



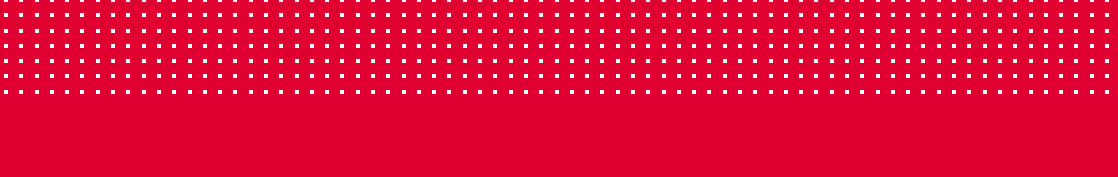
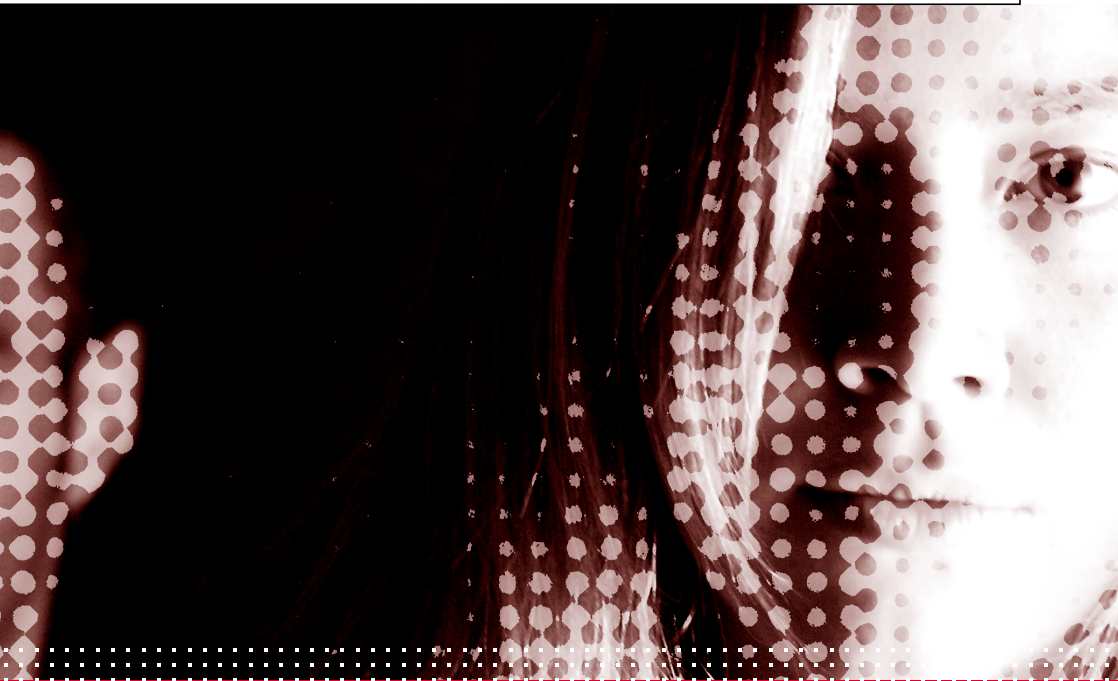
JUSTIS- OG POLITIDEPARTEMENTET

*Ministry of Justice and the Police*

Action Plan

# Domestic violence

(2004–2007)





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# Foreword

Domestic violence is unacceptable! For this reason, the first Bondevik government submitted an action plan entitled “Violence against Women” in 1999. The implementation of that plan produced several results: domestic violence has become more visible; the support services have been improved, and we have gained experience and learnt a great deal from the measures that were implemented. Expertise has been built up in the police service, in the legal system, in the health and social welfare services and in the women’s shelters which assist people who have been exposed to violence. We will develop and build on this expertise. In order to ensure continuity in the work that started five years ago, the present Government has drawn up a new action plan to combat domestic violence.

We will pave the way for a better organization of the services, thereby ensuring that wise use is made of the knowledge when it is needed. Through constructive cooperation between sectors and disciplines and between the public services and NGOs, we will make a concerted effort to ensure that help and protection are available to victims of violence and threats of violence in close relationships.

The experiences that have been passed on to us by victims of violence, by children who have been witnesses to violence and by perpetrators of violence have taught us a great deal. Attitudes to the use of violence between people who are close to each other must be changed. Barriers which stop people from seeking help must be pulled down.

A person who is exposed to violence and threats of violence must not feel ashamed and afraid to tell someone and ask for help. The perpetrator must dare to admit that he has a problem and must dare to seek help. This will require willingness to help and solution-oriented and cooperation-oriented attitudes in the police service, legal system and support services.

The approach of this action plan to help and protection is to take victims of violence and their experiences seriously. The measures in the plan aim to support the victims’ own efforts to get out of the situation they are in and to make it possible for them to take responsibility for their own lives and for the lives of any children they may have. Moreover, the perpetrators must make it their responsibility to change a violent pattern of behaviour. Society must pave the way for such developments by reacting clearly and providing help and treatment.

This plan of action to combat domestic violence has been prepared jointly by the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice and the Police and the Ministry of Social Affairs under the direction of State Secretary Rita Sletner of the Ministry of Justice and the Police.

*Odd Einar Dørum  
Minister of Justice and the Police*

# Introduction

Domestic violence against women and children is a serious and to some extent hidden social problem, which means that many people live lives of humiliation and indignity. All use of violence is prohibited under Norwegian law. It is an infringement of basic human rights. Violence and abuse of women and children in close relationships is particularly serious and has far-reaching consequences for the victim. It is damaging to health, self-respect, security, quality of life and to the victims' ability to and possibility of having control of their own lives.

The Government's view is clear. Domestic violence is unacceptable. It must be prevented, combated and alleviated through measures to help and protect the victims and through treatment and prosecution of the perpetrators.

In 1999, the first Bondevik government submitted a plan of action under the title "Violence against Women". When it was implemented, the plan produced results, but it also revealed weaknesses and the need for greater effort.

To ensure continuity of this work, the present Government has drawn up a new action plan on domestic violence. The plan has four general objectives:

- a. To improve the level of cooperation and knowledge in the support services
- b. To increase awareness of domestic violence and prevent it through changes in attitude
- c. To give victims of domestic violence adequate help, protection and support
- d. To break down the spiral of violence by strengthening treatment programmes for perpetrators

Domestic violence takes many forms. Violence can be physical, psychological and sexual in character. Many people are also threatened with violence. In most cases, domestic violence is perpetrated by men and mainly against women and children. However, there are also female perpetrators. Violence exists in many types of relationships: in heterosexual marriages/partnerships, in lesbian and homosexual partnerships/relationships, in relationships where parents are violent towards children and in relationships where children abuse parents and siblings.

When the perpetration of violence occurs in close relationships, the consequences are

more extensive and more profound than the visible effects of the harm caused by the physical act of violence itself. This type of violence is often practised behind closed doors and the persons involved have a meaningful role in each other's lives. They have a history together, mutual obligations and dependence. A person who is the victim of violence often blames her/himself and feels ashamed and guilty. Sometimes the violence is visible, but many people are still unwilling to interfere in what they regard as private relationships. This helps to keep the abuse hidden from the people who can help.

Many of the women who are victims of violence, by a present or past partner, have children. Some children are affected directly by violence and are the victims of criminal child abuse. Many more are affected indirectly and grow up in homes where violence is practised. The ordeals children suffer in such situations are not directly punishable, but they must be characterized as neglect in cases where the children are witnesses to violence against their mother. The effects of violence on children varies, depending on a number of factors, such as the child's age, the duration and extent of the violence and, not least, the relation of the perpetrator to the victim. Children who live in families where they witness violence against people they love and are close to are entitled to society's protection. They must, for example, be given help to change a situation in which their parents are unable to fulfil their obligations as caregivers.

If the pattern of violence is to be broken, steps must be taken to stop the perpetrator. However, it is the responsibility of the perpetrator to stop using violence. Society has a responsibility to help to prevent the development of patterns of violence, to offer the perpetrator help and treatment, and to prevent the violence being repeated and being inherited by the children.

A comprehensive description of the challenges we are facing in the work of combating violence against women and children can be found in *St.meld. nr. 29 (2002-2003) Om familien –forpliktende samliv og foreldreskap* (Report No. 29 to the Storting (2002-2003) "The Obligations of Family Life and Parenthood") and in *NOU 2003: 31 Retten til et liv uten vold* (Official Norwegian Report 2003:13 "The Right to a Life without Violence"). These reports give a detailed presentation of the scope, causes and consequences of violence against women and children in close relationships. (These reports are only available in Norwegian.)

## Delimitations

The Government is in the process of preparing a plan to combat sexual and physical abuse of children. A special plan will also be drawn up to prevent the exploitation of minors in pornography and the sex trade. The Government's strategic plan for children's and young people's mental health (2003) contains a number of measures which also apply to children who are victims of domestic violence.

The measures targeting children in this action plan are therefore limited to the violence to which children are indirectly exposed, as witnesses to violence between the persons closest to them, during a phase of their lives when security and proper care in the home are essential to their development.

Domestic violence also includes forced marriage and female genital mutilation. Measures to prevent these forms of violence have been initiated through separate programmes and are therefore not included in this plan.

At the request of the Ministry of Justice and the Police, a report was drawn up on the standing of the injured party in criminal cases (Anne Robberstad "*Kontradiksjon og verdighet 2002*"). This report is part of the Government's work to strengthen the standing of the injured party in criminal proceedings and in particular that of victims of crimes of violence and sexual abuse. The proposals in Ms Robberstad's report



will not be discussed in this action plan, but they will be followed up by a broad-based committee that will be appointed to consider the questions she has raised about criminal proceedings. A working group will also be set up to consider a number of practical aspects of criminal procedures which can help to lessen the burden for the injured party.

Many acts of violence are committed under the influence of alcohol or other intoxicating substances. Research shows that the effects of alcohol and other substances can lower barriers to the use of violence and that violence can be more serious and uncontrolled under the influence of these substances. The Government's Plan of Action on Drug and Alcohol-related Problems (2003-2005) contains a number of measures to reduce the social and health-related harm caused by drugs and alcohol. For a more detailed description of strategies to combat these problems, readers are therefore referred to that document, which is available in English.

## Organizational framework for the work of combating domestic violence

To ensure the best possible coherence and uniformity in the efforts of the support services, the Government deems it important to establish a good organizational framework. The current framework will be reviewed in order to determine whether it is good enough to sustain the services available to victims and perpetrators of violence. The Government is of the opinion that a great deal can be achieved with a better organization and tighter cooperative structures at all levels: nationally, regionally and locally.

The responsibility for coordinating the Government's efforts to combat domestic violence lies with the Ministry of Justice and the Police. However, there are a number of issues involved which cannot be solved with the use of criminal policy instruments alone. An effective fight against violence requires close cooperation with other central government authorities with responsibility for health, social welfare and gender equality issues. To meet the need for coordination at central government level, a cross-ministerial working group has been set up. This group consists of representatives of the Ministries of Health, Social Affairs, Children and Family Affairs, and Justice and the Police. As well as ensuring the implementation of the present action plan, the group will draw up proposals for future efforts to combat domestic violence.

A national resource centre on violence and traumatic stress (*Nasjonalt kunnskapssenter om vold og traumatisk stress – NKVTS*) was established on 1 January 2004. The purpose of this centre is to strengthen research, education and guidance for the public services in the field of violence and trauma. The centre has a special section for violence, family violence and sexual abuse. NKVTS will play a central role in the Government's endeavours to improve the level of knowledge about domestic violence with reference to children, women and perpetrators. However, the centre is not sufficiently close to the support services. The Government also deems it necessary to have strong regional resource centres which can act as primary instigators in the development of expertise and services on violence, at local and regional level.

In January 2004, the central authorities took over responsibility from the county authorities for the operation of the family welfare offices, child welfare institutions and parts of the foster care services. In this connection, a new administrative unit was established for family and child welfare and protection (*Statens barnevern og familievern – SBF*). A new Directorate for Children, Young People and Families was established on 1 July 2004. The main reason for centralising the responsibility for child and family welfare was the need to

create more equitable services of good quality throughout the country. The shift of responsibility for child welfare services from the county authorities to the five administrative regions and the broad supply of specialist units (twenty-six regional response and consultation teams) should help to provide expertise and knowledge-based guidance for the municipal child welfare services.

At regional level we have seen how cooperation between different services in cases involving sexual abuse and gross negligence of children bring to light cases that would otherwise have remained hidden and contributes to joint follow-up. A special report has been drawn up on regional organization of resources in the field of violence and trauma, which emphasizes the need to build up and develop regional expertise on violence with

**“... there are so many people who want to do something – but they don’t know how to do it ...”**

Abused woman

special focus on domestic violence. To follow up this report, measures will be implemented which can help to improve services, the level of knowledge and cooperation across the services. The resource groups will be closely associated with the practice field and cooperate closely with all the relevant bodies in the regions. Violence as a separate subject for regional resource persons is an important motive force in the development of the different services in this area.

The great majority of the services that are relevant for victims of violence are provided at municipal level. There are also some private/voluntary services, such as shelters for battered women and certain treatment programmes for perpetrators of violence. The challenge here is to integrate these services into a coherent programme, in cooperation with the ordinary services.

# Measures in the Government's action plan to combat

## **A. Improving the level of cooperation and knowledge in the support services**

Victims of domestic violence have a need for, and a right to, help from the support services. Their needs for help are often complex and a number of different agencies and services must be involved. Today, many victims of violence find themselves being shunted from one helper or service to another. This places an unnecessary burden on the users of the services, as well as being poor utilization of resources. The lack of awareness and knowledge of domestic violence and the lack of cooperation between the different services make it very difficult to provide victims of violence with the proper help.

One of the primary objectives of this action plan is to help to develop integrated, available and professionally good services in situations involving domestic violence.

No matter who they contact: be it a women's shelter, the police, the social services, a family welfare office, the child welfare service, the health service or others, the users must be well looked after. Ensuring this in cooperation with non-governmental organizations will be a challenging task for the central, regional and local authorities. Cooperation and coordination between different professions and welfare services is essential, if the users are to be given good, well-integrated services.

The principle of cooperation is laid down in a number of relevant acts, such as the Child Welfare Services Act, the Social Services Act, the Police Act, the Municipal Health Services Act and the Specialist Health Service Act. Nonetheless, it is a challenge to establish good, predictable routines for cooperation.

As part of the implementation of the Government's action plan on violence against women (2000-2003), pilot projects were initiated to test models aiming at strengthening cooperation and knowledge in the support services. The projects were located in Tønsberg, Molde and Tana (south-east, west and north of Norway) and they showed that it is possible to achieve cooperation between different services. More cooperation and coordination leads to better and more coherent help because, for one reason, cooperation leads to the development of common routines and a common understanding of who is responsible for what. At the same time, awareness of domestic violence as a problem is growing in all the services. Joint development of expertise and knowledge is an important strategy which not only inspires and contributes to cooperation but also improves the quality of the services provided.

In order to promote a coherent, uniform and qualitatively good handling of cases involving domestic violence, the Police introduced a new scheme on 1 July 2002, placing a domestic violence coordinator in each of Norway's twenty-seven police districts. It is the coordinator's job to ensure that the victim of violence

# domestic violence

and her/his next of kin are met with understanding, knowledge and insight by police officers – both at a human and policing level. The coordinator acts as prime mover in establishing good routines for cooperation with the other services, institutions and organizations who are to assist victims of violence. Experience so far indicates that some domestic violence coordinators find that other bodies are reluctant to follow up when the professional resources of the police have been “exhausted”. This underlines the importance of establishing good networks and routines across all central services and bodies in these cases. A common understanding of the issues and the need for action is also of considerable importance in helping victims of violence to move on.

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## Measure 1

NKVTS (*Nasjonalt kunnskapssenter om vold og traumatisk stress – Norway's national resource centre on violence and traumatic stress*) will be strengthened in the field of research and development of expertise on violence in close relations.

**Commencement:** 2004

**Implementation:** 2004-2008

**Responsible:** Ministry of Health, Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Affairs in cooperation with the Directorate for Health and Social Affairs.

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## Measure 2

Regional resource groups in the field of violence and trauma will be established with a view to achieving better, more coherent services. These groups will assist the support services by providing information, guidance and competence training and they will establish networks between all the relevant partners in the region. Existing regional projects in the field of violence and trauma (measures for sexually abused children, psychosocial work for refugees and suicide prevention measures) will be incorporated in the resource groups. The Government will submit a follow-up to the matter in Proposition No. 1 (2004-2005) to the Storting (Norwegian Parliament).

**Commencement:** 2004

**Implementation:** 2004-2008

**Responsible:** Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development in cooperation with the Directorate for Health and Social Affairs.

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## Measure 3

Financial support will be given to a continuation of the Vestfold Project in 2004. This project is the responsibility of the County Governor and its objective is systematic testing of the models that have been devised for cooperation, reception and registration routines in the individual municipalities and for external cooperation between municipal authorities.

**Commencement:** 2004

**Implementation:** 2004

**Responsible:** Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Children and Family Affairs.

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#### **Measure 4**

NKVTS will be commissioned to draw up a national implementation plan with a view to strengthening various basic, advanced and specialist educations in respect of knowledge about domestic violence.

**Commencement:** 2005

**Implementation:** 2005

**Responsible:** Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Social Affairs, Ministry of Children and Family Affairs.

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#### **Measure 5**

NKVTS will be commissioned to draw up a proposal for common training programmes for employees in relevant support services. This training will include both cooperative skills and a common basic understanding of the problem area of domestic violence.

**Commencement:** 2005

**Implementation:** 2005

**Responsible:** Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development.

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#### **Measure 6**

Knowledge about the issues of violence will be built up in the response and consultation teams in the national child and family welfare services (formerly SBF).

**Commencement:** 2004

**Implementation:** 2004-2005

**Responsible:** Ministry of Children and Family Affairs in collaboration with the Center for Crisis Psychology and Alternative to Violence.

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#### **Measure 7**

Financial support will be given to Norwegian participation in the EU's Daphne II Programme for the period 2004-2008. The objective of this programme is to contribute to greater protection of physical and mental health by preventing all forms of violence and provide support for victims and treatment for perpetrators. The programme supports projects which promote cross-border cooperation and multidisciplinary networks.

**Commencement:** 2004

**Implementation:** 2004-2008

**Responsible:** Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice.

## **B. Increasing awareness of domestic violence and preventing it through changes in attitudes**

Domestic violence has traditionally been kept hidden and played down and not identified as a problem. As a result, many women have been reluctant to contact the police or the support services. Fear and a feeling of shame prevent many people from seeking help.

It is the Government's aim to increase awareness of domestic violence and to make it socially and culturally acceptable to talk about violence against women and children as a serious social problem. There is a need for more openness and for stronger attitudes against domestic violence both in the support services and in the population in general.

More openness and knowledge about where it is possible to get the necessary assistance will help to increase the number of victims of violence who contact the support services. A good example of this is the noticeable increase in the number of people who have contacted the police since the introduction of the family violence coordinator scheme.

**"... it was so embarrassing going to a place like the women's shelter ..."**

Abused woman  
(Jonassen and Eidheim, 2001)

Openness in the form of routine questions about violence and exposure to violence can help to put the support services in a better position to identify victims of violence. A Swedish method development project, *“Tack för att ni frågar”* (Thank you for asking), showed that, when routine questions (screening) were used as a method to uncover violence, more women – women who would not otherwise have told anyone about the violence they were exposed to – could be helped at an early stage.

Openness and awareness-raising must also apply to children who have experienced violence in the home. Most of the existing information and material about domestic violence is intended for adults and is not easily accessible to children. The Government will therefore facilitate the development of resources to make it possible to talk to children about violence in the family.



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**Measure 8**

Financial support will be given to the production of an animated film "Sinna Mann" (Angry Man). This film will, for example, be used in conversations with children and adults about domestic violence. Advice on how to use the film will be prepared.

**Commencement:** 2004

**Implementation:** 200-2008

**Responsible:** Ministry of Children and Family Affairs in collaboration with Trollfilm A/S, Alternative to Violence and the Center for Crisis Psychology.

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**Measure 9**

The Government will draw up an information strategy aiming to break down taboos and increase knowledge about and awareness of domestic violence.

**Commencement:** 2004

**Implementation:** 2004-2006

**Responsible:** Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Affairs.

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**Measure 10**

A pilot project will be initiated, whereby routine questions will be asked about violence during maternity check-ups. The purpose of the project is to develop methods to uncover violence. The project will include routines and measures for cooperation and follow-up of any violence that is discovered.

**Commencement:** 2005

**Implementation:** 2005-2006

**Responsible:** Ministry of Health

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**Measure 11**

Existing national telephone and internet help-lines will be strengthened by providing expertise to meet the needs of children and young people for help and advice in connection with violence.

**Commencement:** 2005

**Implementation:** 2005-2006

**Responsible:** Ministry of Health, Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, Ministry of Justice in collaboration with the Directorate for Health and Social Affairs.

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**Measure 12**

Consideration will be given to the establishment of a national freephone number, which will give women and children who are victims of domestic violence and male perpetrators of violence a common source of information about support bodies suitable for their needs.

**Commencement:** 2005

**Implementation:** 2005

**Responsible:** Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Affairs .

## **C. Ensuring that victims of domestic violence receive adequate help, protection and support**

### **Women**

Women who have been exposed to violence and threats of violence in close relationships need different kinds of help. Their needs may be of a medical, psychological, financial or legal nature, depending on the woman's life situation, for example whether she is living with the perpetrator, is in the process of breaking out of a relationship, or has already broken out of one.

The women's shelters, the police and other support services are important contributors during the various phases female victims find themselves in. For many of these victims, NGOs, self-help groups and other measures, which can be described as 'low threshold', will be an important supplement to the public services.

Participation and self-empowerment are important principles in all of the help given to women who are exposed to and threatened with domestic violence. This is about showing respect for and taking into account the victim's experiences, knowledge, insight into her own situation. This also means motivating her to make use of her own resources to handle the situation and to make important decisions to get out of it and take control of her own life. In the same way, the available help must contribute toward changing and strengthening

her ability to look after any children in her care.

The responsibility of the public services is to create space and provide help that can strengthen the individual victim's ability to make use of existing possibilities. The Government aims to ensure that abused women are given a genuine chance to establish a new and independent life for themselves and any children they may have.

Owing to language problems, small or underdeveloped networks, lack of financial resources, disabilities or other factors, some abused women will have special needs for assistance. Women's shelters, the police and the other support services must therefore have the knowledge and expertise to meet their special needs.

Leaving the perpetrator is no guarantee that the violence will cease. Violence has a tendency to increase in degree and extent when the woman breaks out of the relationship. Sometimes the situation is so dangerous that the woman needs special protection for a short or long period. Violence alarms, restraining orders, temporary accommodation, special protection of personal data are some of the forms of police protection that may be used in these cases. In extraordinary cases, when other protective measures are deemed to be inadequate, permission may be given to use a fictive identity. In most cases, there will be a need for extensive help and follow up in addition to the purely protective measures.

In the course of autumn 2004, the Government will consider how cross-ministerial measures can be implemented in order to give government and municipal agencies the necessary information about suitable ways of assisting persons who are under protection, such as address blocking.

A woman who has lived in an abusive relationship will often have been exposed to many types of abuse, including both punishable offences and offences which are not punishable but which must still be regarded as part of the maltreatment she has suffered. There may be cases where the perpetrator refuses to let her go out or use the telephone, will not let her see her relatives, takes away her keys or frequently talks about her in a derogatory way.

The question has been raised of whether the current criminal regulations comprehend the complexity of cases of violence against women

and children in close relationships, including the mental/ emotional strain of prolonged abuse. For a woman who is the victim of repeated violence, it is not the individual incidents but the sum of the maltreatment and the fact that she has lived under the threat of violence for a long time that constitute the offence.

**“..if my children were to find themselves in the same situation, I hope they would know more about their rights than I did ...”**

Abused woman  
(Jonassen and Eidheim, 2001)

Rape mainly affects women and represents a particular challenge to the legal system and to the health services. The Government finds it a matter for concern that both the frequency of reported cases and the number of cases that result in a conviction are low. Furthermore, the quality, content and organization of the health ser-

vices that are available to victims of rape vary considerably from one part of Norway to another. The Government intends to initiate measures to ensure that victims of rape will to a greater degree be met by a support and legal system with knowledge and expertise about their special, vulnerable situation.

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**Measure 13**

The Government will transfer responsibility for the administration of government subsidies available to shelters for battered women to the National Office for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (1 July 2004) and intensify central government efforts to build up the assistance provided by these shelters. The work of the host municipalities to establish long-term inter-municipal cooperation will be supported.

**Commencement:** 2005

**Implementation:** 2005

**Responsible:** Ministry of Children and Family Affairs

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**Measure 14**

An availability plan will be drawn up for the women's shelters to ensure that women all over the country can contact a shelter within a reasonable geographic distance from their home.

**Commencement:** 2005

**Implementation:** 2005

**Responsible:** Ministry of Children and Family Affairs

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**Measure 15**

The Norwegian State Housing Bank's loan scheme will also be opened to women's shelters with residential facilities, thus making it easier to borrow money for the conversion and improvement of women's shelters in need of this. Loans will also be available for new buildings.

**Commencement:** 2004

**Implementation:** 2004

**Responsible:** The Norwegian State Housing Bank in collaboration with the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs and the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development.

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**Measure 16**

A project will be initiated to provide the women's shelters and local support services with expertise and knowledge about the needs of immigrant women who are the victims of violence. A training programme will be developed, implemented and evaluated. The intention is to continue the training programme after the conclusion of the project.

**Commencement:** 2004

**Implementation:** 2004-2006

**Responsible:** Ministry of Children and Family Affairs

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**Measure 17**

A project will be initiated to continue and follow up the survey of the municipal support services available to functionally disabled female victims of violence.

**Commencement:** 2004

**Implementation:** 2004-2005

**Responsible:** Ministry of Social Affairs and Ministry of Children and Family Affairs.

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**Measure 18**

A survey will be carried out of the number of women who are turned away by the women's shelters and the reasons for this. The survey will form the basis for an assessment of suitable measures for abused women with special problems, such as a mental illness or drug or alcohol-related problems.

**Commencement:** 2004

**Implementation:** 2004-2005

**Responsible:** Ministry of Children and Family Affairs

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**Measure 19**

The Government is considering establishing a central body for coordinated assistance to victims of traffic in human beings who, for a short or long period, need special protection and assistance. Consideration will be given to whether other victims of violence and threats of violence should also be able to benefit from the services offered by the body. In the first instance this will apply to victims of domestic violence, including those who are at risk of forced marriage or female genital mutilation.

**Commencement:** 2005

**Implementation:** 2005

**Responsible:** Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development.

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**Measure 20**

The health services that are available at local level to victims of violence and rape will be strengthened. The Directorate for Health and Social Affairs will submit a report to the Ministry of Health in June 2004, listing existing services and proposing how they can be developed. The report will form the basis for further follow-up by the Ministry. This will be presented in Proposition No. 1 (2004-2005) to the Storting.

**Commencement:** 2005

**Implementation:** 2005-2008

**Responsible:** Ministry of Health

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**Measure 21**

Measures will be prepared and implemented with a view to building up the health services' capabilities as regards examinations, securing evidence and documentation in rape cases.

**Commencement:** 2005

**Implementation:** 2005

**Responsible:** Directorate for Health and Social Affairs in co-operation with the National Police Directorate.

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**Measure 22**

The Government will take the initiative vis-à-vis the Director General of Public Prosecutions to prepare a circular clarifying the routines for handling rape cases, particularly in respect of the police and prosecuting authorities' cooperation with other bodies.

**Commencement:** 2004

**Implementation:** 2005

**Responsible:** Ministry of Justice and the Police in cooperation with the Director General of Public Prosecutions.

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### Measure 23

The Government will assess whether there is a need for new penal rules to provide for the complexity of cases of domestic violence.

**Commencement:** 2004

**Implementation:** 2005

**Responsible:** Ministry of Justice and the Police

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### Measure 24

The work of the police on domestic violence will be strengthened. The family violence coordinator scheme is being evaluated by the National Police Directorate. This evaluation will form the basis for the further development of police work in this area. The statistical tools used by the police to register family violence will be enhanced. Mobile violence deterrent systems will continue to be made available to victims of violence and threats of violence. The system of advice and guidance offices for victims of crime will be further developed.

**Commencement:** 2004

**Implementation:** 2005

**Responsible:** Ministry of Justice and the Police

## Children who witness violence

Children are very much affected by violence in the family and it is the aim of the Government to ensure that children who witness violence are offered the necessary protection and follow up.

Being a witness to violence exposes a child to considerable risk of damage to its health and development. Children who grow up with domestic violence experience insecurity and suffering and are affected in different ways – either by being directly exposed to physical or psychological violence or by living in a situation where they see and/or hear their mother being exposed to violence.

When children witness violence to persons closest to them, they are – legally speaking – not the victims of a criminal offence because they are not affected directly. Even if the child who witnesses violence suffers mental trauma as a result, the child is not regarded the injured party in criminal proceedings. Nor is the child's situation automatically defined as negligence, which would make him/her the responsibility of the child welfare service. The question of whether the court attaches sufficient importance to the harmful effects of violence on the child in cases concerning parental responsibility, place of residence and access has recently been discussed by an inter-ministerial working group appointed by the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs.

Its report, “Measures to protect children from abuse – proposals for amendments in the Children’s Act etc.”, was published on 16 February 2004.

In order to prevent violence and intervene at a far earlier stage than is the case today and in order to give children and their parents a better possibility of follow up, support and treatment, the level of knowledge in the child welfare service and in the other services about the detrimental effects of being a witness to violence will have to be improved.

The fact that a child is living in a situation where he/she repeatedly witnesses violence in the family gives grounds for investigation and if necessary intervention by the child welfare service or other support services. Expertise on domestic violence must be built up in the child welfare service, in the family welfare service, at the women’s shelters, among general practitioners, at the child health clinics, in the school health service, in school counselling services and in mental health care services for children and young people. There is a need to increase knowledge about work methods and measures which can be implemented to prevent damage and help the child.

Children in minority families are in a particularly vulnerable situation and more knowledge is needed about their situation and needs.

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### **Measure 25**

Financial support for the 3-year national project “Children who live with violence in the family” will be continued in 2005 and 2006. In the course of the project period, the project will, among other things:

- offer clinical services to children who witness violence and who are exposed to physical violence
- arrange seminars for selected family welfare offices
- arrange national seminars for the child welfare service
- arrange regional meetings for dialogue and exchange of experience with BUP (mental healthcare for children and young people)
- prepare material for talks with parents and children at women’s shelters
- prepare guidance modules for the family welfare service which include videos, teaching material, registration and evaluation tools and testing methods
- prepare guidance material for the child welfare service
- transfer knowledge to the child health clinics
- review and collate related documentation/ research about children who are exposed to violence/child abuse and children who are witnesses to violence

**Commencement:** 2004

**Implementation:** 2004-2006

**Responsible:** Ministry of Children and Family Affairs in collaboration with Alternative to Violence, the Center for Crisis Psychology and NKTVS.

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**Measure 26**

The report on "Measures to protect children against abuse - proposals for amendments in the Children's Act etc." was distributed for comment and return by 2 July 2004. The report submits that, in cases pursuant to the Children's Act concerning parental responsibility, residence and access, where there is a risk of abuse, the interests of the children are not well enough looked after. Proposals in the report include training programmes for the professional groups who are involved in such cases and amendments to the law specifying that consideration must be given to the fact that the child must not be exposed to abuse. These proposals will be followed up.

**Commencement:** 2004

**Implementation:** 2004-2005

**Responsible:** Ministry of Children and Family Affairs

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**Measure 27**

A regional project will be initiated to test co-operation models/routines between women's shelters and the family/child welfare services, in order to build up paediatric expertise at the women's shelters. The women's shelters will also be able to apply for financial support for specific measures at the shelters, for example in the form of guidance for the staff, professional assistance for the child, etc.

**Commencement:** 2004

**Implementation:** 2004-2005

**Responsible:** Ministry of Children and Family Affairs

**D. Breaking the spiral of violence by strengthening treatment programmes for perpetrators**

Men's use of violence against women is a social problem that must not be accepted.

The explanations of why men use violence, the ways in which they express violence and how they themselves regard their use of violence are to be found at many levels. The male role can be seen as the fairly stable expectations which we have of men and which play a part in forming their male identity and self-image in our society. These expectations concern to some extent personal characteristics, to some extent relationships with other people and to some extent position, power and participation in society. In all of these areas we find features that can be significant for the development of violent action patterns, but also features that can counteract such a development. The male role is changing. Good prevention and treatment measures must take this into account.

The absence of genuine equality in the positions of women and men in many of society's arenas, and attitudes which say this is the way it should be, are also reflected in close relationships. At their most extreme, they may lead some men to choose violence as one alternative form of behaviour in order to uphold power and control. For this reason, the work of promoting gender equality in our society is significant if we are to prevent and combat domestic violence.



Within the framework of this action plan, the Government will attach importance to the work of preventing and combating domestic violence by increasing the focus on treatment of the perpetrators. These efforts will be directed at the persons who use violence and at their violence problems. They will help the perpetrators to take an active part in stopping the violence. Punishment alone is not the answer, but it is important that society also punishes perpetrators of criminal offences and abuse. However, punishment must be followed up with help and treatment and responsibility must be laid clearly at the door of the perpetrator himself.

A treatment programme for men must have a perspective of diversity where discussion groups and more specialized services are available depending on the perpetrator's needs. These services must be adapted for young people and adults, both for those who themselves want help to prevent and avoid violence and for those who have already been convicted of violence and abuse. It is also important that the available services are adapted for men of different ethnic backgrounds.



**“... I hit my girlfriend  
and ended up by  
ruining our  
relationship ..”**

Perpetrator of violence  
“Aftenposten” 12 June 2004

There are currently a number of public and private bodies which provide help and treatment for men who use domestic violence. Help is available from the family welfare service, the mental health care service, the probation service and from private organizations. However, these services are unevenly distributed geographically, have different providers (public, semi-public, private) and have not been satisfactorily evaluated. There is an absence of measures and strategies for reaching the perpetrators at an early stage.

The Government will contribute to the systematic development of support and treatment services for perpetrators of violence and abusers. Its objective is to prevent the use of violence and ensure that help is available as close as possible to home or work. This is in line with the Government's submissions in Report No. 29 (2002-2003) to the Storting, from which it can be seen that the Government wishes to increase the scope and quality of the treatment available to perpetrators of violence and abuse.

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**Measure 28**

The help and treatment offered to perpetrators by the "Alternative to Violence" organization will be evaluated. The purpose of the evaluation is to document the effect of the treatment with a view to systematic dissemination of the methods. The evaluation work has been assigned to NKVTS.

**Commencement:** 2004

**Implementation:** 2004-2005

**Responsible:** Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice and Police, Ministry of Children and Family Affairs.

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**Measure 29**

The support and treatment services in most places have a need for more expertise in order to be able to provide satisfactory help for perpetrators. Today's services, locally and regionally, will be assessed in relation to the need on a country-wide basis. The plan is to continue the work of disseminating the anger management programme for perpetrators of violence ("Sinne-mestringsprogrammet for voldsutøvere") developed by the Regional Resource Centre for Security, Prison and Forensic Psychiatry at Brøset, and experience gained from other treatment programmes.

**Commencement:** 2005

**Implementation:** 2005-2008

**Responsible:** Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice and the Police.

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**Measure 30**

Work was initiated in 2004 to strengthen research and build up expertise on perpetrators of violence at NKVTS. This will be continued and possibly intensified.

**Commencement:** 2005

**Implementation:** 2005-2008

**Responsible:** Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice and the Police, Ministry of Children and Family Affairs.

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