



Northern  
Ireland  
Office



Department of  
**Health, Social Services  
and Public Safety**  
[www.dhsspsni.gov.uk](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk)

AN ROINN

Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta  
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí

MINISTRE O

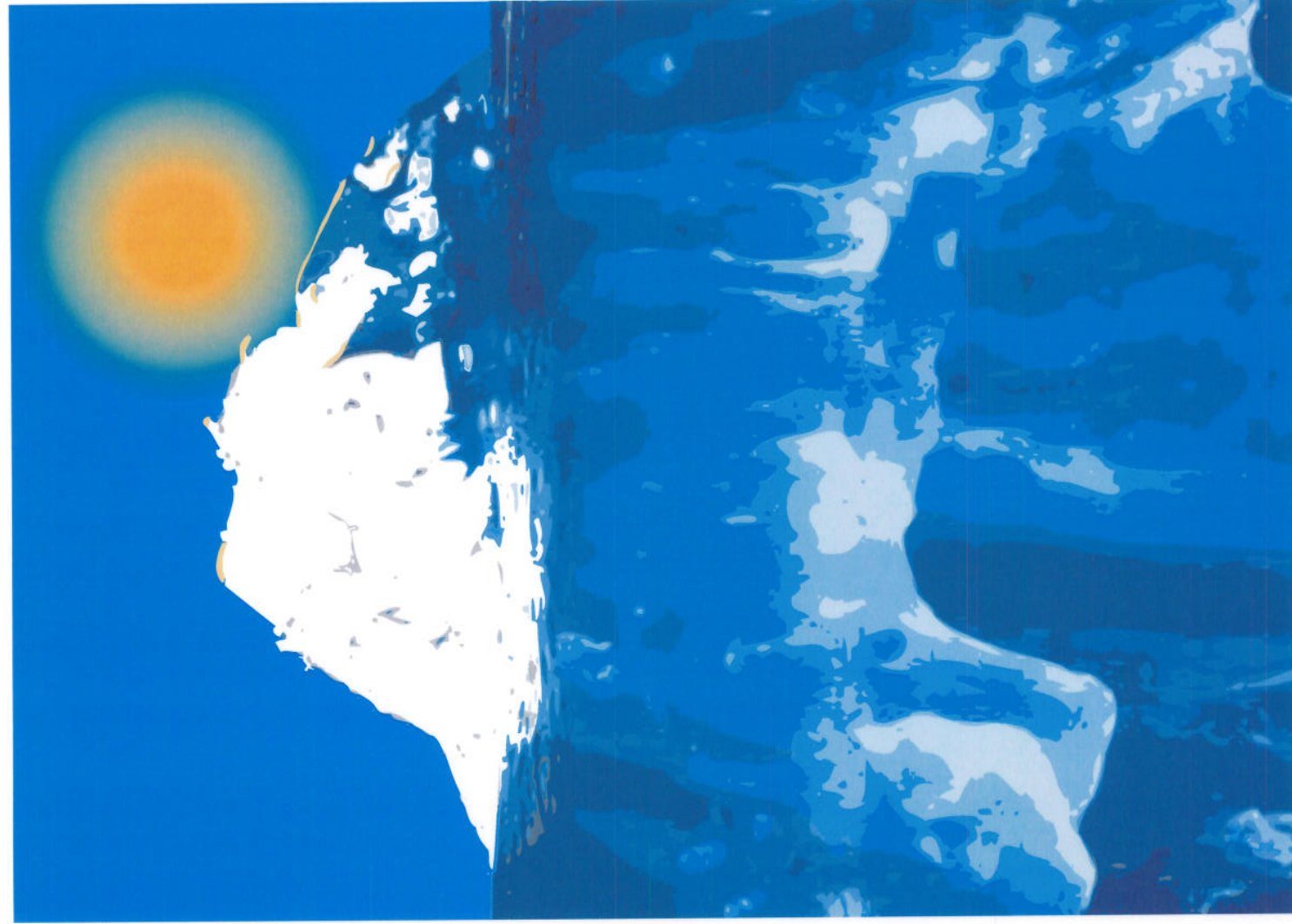
Pouostic, Resydènter Heisin  
an Fowk Siccar

APPENDIX 4

# Tackling Sexual Violence and Abuse

## Action Plan 2008 - 2009

June 2008 to March 2009



## Foreword

We welcome the publication of this first Action Plan under “*Tackling Sexual Violence and Abuse – A Regional Strategy 2008 - 2013 (June 2008)*” [Regional Strategy].

Victims/survivors of sexual violence and abuse and their families need a sympathetic, timely and practical response in order to help them deal with and recover from the crime they have suffered. We must ensure that better support services are provided and that individuals who suffer sexual violence and abuse and their families are given the help they need.

We acknowledge the important work that has been done in this area over many years by the voluntary and community sector. Indeed, partnership and inter-agency working is a key factor in developing and implementing this Regional Strategy.

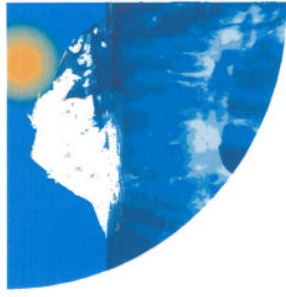
We are determined that proper support services are available to all victims/survivors in Northern Ireland and that perpetrators of sexual violence and abuse are called to account. The publication of this 2008 - 2009 Action Plan is the first step towards making sure this happens.



**Michael McGimpsey**  
**Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety**



**Paul Goggins**  
**Minister of State for Northern Ireland**



## Introduction

This is the first Action Plan designed to deliver the objectives of “*Tackling Sexual Violence and Abuse - A Regional Strategy 2008 - 2013 (June 2008)*”. It builds on the proposals set out in the draft Strategy “*Hidden Crimes, Secret Pain*” which was issued for public consultation in January 2007. The Regional Strategy covers all victims/survivors of sexual violence and abuse, whether they are a child, adult, male or female.

This 2008 - 2009 Action Plan contains initiatives to address sexual violence and abuse in a more considered and collaborative way. It includes actions to help prevent sexual violence and abuse from happening, and where it has happened, to improve services and outcomes for victims/survivors, and their families.

The Action Plan is set out in 4 inter-connected strands:

- **Strand 1: Leadership and Direction;**
- **Strand 2: Prevention;**
- **Strand 3: Protection and Justice; and**
- **Strand 4: Support.**

Within each strand, the Action Plan sets out:

- actions proposed until March 2009;
- departments/agencies/organisations with responsibility for implementation; and

- target dates for completion of each action.

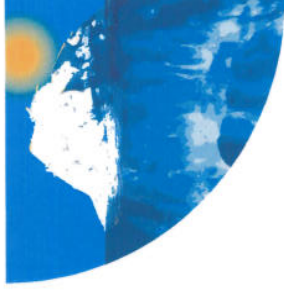
Many actions will continue over a number of years and will be reflected in future Action Plans alongside new actions and initiatives.

### Definition

The definition of sexual violence used throughout the strategy is “**any behaviour perceived to be of a sexual nature which is unwanted and takes place without consent or understanding**”.

**For the purposes of this Action Plan a child is a person under the age of 18 years.**

The Sexual Violence Unit in the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) and the Criminal Justice Policy Division in the Northern Ireland Office (NIO), in conjunction with the Inter-Departmental Steering Group on Sexual Violence and Abuse and its Sub-Groups, are responsible for the implementation of the Regional Strategy and the delivery of the actions contained in this and subsequent Action Plans.



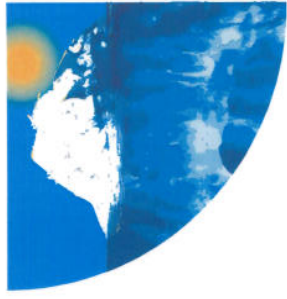


## Strand 1: Leadership and Direction

A strategic objective of "Tackling Sexual Violence and Abuse – A Regional Strategy 2008 - 2013 (June 2008)", is to **ensure a joined-up, targeted approach by all government departments, agencies and partner organisations** involved in tackling and addressing the issue of sexual violence and abuse in Northern Ireland. In order to achieve this objective, work will be undertaken in this 2008 - 2009 Action Plan to progress key outcome 1 of the Regional Strategy which is:

### Key outcome:

- **deliver effective, accountable and integrated strategies and services in respect of sexual violence and abuse.**



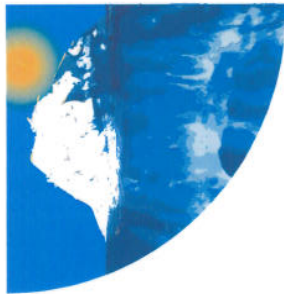
Key Action	Activities	Responsibility	Target Date
<p><b>1. Provide leadership and direction.</b></p>	<p>Provide regular reports to new local Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic and Sexual Violence on key actions and milestones.</p> <p>Leadership on implementing the Regional Strategy and the actions in the Action Plan will be provided by the Inter-Departmental Steering Group on Sexual Violence and Abuse, and its Sub-Groups.</p>	<p>DHSSPS ] NIO ] Joint lead Relevant Government Departments Health and Social Services Boards Health and Social Care Trusts PSNI Criminal Justice Agencies Voluntary Organisations</p>	<p>31 March 2009</p>
<p><b>2. Annual Action Plans.</b></p>	<p>Review Annual Action Plans to measure progress made, identify actions needed and determine priorities for future plans.</p>	<p>DHSSPS ] NIO ] Joint lead Inter-Departmental Steering Group and Sub-Groups</p>	<p>31 March 2009</p>
<p><b>3. Develop a wider understanding of the profile, prevalence and impact of sexual violence and abuse in Northern Ireland.</b></p>	<p>Commission a module in the NI Crime Survey to establish the prevalence and nature of sexual violence and abuse in Northern Ireland.</p>	<p>DHSSPS ] NIO ] Joint lead Inter-Departmental Steering Group</p>	<p>NI Crime Survey 2008/09</p>

## Strand 2: Prevention

A strategic objective of “*Tackling Sexual Violence and Abuse – A Regional Strategy 2008 - 2013 (June 2008)*”, is **to reduce risk and prevent sexual violence and abuse**. In order to achieve this objective, work will be undertaken in this 2008 - 2009 Action Plan to progress key outcomes 2 and 3 of the Regional Strategy which are:

### Key outcomes:

- **raised public awareness about risk factors and promotion of personal safety; and**
- **healthy relationships based on mutual respect.**



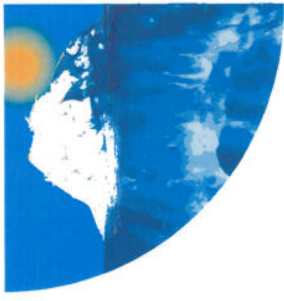
Key Action	Activities	Responsibility	Target Date
<p><b>1. Develop and deliver a Public Information Campaign.</b></p>	<p>Engage local media in raising awareness of the issues and in challenging the myths surrounding sexual violence and abuse.</p> <p>Engage with local media in addressing how reporting and storylines in print and programming about sexual violence and abuse are accurately and sensitively portrayed, and that help lines are published.</p> <p>Work with media to investigate suggested link between sexual violence and abuse and TV programmes, music videos, computer games etc.</p>	<p><b>DHSSPS ]</b>  <b>NIO ] (Joint lead)</b>  <b>Information Offices</b>  <b>DHSSPS and NIO</b>  <b>PSNI</b>  <b>Health Promotion Agency</b>  <b>Voluntary Organisations</b></p>	<p><b>Commence delivery of public information campaign by 30 November 2008</b></p>



## Strand 2: Prevention

Key Action	Activities	Responsibility	Target Date
<p><b>2. Improve education in Schools and Higher Education Institutions to increase awareness among children and young people.</b></p>	<p>Support the work delivered through the Personal Development Programme which incorporates Relationships and Sexual Education (RSE) in Schools to encourage the development of healthy relationships and respect.</p> <p>Encourage Further and Higher Education Institutions to include in their pastoral care arrangements, appropriate information, advice and support around the issue of sexual violence and abuse.</p>	<p><b>Department of Education (Lead)</b>  <b>Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)</b>  <b>OFMDFM</b>  <b>Voluntary Organisations</b>  <b>Health Promotion Agency</b>  <b>NIO</b></p> <p><b>Department for Employment and Learning</b>  <b>OFMDFM</b>  <b>Voluntary Organisations</b>  <b>Health Promotion Agency</b>  <b>NIO</b></p>	<p><b>31 March 2009</b></p> <p><b>31 March 2009</b></p>

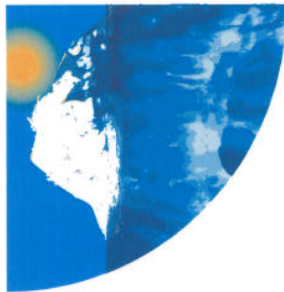




Key Action	Activities	Responsibility	Target Date
<p><b>3. Promote personal safety for those who are most at risk.</b></p>	<p>Formulate and promote a framework of practical steps which people can take to increase their personal safety.</p> <p>Integrate strategic messages about sexual violence and abuse with those about domestic violence, the reduction of alcohol and drug harm, sexual health, mental health and the protection of children and vulnerable adults; develop guidance and consistent messages about specific risk factors.</p>	<p><b>NIO Community Safety (Lead)</b>  <b>DHSSPS</b>  <b>Voluntary Organisations</b>  <b>PSNI</b></p>	<p><b>31 March 2009</b></p> <p><b>31 March 2009</b></p>
<p><b>4. Promote closer working.</b></p>	<p>Promote and further develop close working practices and protocols within and between statutory and voluntary agencies to protect those most at risk, including children and vulnerable adults.</p> <p>Encourage commitment by all agencies involved in the protection of those most at risk through strengthening interagency, multi-disciplinary co-operation and sharing of information and best practice.</p>	<p><b>Prevention sub-group (Lead)</b>  <b>Voluntary Organisations</b>  <b>NIO</b>  <b>DHSSPS</b>  <b>PSNI</b>  <b>Department of Education</b>  <b>NI Prison Service</b></p>	<p><b>31 March 2009</b></p> <p><b>31 March 2009</b></p>

## Strand 2: Prevention

Key Action	Activities	Responsibility	Target Date
<p><b>5. Training for staff.</b></p>	<p>Encourage commitment by all agencies involved in the protection of those most at risk, in relation to professional development and skills training for staff, through the design and delivery of regional training programmes, including shared training experiences.</p>	<p><b>Prevention sub-group (Lead)</b>  <b>Voluntary Organisations</b>  <b>NIO</b>  <b>DHSSPS</b>  <b>PSNI</b>  <b>NI Prison Service</b></p>	<p><b>31 March 2009</b></p>
<p><b>6. Prevent sexually harmful behaviour.</b></p>	<p>Develop age appropriate messages about what constitutes inappropriate and/or harmful sexual behaviour, including what is meant by consent in relation to sexual activities.</p> <p>Identify and promote multi-agency interventions to improve outcomes for young people who display sexually harmful behaviours.</p>	<p><b>Prevention sub-group (Lead)</b>  <b>Voluntary Organisations</b>  <b>DHSSPS</b>  <b>Health and Social Services Boards</b></p> <p><b>Health and Social Care Trusts</b>  <b>PSNI</b>  <b>NIO</b>  <b>NI Prison Service</b>  <b>Probation Board for NI</b></p>	<p><b>30 November 2008</b></p> <p><b>30 November 2008</b></p>



Key Action	Activities	Responsibility	Target Date
<p><b>6. (Continued)</b>  <b>Prevent sexually harmful behaviour.</b></p>	<p>Identify and promote best practice models in relation to intervention with adults who display sexually harmful behaviour so as to prevent re-occurrence.</p> <p>Support the development across the region of programmes for the families of perpetrators to prevent inappropriate or harmful behaviours and to break cycles of abuse.</p>	<p><b>Prevention sub-group (Lead)</b>  <b>Voluntary Organisations</b>  <b>DHSSPS</b>  <b>Health and Social Services Boards</b></p> <p><b>Health and Social Care Trusts</b>  <b>PSNI</b>  <b>NIO</b>  <b>NI Prison Service</b>  <b>Probation Board for NI</b></p>	<p><b>30 November 2008</b></p> <p><b>30 March 2009</b></p>

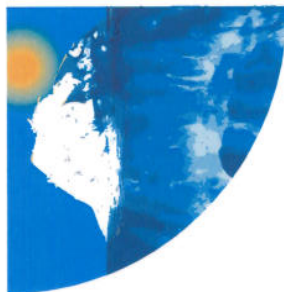


## Strand 3: Protection and Justice

A strategic objective of "Tackling Sexual Violence and Abuse – A Regional Strategy 2008 - 2013 (June 2008) is **to build confidence in the criminal justice system through an appropriate, professional and sensitive approach to reported crime**. In order to achieve this objective, work will be undertaken in this 2008 - 2009 Action Plan to progress key outcomes 4 to 8 of the Regional Strategy which are:

### Key outcomes:

- **reforms in the law on sexual violence and abuse enhance levels of protection for adults;**
- **new sentences available to the courts more effectively address the risks posed by sex offenders;**
- **the criminal justice system provides an effective response to reported crimes of sexual violence and abuse;**
- **victims of sexual violence and abuse are supported through the criminal justice process and post-sentencing; and**
- **re-occurrence of offending behaviour is minimised by the strengthening of mechanisms and procedures for assessing and managing the risk posed by sex offenders.**



Key Action	Activities	Responsibility	Target Date
<p><b>1. Modernise the law on sexual offences in Northern Ireland.</b></p>	<p>Following the completion of the review of the law on sex offences, legislative proposals were published for consultation in November 2007. The Order in Council was introduced in Parliament on 30 April 2008 and subject to Parliamentary approval, new offences will be available to the courts by 1 January 2009.</p>	<p><b>NIO</b></p>	<p><b>1 January 2009</b></p>
<p><b>2. Legislate for risk assessment and management of sex offenders in the community.</b></p>	<p>Strengthen multi-agency arrangements for managing the risks posed by certain sexual and violent offenders through guidance issued by the Secretary of State under provisions in the Criminal Justice (NI) Order 2008.</p> <p>New public protection arrangements will be implemented by October 2008.</p>	<p><b>NIO (Lead) PSNI NI Prison Service Probation Board for NI</b></p>	<p><b>31 October 2008</b></p> <p><b>31 October 2008</b></p>

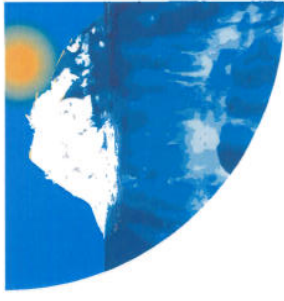
## Strand 3: Protection and Justice

Key Action	Activities	Responsibility	Target Date
<p><b>3. Introduce legislation making provision for public protection sentences, within the context of the sentencing framework.</b></p>	<p>Introduce Public Protection Sentences to the sentencing framework which enable dangerous sexual and violent offenders to be detained indefinitely, or for an extended period, based on risks posed to the public. Provisions taken forward in the Criminal Justice (NI) Order 2008 received Royal Assent on 7 May 2008. New indeterminate and extended public protection sentences for dangerous sexual and violent offenders introduced and available to the courts by June 2008.</p> <p>To develop an implementation strategy to commence the appropriate provisions in the Criminal Justice (NI) Order 2008.</p>	<p><b>NIO Probation Board for NI NI Prison Service</b></p>	<p><b>30 June 2008</b></p> <p><b>Ongoing during 2008/09</b></p>



## Strand 3: Protection and Justice

Key Action	Activities	Responsibility	Target Date
<p><b>5. To implement procedures which contribute to addressing sexual offending behaviour and reduce the risk of re-offending.</b></p>	<p>Pilot both in the prison system and in the community during 2008, a Sex Offender treatment programme for young offenders between 18 and 21 years old.</p> <p>Develop programmes for offenders convicted of downloading indecent images of children in partnership with other criminal justice organisations. Agree training with Probation Service of England and Wales for Probation Board NI staff, in the accredited programme for internet offenders.</p> <p>Pilot the implementation of the national Violent &amp; Sex Offender Register Information System (VISOR) for the risk management of offenders in a prison context.</p> <p>Develop a co-located team to supervise the highest risk sexual and violent offenders within the community and work together to manage the risk management plans of Category 3 offenders in Northern Ireland.</p>	<p><b>NIO</b> <b>Probation Board NI</b></p> <p><b>Probation Board NI</b></p> <p><b>NI Prison Service</b></p> <p><b>PSNI</b> <b>Probation Board NI</b> <b>[with support from Health and Social Care Trusts and NI Prison Service]</b></p>	<p><b>Pilot during 2008</b></p> <p><b>31 January 2009</b></p> <p><b>30 September 2008</b></p> <p><b>Teams to be operational by July 2008</b></p>



Key Action	Activities	Responsibility	Target Date
<p><b>6. Identify and promote best policy and practice in the treatment of victims of sexual violence and abuse.</b></p>	<p>Ensure the plans developed within the context of the 5 year Strategy for Victims &amp; Witnesses of Crime incorporate the specific needs and views of victims of sexual violence and abuse.</p> <p>Identify best practice models elsewhere in the UK in the treatment of all victims of sexual violence and abuse within the Criminal Justice System and establish potential for read across to Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Develop proposals for tackling the attrition rate in relation to cases involving victims of rape and attempted rape.</p> <p>Commission the Victims Inter-Governmental Project Advisory Group to explore opportunities for cross-border co operation with the Republic of Ireland on supporting victims of sexual violence and abuse.</p>	<p><b>Protection &amp; Justice Sub-Group (Lead)</b>  <b>PSNI</b>  <b>Public Prosecution Service</b>  <b>NI Prison Service</b>  <b>Probation Board NI</b>  <b>Voluntary Groups</b></p> <p><b>NIO</b></p> <p><b>Protection &amp; Justice Sub-Group</b></p> <p><b>NIO</b></p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p><b>30 September 2008</b></p> <p><b>31 March 2009</b></p> <p><b>30 June 2008</b></p>



## Strand 3: Protection and Justice

Key Action	Activities	Responsibility	Target Date
<p><b>6. (Continued) Identify and promote best policy and practice in the treatment of victims of sexual violence and abuse.</b></p>	<p>Conduct a review of victim referral support mechanisms in relation to victims of sexual violence and abuse.</p> <p>Develop guidelines with particular reference to the provision of therapeutic help for vulnerable or intimidated adult witnesses and child witnesses prior to criminal trials [see Strand 4: Support - Action 5].</p> <p>Contribute to the development of the overarching Criminal Justice System Victims' Code of Practice, with particular reference to the treatment of victims of sexual violence and abuse.</p> <p>Contribute to the development of Achieving Best Evidence practitioners' guidance with particular reference to the treatment of victims of sexual violence and abuse.</p> <p>Develop procedures for communication with victims both to provide them with information to deal with their concerns and to ensure there is an opportunity for victims to inform the multi-agency risk assessment process.</p>	<p><b>Protection &amp; Justice Sub-Group Voluntary Groups</b></p> <p><b>NIO (Lead)</b> <b>DHSSPS</b> <b>Protection &amp; Justice Sub-Group Support Sub-group</b> <b>Voluntary Organisations</b></p> <p><b>Protection &amp; Justice Sub-Group</b></p> <p><b>NIO</b> <b>Protection &amp; Justice Sub-Group</b> <b>Voluntary Organisations</b></p> <p><b>Northern Ireland Sex Offender Strategic Management Committee (NISOSMC)</b></p>	<p><b>30 September 2008</b></p> <p><b>31 March 2009</b></p> <p><b>30 November 2008</b></p> <p><b>31 March 2009</b></p> <p><b>Currently being developed and should be implemented by Summer 2008</b></p>



## Strand 4: Support

Key Action	Activities	Responsibility	Target Date
<p><b>4. Map existing range of services including how they integrate with each other, identify gaps in services and make recommendations.</b></p>	<p>Map range of services currently available for victims and survivors of sexual violence and abuse; identify gaps in services and make recommendations as to how these may be addressed.</p>	<p><b>DHSSPS ] NIO ] (Joint lead) PSNI Support Sub-Group</b></p>	<p><b>31 March 2009</b></p>
<p><b>5. Produce guidance on therapeutic support for children and vulnerable adults pending criminal investigation in relation to their cases.</b></p>	<p>Contribute to the development of guidelines for use by professionals involved with providing therapeutic support for vulnerable or intimidated adult witnesses and child witnesses prior to a criminal trial [see Strand 3: Protection and Justice - Action 6].</p>	<p><b>NIO (Lead) DHSSPS Health and Social Services Boards (including ACPCs) Safeguarding Board for NI (SBNI) NSPCC Regional Adult Protection Forum Criminal Justice Agencies Protection and Justice Sub-Group Support Sub-Group</b></p>	<p><b>31 March 2009</b></p>