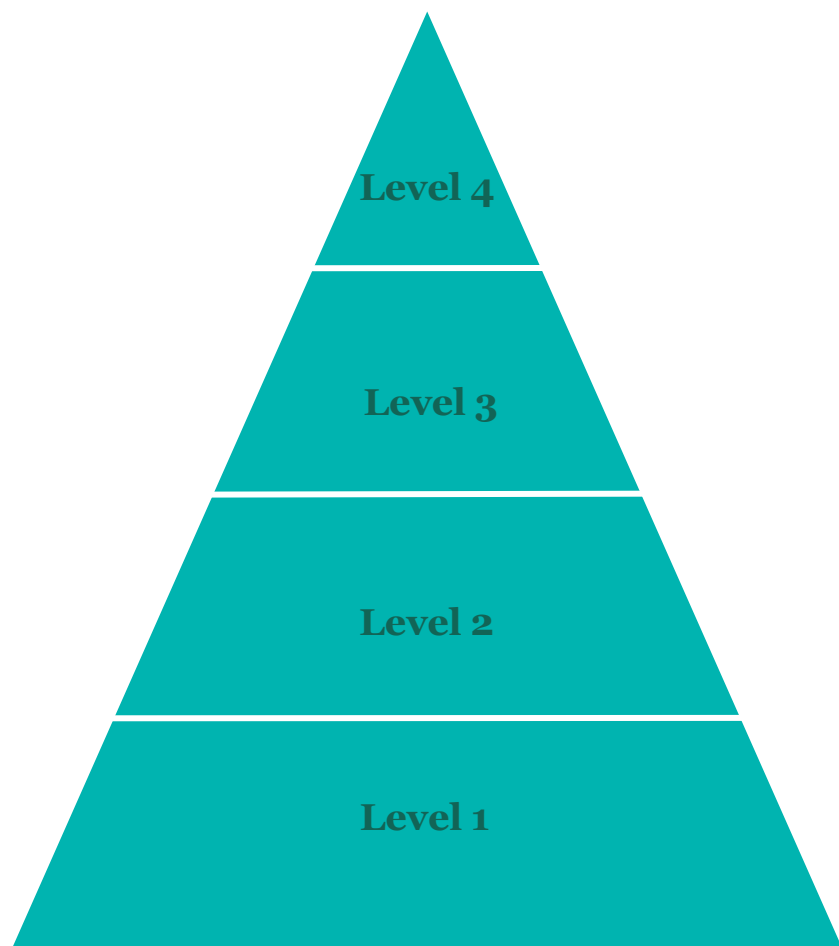
Developments in Tusla Commissioning

- Commissioning Framework being developed through which Tusla identifies how to align resources with the activities and services that will achieve best outcomes currently and into the future – for children, families and individuals (commissioning mechanisms for funding of external services from 2016 onwards)



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Tusla – Hardiker Definitions to Support Commissioning



Acute Targeted: Represents support to families or individual children and young people where the family structure has broken down temporarily or permanently. Interventions at this level are typically long term requiring highly skilled assessment and planning.

Targeted: Represents support to families or individual children and young people where there are chronic or serious needs e.g. Springboard, NYP, YAP etc.

Early Intervention: Represents services to children who are vulnerable or who have some additional needs. Services at Level 2 are characterized by referral, full parental consent and negotiation. Work is typically task centered, usually short term with the objective of restoring personal and social functioning e.g. parenting support, therapeutic services, teen counselling services etc.

Prevention: Refers to engagement with L1 universal services -identification of local needs and service planning for children and families (e.g. through CYPSC & FRCs); early identification of children and families at risk; leveraging support of L1 partners to provide targeted services e.g. potential to deliver L2 and L3 services in L1 settings

Source of definition: adapted from HSE 2013 National Survey of Funding to agencies providing children and family services

Note:

These definitions are being applied to support commissioning priorities and service categorisation.

- More detailed complementary definitions are being applied across Tusla
- Other models being applied to identify children and family needs.

Conclusions

- Tusla recognises the challenges for Housing Authorities in the current situation and that there are many vulnerable groups requiring additional supports.



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Conclusions

- Shared understanding of the role of Domestic Violence Emergency Refuge Accommodation – these services do not meet the needs of all women and children who require accommodation because of DV.
- Consistent understanding of the complexities of domestic violence, appropriate responses from housing authorities to safety and trauma issues in allocating accommodation.
- Guidance for Housing Authorities is a recommendation of the National Strategy on Domestic Sexual and Gender Based Violence
- Focus required on perpetrators' responsibilities.

Thank you



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