

# **PLAN OF ACTION TO DEAL WITH DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

**Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Security**

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**Translation from the Icelandic:**

**„Aðgerðaáætlun vegna ofbeldis á heimilum og kynferðislegs ofbeldis“**

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## **PART I**

### **Measures to combat domestic violence and sexual offences against children.**

#### ***1. General***

This plan covers the measures which the Government intends to take in order to prevent domestic violence and sexual offences against children, and also measures to help the victims of violence and offences of this type. Four main aims are identified in the plan; several measures are listed applying to each, with reasons for their choice.

A fundamental assumption in this plan is that in cases where children are the victims of violence and abuse, it is the adult who is responsible and must take the consequences of his actions, as conduct of this type is wholly unacceptable. The remedies proposed in the plan reflect this position and are therefore intended primarily to be applied to adults.

The bodies responsible for each of the measures are named and in some cases other parties which will be involved in applying the measures are also listed. The time-frame and completion dates for each measure are also specified.

#### ***2. Further preventive measures should be taken to encourage public discussion of violence against children and changes of attitude in the society.***

## **AIM**

### **To prevent domestic violence and sexual offences involving children.**

Professional knowledge of the causes of violence and how it can be prevented is an important element when planning preventive measures. As has been established, there is no simple explanation of why violence is directed against children; a complex pattern of cause and effect is involved.

Preventive measures may be directed towards children, adults, society as a whole and at risk groups. The merits of measures directed towards children themselves are disputed among professionals: some believe there is a danger that children will develop wrong ideas of their own responsibility regarding violence or abuse, and that they may develop fear towards all adults, etc.

The following are preventive measures directed primarily at children's parents/guardians.

### **Support for the parents of infants and young children who suffer from sleep disturbances and restlessness.**

Infant's sleeping patterns or lack of sleep and crying tend to cause parents/guardians concern. Overseas studies have shown that when children have difficulty sleeping and cry a lot during the first six months of their lives, this may be followed by violence and behavioural problems later in life. To meet the needs of parents/guardians of infants and young children in situations of this type, it is desirable to have the primary health clinics give more information about sleep and sleep disturbances, and also about the services available to the parents of children with problems of this type.

Measure	An information pamphlet should be produced, both in Icelandic and other languages, about sleep and sleep disturbances, including the potential negative consequences of sleep disturbances on the parent-child relationship, and about the services available to parents of infants and young children who suffer from sleep disturbances and restlessness.
Responsible body	Ministry of Health and Social Security.
Time-frame	2007 to the end of 2010.

### **Training in parental skills.**

Some local authorities in Iceland, e.g. Hafnarfjörður and Reykjanesbær, have offered structured treatment and advice for the parents/guardians of children of pre-school and junior school age with behavioural problems. Based on socialization theories, this approach has produced good results.

Measure	A conference/meetings should be held to publicise methods of working with children of pre-school and junior school age who suffer from behavioural problems. Local authorities should be urged to offer support and advice for the parents/guardians of these children.
Responsible body	Ministry of Social Affairs.
Other participants	Ministry of Education and the Association of Local Authorities in Iceland.
Completion date	End of 2007.

### **Information/courses for parents.**

Research overseas has shown that young children, and particularly those aged under 3, constitute a risk group in terms of exposure to violence and abuse by their parents/guardians, more often by their mothers. The consequences of violence and abuse must be made clear to all parents/guardians in Iceland. In view of the cultural diversity in Iceland, informative material designed for parents/guardians should be prepared both in Icelandic and in other languages.

Measure 1	An information booklet should be prepared, in Icelandic and various other languages, about the consequences of child abuse. This booklet should be distributed as widely as possible and receive public promotion.
Responsible body	Ministry of Social Affairs.
Completion date	September 2007.
Measure 2	Parents/guardians of pre-school children should have access to courses run by the primary health clinics. The course materials and lectures should be presented in various other languages in addition to Icelandic.
Responsible body	Ministry of Health and Social Security.
Time-frame	Beginning of 2008 to end of 2011.

### **Prospective parents.**

School attendance by children and teenagers offers an opportunity to mould their attitudes and develop their competence as potential parents later in life. The junior and senior schools could play a larger role in preventing child abuse by teaching their pupils about the growth and development of children, so preparing them for the role of parenthood. Such teaching could be integrated with practical and theoretical studies in the junior and senior schools all over the country.

Measure 1	Preparation of a schedule covering methods of integrating teaching about the growth and development of children into the curriculum of the junior and senior schools.
Responsible body	Ministry of Education.
Completion date	November 2007.
Measure 2	Publication of educational materials for the junior and senior schools with the aim of increasing awareness of the growth and development of children and child care.
Responsible body	Ministry of Education.
Completion date	May 2008.

***3. The staff of institutions should be given assistance in recognising symptoms of violence and abuse in child victims and acting to help them.***

**AIM**

**To increase the knowledge and skills of staff working with children and teenagers and to establish greater cooperation between them.**

In order to be able to help child victims of abuse, it is important that professionals employed in institutions such as pre-schools, junior schools, health clinics and child welfare authorities should be aware of the symptoms of violence and its consequences. It is also essential that they be aware of the steps to be taken when such cases occur. The institutions listed above play different roles in the life of the child and it is important that the professional staff be aware of the division between them. When more than one institution is involved in dealing with a family where a child has been abused, it is necessary that they cooperate, consult and communicate in a clear and decisive manner. For this to be possible, the staff must be aware of the scope and responsibilities of each separate institution.

In many cases it is not possible to be certain whether or not the child has actually been subjected to abuse. The child welfare authorities concentrate on monitoring the security of the child and the care receives, irrespective of the handling of the case in the criminal justice system.

Here follow a number of measures aimed at increasing staff ability to detect possible cases of child abuse and to assist the victims.

**Engagement of staff.**

It should be made clear to applicants seeking positions where they will work with children and teenagers that they will be required to submit statements from the Penal Registry (clean criminal records) and that their permission may be requested to seek additional information from the registry to establish whether or not they have ever been convicted of sexual offences; this should be done early in the application process.

Measure	Rules of procedure should be laid down for institutions and NGOs to follow when engaging staff (cf. Article 36 of the Child Protection Act, No. 80/2002).
Responsible body	Ministry of Social Affairs.
Completion date	November 2007.

### **Response in cases of child abuse.**

Cases have occurred in which children have been subjected to physical violence, mental cruelty and/or sexual abused in institutions or group homes, both by other children and by employees. Such cases have included children who attend pre-school or junior school institutions for part of the day or all day; the same may apply to children who are placed for short of long periods in institutions or group homes and those who participate in sports and leisure activities run by NGOs. No guidelines/procedural rules exist for the staff of such institutions in Iceland on how to respond when a suspicion of abuse arises, whether the suspected violence or abuse takes place within or outside the institution.

Measure	Compilation of a manual for institutions/group homes laying down procedures to be followed when suspicion arises that a child has been subjected to abuse, whether this occurs within the institution or elsewhere.
Responsible body	Ministry of Social Affairs.
Other parties	Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Social Security and Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs.
Completion date	October 2007.

### **Duty of notification under the Child Protection Act.**

The Child Protection Act contains provisions obliging members of the public and those who deal with children in the context of their professions and responsibilities to inform the authorities in cases of suspected abuse; this obligation takes priority over other non-disclosure undertakings or ethical codes applying to the professions in question.

Measure	Compilation of a pamphlet calling attention to the responsibilities of the child welfare authorities and stating the provisions of chapter IV of the Child Protection Act on the obligation on the part of members of the public and of professional staff who deal with children and young persons in the course of their work to report cases of suspected abuse or violence.
Responsible body	Ministry of Social Affairs.
Completion date	November 2007.



## **Medical examinations of children.**

Evidence of mental cruelty, physical violence and/or sexual abuse must be confirmed and steps must be taken to ensure that evidence is not destroyed or lost. In some cases, particularly those involving sexual abuse, there is not always physical evidence of the abuse. In the same way, it can be difficult to establish whether mental cruelty has occurred. No guidelines or checklists are available in Iceland specifying how medical examinations are to be carried out in cases where suspicion arises concerning child abuse. Thus, a coordinated set of procedures, with checklists and rules on how to carry out medical examinations of children who may be the victims of abuse could be a useful aid for health-service workers throughout Iceland. Cases of violence and abuse have been handled at the Astrid Lindgren Children's Hospital in Sweden according to detailed procedural rules and checklists for some years now, and it has been found easier to identify cases of violence against children at earlier stages by this means.

Measure	Compilation of a manual for health-service workers with checklists and rules on how to carry out medical examinations of children who may be the victims of abuse.
Responsible body	Ministry of Health and Social Security.
Completion date	September 2008.

## **Professional training.**

Increased competence and skills on the part of health-service workers, teachers, pre-school teachers, ministers of religion, psychologists, social workers, policemen and lawyers, including judges, and also other professionals working with children and families, is an important element in establishing preventive measures against violence and abuse against children. Such skills include, for example, a knowledge of the symptoms of mental cruelty, physical violence and sexual abuse against children and training in conversational techniques.

Measure 1	Training is to be upgraded in the professions involved in dealing with the victims of violence and abuse. The Ministry of Education should give instructions to the educational institutions involved in work with children and their families to include teaching about child abuse in the curriculum of both basic training and extension courses for professionals. In the production of educational materials, the differing attitudes of non-Icelandic cultural groups towards the upbringing of children should be borne in mind.
Responsible body	Ministry of Education.
Time-frame	September 2007–October 2011.
Measure 2	More prominence should be given in the National Police College to the topic of child abuse, including an examination of causes and effects and methods of response to cases of this type.
Responsible body	Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs.
Time-frame	September 2007–October 2011.

### **Annual training day.**

Increased competence and skills on the part teachers and other professionals working with children is an important element in establishing preventive measures against violence.

Measure	An annual training day should be held for persons who in the course of their work are involved in caring for and teaching children. The focus should be on preventive measures and the causes and consequences of child abuse, the aim being to increase the workers' professional skills and knowledge.
Responsible bodies	Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health and Social Security.
Other participants	Ministry of Social Affairs and the Association of Local Authorities in Iceland.
Time-frame	To commence in beginning of 2007.

### **Research into violence against children.**

The Centre for Children and Family Research was established in the University of Iceland's Social Science Institute late in 2005. The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Health and Social Security are among the founders of the centre. Few studies of child abuse that could indicate where the need for support and remedial measures lies have been carried out in Iceland. The report to the Minister of Justice on preventive measures against domestic violence, assistance to victims and remedial measures for perpetrators, dated 12 May 1998, stated: "On the other hand, the committee is of the opinion that violence against children cannot be treated separately from domestic violence. All violence committed in homes where there are children is also violence against those children. The committee points out that while many of the remedies proposed in the report may be of advantage to children, there is a need for a comprehensive study of the frequency of acts of violence and sexual abuse against children and the handling of such cases, irrespective of whether or not they take place in the home or elsewhere." This view is hereby endorsed, and it is recommended that a nationwide study be made of mental cruelty, physical violence and sexual abuse against children.

Measure	A nationwide study should be made of mental cruelty and physical violence against children. Sexual offences against children should be studied in the same way. The study should not be restricted to surveying the extent of the abuse; the risk factors and consequences of the abuse should be the main focus. In addition, a survey should be made of the remedies available for children in this group and, as appropriate, further remedial measures should be developed.
Responsible body	Ministry of Social Affairs.
Time-frame	January 2008–end of 2011.

#### ***4. Child victims of domestic violence or sexual abuse should be guaranteed suitable assistance.***

##### **AIM**

**That child victims of domestic violence or sexual abuse receive individually-tailored treatment.**

Here follow measures designed to meet the needs of child victims of domestic violence or sexual abuse.

##### **Monitoring of the handling of cases by the child welfare authorities.**

The child welfare authorities play an important role in cases involving suspicion that a parent/guardian has subjected his child to mental cruelty, physical violence or sexual abuse. The same applies to cases where a parent/guardian is unable to protect the child against the violent behaviour of a third party. Statistical data from recent years show an increase in the number of notifications of violence against children in Iceland. Whether the actual scope and nature of the cases put before the child welfare authorities has changed in recent years has not been investigated. Nor do data exist showing how the local authorities in all parts of the country have responded to this increase in notified cases. In the light of this, there is felt to be a need to examine the size of the problem in Iceland, and then to assess whether criteria should be set regarding the number of cases handled by staff at any given time.

Measure 1	The obligation of the Government Agency for Child Protection to monitor the work of the child welfare committees (cf. Article 8 of the Child Protection Act, No. 80/2002), should be expanded to include the demanding of information about the handling of cases and speed of their processing at quarterly intervals.
Responsible body	Ministry of Social Affairs.
Time-frame	November 2006 to end of 2011.
Measure 2	Following a survey and data-collecting operation by the Government Agency for Child Protection, an assessment should be made of whether there is reason to establish criteria regarding the number of cases handled by the staff at any given time.
Responsible body	Ministry of Social Affairs.
Time-frame	January 2007 to the end of 2011.

### **Taking of statements from children.**

The legal provisions covering the taking of statements from children in cases potentially involving sexual abuse, and the application of these provisions, have been under intense discussion in Iceland. This has focussed, in particular, on where statements are to be taken and who is to take them. If cases are investigated by the police, the current arrangement is that the place where testimony is taken from the child is determined by a judge. In the light of the age of criminal liability being fixed at 15 years, it is considered that children under the age of 15 should give testimony in the Children's House (Barnahús).

Measure	The courts should be instructed to make use, whenever possible, of the facilities in the Children's House for taking statements from children under the age of 15 in cases involving suspected sexual offences.
Responsible body	Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs.
Completion date	May 2007.

### **Treatment for children.**

Treatment for children who have been subjected to mental cruelty, physical violence and/or sexual abuse must be tailored to the individual case, based on an individual assessment of the needs of the child.

Child welfare committees, the police and the district courts are able to make use of the services of the Children's House in connection with suspected cases of child abuse. The Children's Psychiatric Ward of Landspítalinn (the National and University Hospital of Iceland), treatment homes for children, the psychological departments of schools, self-employed psychologists and psychiatrists also provide services for these children. Mental cruelty and physical abuse against children have not received the same amount of attention and follow-up action as cases of sexual abuse, despite statistical data indicating that a considerable number of children are the victims of such violence.

Excellent facilities have been established at the Children's House for medical examinations of children. A three-man professional team from Landspítalinn is on duty at the Children's House at a fixed time for part of the day every fortnight. When emergency medical services are required, the child welfare authorities send those concerned direct to the Emergency Ward of Landspítalinn, the Children's Ward of the Akureyri Provincial Hospital or the nearest primary healthcare/healthcare facilities.

Measure	The work of the Children's House shall be supported and extended by publicising its services and finding ways of better meeting the needs of children who have been subjected to violence of all types.
Responsible body	Ministry of Social Affairs.
Time-frame	To begin in June 2007.

## **Police investigations into cases of violence against children.**

In cases of suspected sexual abuse, care is taken to ensure that specialist treatment of the child does not commence until after a statement has been taken from the child or an exploratory interview has taken place, as it is considered likely to have a damaging effect on the prosecution of the case in the criminal justice system, and could potentially influence the child's testimony in court or statements made in the exploratory interview if the child undergoes treatment before the case is investigated.

No statistics are available on the length of time that typically elapses between the referral of a case to the police and the first taking of a statement from the child.

Measure	An examination should be made of the average length of time that elapsed during the period 2000-2005 between the referral of cases to the police and the first taking of a statement from the children involved and commencement of treatment of the child by specialists. It is important that ways be sought of rectifying any shortcomings that may be found in the conduct of police investigations.
Responsible body	Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs.
Completion date	June 2007.

## ***5. The vicious circle of violent behaviour is to be broken by putting additional resources into remedial treatment for the perpetrators.***

### **AIM**

**That the perpetrators of violence and sexual abuse involving children be given an opportunity of undergoing treatment aimed at breaking the pattern of violent behaviour.**

### **Remedial treatment for young offenders.**

Children who subject other children to mental cruelty, physical violence and/or sexual abuse are entitled to assistance and treatment under the Child Protection Act, No. 80/2002, in the same way as other children who are beset by problems and/or suffer from illnesses. It is important to provide treatment for children in this group, partly for preventive purposes; overseas studies have demonstrated that there is a considerable likelihood that they will commit violent acts later in life. The child welfare authorities, the Children's Psychiatric Ward of Landspítalinn and private specialists provide services for this group, but there is no remedial treatment programme apart from that offered at the treatment centre Berg.

Situated in the north of Iceland, the treatment centre Berg has accepted boys for treatment who have committed sexual offences against children. The staff of the home have worked under the guidance of a specialist in this field, in addition to which the boys have received individual treatment from the same specialist. Since 2000, nine boys who have all committed offences of a sexual offences against other children have spent time at the treatment centre Berg. Between 1 November 1998 and the end of 2004, suspected sexual offenders in 32% of

the cases handled in the Children's Centre were younger than 18 years; there were 127 offenders in this age-group, including the brothers, family friends or neighbours of the victims.

A British study from 2003 demonstrated that children who have been subjected to physical violence are more likely than those who are the victims of sexual abuse to commit acts of sexual abuse against other children. The same study also showed that young sexual offenders exhibit behaviour that is characterised by gross violence and threats towards children, while adult perpetrators tend rather to have other ways of enticing their victims to them. The findings of this British study are compatible with what has been found in cases investigated at the Children's House in recent years involving young sexual offenders. Overseas studies also show that half of adult sexual offenders begin this conduct during their teens, and this proportion is thought to be on the rise. As can be seen from the findings of these studies, violence tends to be perpetuated in a chain reaction both within the home and outside it and also from one generation to the next. No studies have been done of young violence offenders in Iceland.

Measure	A team of professional specialists skilled in the treatment of young offenders who have subjected other children to mental cruelty, physical violence and/or sexual abuse should be set up.
Responsible body	Ministry of Social Affairs.
Time-frame	January 2008–September 2011.

### **Treatment while serving prison sentences.**

A certain number of the individuals sentenced for acts of child abuse appear to lack a moral sense towards children. Some of them have serious personality disorders or mental disorders, and these may be in greater danger of abusing children if circumstances present themselves. In addition, these individuals are likely to be offenders in other areas.

Measure	Those sentenced to prison for acts of child abuse should undergo treatment during their prison terms, the aim of this being to reduce the likelihood of recidivism following their release. Treatment of this type could also constitute part of their punishment.
Responsible body	Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs.
Time-frame	To begin in 2007.

## **PART II**

### **Measures to tackle domestic violence and sexual offences against women.**

#### ***1. General.***

Here follows an account of the measures that the Government intends to take during the time covered by this plan in order to prevent domestic violence and sexual offences against adults. Four main aims are identified in the plan; several measures are listed applying to each, with reasons for their choice.

The bodies responsible for each of the measures are named and in some cases other parties which will be involved in applying the measures are also listed. The completion date and time-frame for each measure are also specified.

#### ***2. Further preventive measures should be taken to encourage public discussion of gender-based violence and changes of attitude in society.***

### **AIM**

#### **To prevent domestic violence and sexual offences against women.**

Gender-based violence is a social problem which has long been in existence. For a long time it was concealed, but has now been brought out into the open in recent years and received more public attention. Considerable results have been achieved in recent years in terms of better understanding and more open access to assistance and services for the victims of gender-based violence. All efforts must be put into strengthening preventive measures and putting across a clear message to the effect that gender-based violence is never justified under any circumstances.

If substantial results are to be achieved in the struggle against gender-based violence, it is a matter of urgency that society should recognise the existence of the problem and take deliberate steps to prevent it from being tolerated.

### **Awareness-raising campaign.**

Collaboration must be sought with the media and NGOs in order to publicise the message that gender-based violence is not tolerated in Icelandic society. The aim of this is to make people aware of the existence of domestic and gender-based violence, the nature of the problem and where victims can turn for support and assistance. It is also important to examine how traditional gender roles and stereotypes may encourage violence against women.

Measure	The Government should hold regular awareness-raising campaigns, in collaboration with the media and NGOs, with the emphasis on putting across a preventive message, so encouraging public condemnation of gender-based violence. At the same time, action should be taken to counter traditional gender roles and stereotypes which encourages violence against women.
Responsible body	Ministry of Social Affairs.
Other participants	Association of Local Authorities in Iceland.
Time-frame	2007–2011.

### **Awareness-raising measures for the public.**

Domestic violence is one type of gender-based violence which is often difficult to detect and analyse. It takes many forms which must be recognised and identified. These may range from physical blows and injuries of all types to mental cruelty, including disrespect, rejection, humiliation and threats, which is often more difficult to detect. Sexual violence is another type of gender-based violence to which attention must be drawn. It is envisaged that posters with information about domestic violence will be produced and distributed and displayed as widely as possible. It is important that the campaign should reach as wide a public as possible, and therefore these posters will be produced in various languages in addition to Icelandic to take account of the fact that the number of non-Icelandic speakers in the country has risen recently.

Measure	A poster should be produced, in Icelandic and also in various other languages, with information on the nature of domestic violence in all its forms (mental cruelty, physical violence or sexual abuse). It should also contain information on where victims can turn for support and advice. The posters should be distributed and displayed as widely as possible.
Responsible body	Ministry of Social Affairs.
Other parties involved	The Women's Shelter (Kvennaathvarfið).
Completion date	April 2007.



### **Checklist for use in pre- and post-natal health care.**

Overseas studies show that women are in twice as much danger of being subjected to violence by their partners while they are pregnant than otherwise. The aim of using a checklist is to screen for violence against pregnant women. It is also intended to put the message across that society is concerned over the problem of violence, which is not merely the private concern of the victims.

Measure	A checklist should be drawn up for use in pre-and post-natal examinations so as to monitor the social circumstances of expectant mothers, including the incidence of violence in their homes.
Responsible body	Ministry of Health and Social Security.
Completion date	March 2008.

### **Guideline action plans for the local authorities.**

It is important that the local authorities should take deliberate steps on prevention, including awareness-raising campaigns among the public, to tackle the problem of gender-based violence among the inhabitants of their local government areas. It is also important to ensure that the services in the immediate environment of the victims be efficient and that it should be clear where people can go when they need help. It is not less vital that various service-providers within the local authorities should maintain smooth cooperation.

Measure	The Ministry of Social Affairs should publish a guideline plan of action for the local authorities, including, amongst other things, preventive methods, ways of screening for violence and ways of detecting its consequences. One of these methods is to establish cross-discipline collaboration on the issue.
Responsible body	Ministry of Social Affairs.
Other participants	Association of Local Authorities in Iceland.
Completion date	September 2007.

### ***3. The staff of institutions should be given assistance in recognising symptoms of gender-based violence and acting to help the victims.***

#### **AIM**

**To increase the knowledge and skills of staff working with the victims of gender-based violence and to establish greater cooperation between them.**

#### **Assistance and treatment for the victims of domestic violence.**

It is necessary that the victims of domestic violence have easy access to specialist services and know where to find them. In recent years, victims of sexual offences have been able to go to the Emergency Reception Unit for Rape Victims for help and support. No comparable

service exists for the victims of domestic violence, and as a result it is largely a matter of chance where they go in search of help. A great deal of experience and skill has been built up at the Emergency Reception Unit for Rape Victims and the Centre for Post-Traumatic Assistance regarding violence and its effects; as it is important to provide victims of domestic violence with very much the same sort of assistance as victims of sexual offences and sexual abuse, it is envisaged that the services of these two units should be available to them too. It is also important that the Emergency Reception Unit for Rape Victims and the Centre for Post-Traumatic Assistance establish closer cooperation with parties involved with the victims of domestic violence in order to enhance the quality of services available to this group.

Measure	The Ministry of Health and Social Security should commission the director of Landspítalinn (the National and University Hospital) to submit proposals on how to support the Emergency Reception Unit for Rape Victims and the Centre for Post-Traumatic Assistance within the hospital, expand their collaboration and broaden their sphere of operations so as to embrace both domestic violence and sexual violence. Following consultation with the Ministry of Health and Social Security, these proposals should then be put into practice. Furthermore, the director should be commissioned to investigate other methods of promoting more efficient collaboration with the social welfare authorities, the child protection authorities, the primary health clinics, NGOs and other parties involved with the victims of gender-based violence.
Responsible body	Ministry of Health and Social Security.
Time-frame	Proposals are to be ready by the end of 2007.

### **Professional training.**

It is necessary that the training curricula (both basic training and continuing education, extension courses, etc.) of those who in the course of their work deal with the victims of gender-based violence, such as health-service workers, ministers of religion, psychologists, social workers, teachers, pre-school teachers, policemen and lawyers, including judges, should include material about gender-based violence, including how it is to be defined, its causes and consequences and, not least, how to respond if cases of this type arise. A possible aspect of this would be special teaching and training for certain professions in conversational technique and the reception and examination of victims of gender-based violence.

Measure 1	Training (both basic training and extension courses, etc.) is to be upgraded in the professions involved in identifying and treating the victims of gender-based violence. The Ministry of Education should give instructions to the educational institutions involved in training professionals whose work will include dealing with the victims of gender-based violence to include teaching about gender-based violence in the curriculum. Steps shall also be taken to promote the production of educational materials.
Responsible body	Ministry of Education.

Time-frame	September 2007 to the end of 2011.
Measure 2	More emphasis should be placed in the National Police College on teaching about domestic violence and sexual violence, including an examination of causes and effects and methods of responding to cases of this type.
Responsible body	Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs.
Time-frame	September 2007–October 2011.

### **Manual on domestic violence.**

It is proposed that work begin on the preparation of a manual on domestic violence that could be of use to members of a number of different professions, including health-service workers, social workers, teachers and lawyers, including judges. Such a manual could, for example, be of use in teaching in schools, and could also be of value to those already employed in the professions listed. It is important that the material be presented in an accessible and clear manner.

Measure	A manual should be published containing information for professionals involved in dealing with the victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, the aim being to present important information for these professionals regarding this type of violence.
Responsible body	Ministry of Social Affairs.
Other participants	The Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Social Security, and the Association of Local Authorities in Iceland.
Completion date	March 2007.

### **Manual for health-service workers.**

Increased competence and skills on the part of health-service workers who are involved with the victims of gender-based violence is an important element in preventive work against violence. It is important that these health-service workers have common goals and work according to the same definitions so that the victim will at all times receive the best possible service.

Measure	An examination should be made to see whether there is reason to compile a manual with clinical directions for workers in the health services with the aim of supporting and increasing the capacity of these workers and coordinating their working methods.
Responsible body	Ministry of Health and Social Security.
Completion date	June 2007.

### **Regular consultative meetings.**

It is important that steps should be taken to establish active cooperation between the individual bodies involved in cases arising from gender-based violence in order to ensure coordinated responses and collaboration on handling these matters in an appropriate manner. At the same time, it is no less important that the various professional groupings involved make their knowledge and information available to each other to make it possible to develop approaches that are likely to prove effective in preventing gender-based violence. Thus, it is proposed that regular meetings be held within each police jurisdiction area with the professionals who work in the area in order to coordinate measures to deal with domestic and sexual violence.

Measure	Regular consultative meetings should be held, at least twice a year in each police district with representatives of the social services, the school authorities, the primary health services, the police and the hospitals (where appropriate), and also representatives of local associations of the local authorities. The aim of these consultative meetings should be to coordinate measures to deal with domestic violence and sexual violence and ensure that good working procedures are followed in this work.
Responsible body	Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs.
Other participants	Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Health and Social Security, Ministry of Education and the Association of Local Authorities in Iceland.
Time-frame	To commence at the beginning of 2007.

### **Annual information-sharing day.**

The local authorities play an important part in assisting the victims of domestic and sexual violence to tackle their situation. The local authorities' social services play a key role in this, and it is important that the directors of social affairs and other managers working in the social services should meet each year to exchange information and share their experience.

Measure	An annual information-sharing day should be held each year on which the directors and other managers of the local authorities' social services meet and turn their attention primarily to the causes and effects of gender-based violence and also how the social services can work against it.
Responsible body	Ministry of Social Affairs and Association of Local Authorities in Iceland.
Time-frame	First meeting to be held in spring 2007.



### **Survey of the scale of domestic violence against men.**

When the subject of domestic violence comes up, attention is seldom given to men as victims. Studies show that about 3% of the victims of domestic violence are men; however, their circumstances have received scant attention in Iceland. It is therefore considered appropriate to investigate the scale of violence of this type in Iceland so as to be able to assess what measures should be taken to prevent it.

Measure	A survey should be made of the scale and frequency of domestic violence against men with a view to establishing the size of the problem and determining what measures should be taken to prevent it.
Responsible body	Ministry of Social Affairs.
Time-frame	January 2008 to the end of 2011.

### ***4. The victims of domestic violence and sexual violence should be guaranteed appropriate assistance.***

#### **AIM**

**That victims of domestic violence and sexual violence receive individually-tailored treatment.**

#### **Procedural rules for the police.**

The National Police Commissioner has approved procedural rules for the handling and recording of cases of domestic violence by the police; these are seen as having made a great improvement. In the same way, it is also seen as important that procedural rules should be set for the police regarding sexual offences which is also a sensitive issue.

Measure 1	Procedural rules for the police will be set so as to ensure that the investigation of cases involving sexual offences should be efficient and of a high quality. Emphasis should be placed on prompt response and quick execution of the investigations so that important evidence is not lost.
Responsible body	Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs.
Completion date	January 2008.
Measure 2	The Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs should issue clear rules on procedures to be followed by the police when appointing legal advisors under Section VII of the Code of Criminal Procedure, No. 19/1991, with subsequent amendments.
Responsible body	Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs.
Completion date	January 2008.

## **Defence counsels.**

In cases involving sexual offences, the victim has the right to have a lawyer to defend his/her interests if he/she so desires. On the other hand, the police are obliged to appoint a lawyer to defend the interests of the victim in cases of violence or offences against personal freedom, and when the victim has suffered substantial injury to his physical or mental health and is considered by the police to be in particular need of having such a person to assist him/her. The police are also obliged to appoint a lawyer to defend the victim's interests in cases where he/she has not reached the age of 18 when the investigation of the case begins. The role of the appointed lawyer is to defend the interests of the victim during the investigation of the case and to give him/her assistance, this including the presentation of private-law claims and demands, e.g. for compensation for non-pecuniary damage. It is considered important that the victims of domestic violence should be guaranteed the services of a lawyer to defend their interests in the same way as applies to the victims of sexual offences, particularly because violence of this type may have been inflicted on them over a long period of time and perpetrators and victims are often connected by close family ties.

Measure	An amendment should be made to Section VII of the Code of Criminal Procedure, No. 19/1991, with subsequent amendments, so as to give the victims of domestic violence the right of having a lawyer appointed to defend their interests in the same way as applies to the victims of sexual offences.
Responsible body	Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs.
Completion date	May 2007.

## **Exclusion orders.**

Under the Act No. 94/2000, the courts have been empowered since 2000 to impose exclusion orders at the request of the police. An exclusion order means that the person on whom it is served is prohibited from going to a particular address or area and following, visiting or contacting in any other way, the person who is protected under the order. For an exclusion order to be imposed, there must be reason to believe that the person concerned will commit an offence or disturb the peace of the person protected in some other way. The aim of an exclusion order is, primarily, to protect a victim of violence and prevent the occurrence of further violence. The general rule is that only the police are able to request a court to impose an exclusion order; this is generally done at the request of the person seeking protection, but the police are also able to request an order on their own initiative. In the light of the fact that the circumstances involved here are often of an emergency nature, it is proposed that an examination be made of whether the police should be empowered to take the decision to impose an exclusion order; it would be possible to appeal against such a decision subsequently by referring it to a district court. Such an arrangement would seem more likely to achieve the aims of exclusion orders, which are only intended to be applied in very serious cases.

Measure	The provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure, No. 19/1991, should be examined with a view to whether the police should be empowered to impose exclusion orders immediately in cases of domestic violence. Appeals could then be lodged with the district courts against such decisions by the police.
Responsible body	Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs.
Completion date	May 2007.

### **Evaluation of legal remedies.**

Various legal remedies have been passed by the Althingi in recent years to improve the position of the victims of gender-based violence. It is important to examine and evaluate the results achieved by these remedies in practice, and to consider whether they should be reviewed in the light of experience.

Measure	The experience gained by the application of the legal remedies that have been introduced in law in recent years, including exclusion orders and measures to protect witnesses, should be subjected to a systematic evaluation.
Responsible body	Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs.
Completion date	January 2008.

### ***5. The vicious circle of violence is to be broken by putting more resources into treatment remedies for the perpetrators.***

#### **AIM**

**That the perpetrators of gender-based violence against women be offered the opportunity of undergoing treatment aimed at breaking the pattern of repeated violence.**

#### **Treatment remedies for the perpetrators.**

The *Karlar til ábyrgðar* ('Men's Responsibilities') project is designed to provide treatment and assistance for men who have committed acts of domestic violence if they are prepared to seek help in combating their tendency to resort to violence. The perpetrators in cases of sexual offences have not had access to any comparable service. An examination must be made of whether the ideology behind the 'Men's Responsibilities' project would also suit sexual offenders, or whether other methods must be found. It must be considered that the perpetrators would be more likely to seek assistance if they knew where to turn and were confident that they would receive help.



Measure	The ‘Men’s Responsibilities’ project should be expanded and supported with more resources. An examination should be made to establish whether the same methods that are used in the case of perpetrators of domestic violence could be applied, and the same support given, to the perpetrators of sexual offences. Furthermore, attention should be given to providing further support for the families of perpetrators who seek help with their problems.
Responsible body	Ministry of Social Affairs.
Completion date	January 2009.

**Treatment remedies to be applied during the service of prison sentences.**

Violence is a primitive method of resolving disputes, and is employed by individuals who have difficulty in controlling certain circumstances. In most cases, the will to stop using violence is not sufficient to change the individual’s behaviour pattern. It is therefore important to ensure that perpetrators have access to help with gaining control of their behaviour and using more acceptable methods of communication while they are serving their prison sentences so as to prevent the recurrence of violent behaviour when they leave prison.

Measure	Those who have been sentenced to prison for gender-based violence should undergo appropriate treatment, e.g. in controlling anger, during their time in prison so as to reduce the likelihood of repeated offences after they are released. Treatment of this type could also constitute part of their sentences.
Responsible body	Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs.
Time-frame	Beginning of 2008.