

[Script for phone calls to TDs]

It is best to ring the TDs' offices in Leinster House. See contact details below. It is simply a matter of ringing the number and asking for your relevant elected official. If you prefer to contact your TD at the local advice clinic you can do that too.

Leinster House Address

You can send letters to all TDs to Dáil Éireann, Leinster House, Dublin 2.

Leinster House Main Switch Board

Dáil Éireann LoCall: 1890 337 889

(outside of Dublin only)

from within Dublin: (01) 618-3000

Oireachtas Website: www.irlgov.ie

"Hello, my name is *insert your name*, may I speak with Deputy *insert elected official's name*? (Whether you are speaking to a secretary or the elected official, the following script will work)

I am from the constituency and I am calling to express my concern at the lack of focus on violence against women in *A Vision for Change*. While I welcome this policy, I am concerned that it does not fully explore the link between mental health and gender-based violence against women.

A statutory body, the Women's Health Council, published a report in November 2007 entitled *Violence Against Women & Health*, which outlines how gender-based violence has huge consequences on a person's mental health. Psychological consequences of violence against women, it says, include depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, psychosis, phobias, substance abuse, sleep and psychosomatic disorders, eating disorders, self-harm and suicide. For example, in a national survey carried out in 1995 by Women's Aid, *Making the Links*, 65% of women who experienced violence in the home reported that they had also suffered from depression.

The Women's Health Council makes a number of recommendations:

- All health professionals be trained on violence against women so that they can recognise it and deal with it more effectively within their services or refer women appropriately to other services.
- The screening of women presenting at mental health services for experiences of gender-based violence.
- Data collection mechanisms within the health sector be improved so that the extent of the problem and its impact on health services can be documented and budget allocations amended accordingly.
- A national systematic approach by the health sector in providing its own services, as well as linking with other statutory and non-statutory service providers.

It expresses the hope that the new government office, COSC - Irish Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, will bring provide leadership in the development of an integrated response to include a health sector plan for violence against women.

It also advises that the Department of Health and Children and the HSE should develop a nationwide strategy so that women receive appropriate responses when disclosing abuse.

I would be grateful for an answer to the following questions:

What measures are planned, or have been adopted, by your office to address the link between violence against women and mental ill health, and to implement the WHC's recommendations?

Will additional funding and support be granted to expert counselling and support organisations in the community and voluntary sector for women who experience violence?

I would be grateful for a comprehensive response as this a matter that greatly concerns me.