

'Dignity' Project

**Sonas' role and services for
VOTs**

3rd November 2009



Sonas Housing Association



- Is a specialist voluntary housing organisation which provides supported housing to women and children who are out of home due to domestic violence.
- We work with local authorities and other housing providers to assist women and children to move from medium to long-term accommodation.

16/02/2010

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The Sonas Housing Association's mission...



- Sonas works from a human rights based approach to the issue of violence against women
- It uses a feminist analysis of the causes of violence to women which recognises it as a gender based crime and the ultimate expression of the unequal position of women in society
- Committed to ensuring justice for the victim and accountability of and sanctions against violent men
- In the current Sonas strategic plan, the mission was broadened from DV to gender based violence against women & girls and trafficking was identified

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Sonas Services



- 8 supported housing services in Dublin
- A further 23 units in development including:
 - a Women's Refuge which will provide emergency accommodation for 8 women and their families
 - 15 apartments in a mixed development in North Dublin
- Referrals from HSE teams, refuges, DV services, addiction services & Immigrant Council
- In 2008, 61 women and 88 children used the Sonas support service

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Sonas Services



- Key worker system Needs assessment
 - Support plan – goal planning
 - Case management approach to link the woman into mainstream & specialist service
- A children's service in 3 locations involving:
 - Children's needs assessment and support plan
 - Mother and Toddler Group (and toy library)
 - Pre-school group & After-school groups
 - Use of posters and resources explicitly referring to children's experiences of domestic violence
 - Work with staff in other agencies to identify potential model for joint work with children and mothers

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Sonas specialist & transferrable services to VOTs



- Advice on legal remedies and procedures for dealing with domestic violence
- Safety planning and risk assessment at all stages
- Court accompaniment in relation to obtaining and enforcing orders and in relation to custody and access
- Providing a specialist support service to women which is structured during the period of their tenancy, liaising with the Gardai in the local stations
- Working with women in relation to parenting, dealing with the effects of violence on children

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The Learning for Sonas



- Addressing VAW needs both support of victims, specialist services in health, legal, housing, policing and justice system – all needed in working with VOTs
- Many parallels between the accommodation and support responses for victims of DV and trafficking
 - shelters, scatter flats, use of women's refuges
 - Support needs of women are similar – trauma, services, addictions, etc.
- Cross sectoral working and a well-coordinated response for VOTs at all stages needed
- Importance of NGOs and State working together

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The Learning for Sonas



- ❑ Safety planning and risk assessment crucial part of the work
- ❑ Importance of linking the woman and children into appropriate services – based on a needs assessment and support / care plan
- ❑ Need to adapt specific tools for risk assessment, safety planning, needs assessments and support plans
- ❑ Immediate, short term and long term responses needed

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The Learning for Sonas



- ❑ Need for specialist trained workers in all services – but in accommodation
- ❑ Awareness of trafficking and its impacts on victims
- ❑ Capacity to deal with post traumatic stress, mental health issues, addictions – all impacts on VOTs
- ❑ Awareness of the danger of retraumatising victims
- ❑ Need to building self esteem, independence, etc. through programmes

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Dignity project



- An opportunity to develop appropriate responses to women and girls VOT – policy influencing
- Developing integrated and co-ordinated service model
- Could consider specialist housing support services and refuge accommodation to ensure that the victims are housed and supported in safe, secure and appropriate accommodation
- Transferring practice and tools across from VAW work to VOT work – empowerment work, needs assessment and safety planning, case management, outcome measurement, etc.

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Specialist Accommodation & Support response needed for VOT's



- Immediate accommodation
 - crisis accommodation – women's refuges, or homeless accommodation?
- Accommodation during the reflection and recovery period (60 days)
 - specialist shelters needed with security, safety, expertise on site in 'holistic' needs assessment, safety planning, 'case management' and linking into services
- Post 60 day
 - accommodation and support – programmes for training and education, personal development, addressing impact of trauma, etc.
 - Two types – on site supported for more vulnerable & visiting support to less vulnerable

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