

SUMMARY

This report describes the assessment of the status of the interdepartmental approach to domestic violence. The assessment was carried out by INTRAVAL Bureau for Research and Consultancy on behalf of the Ministry of Justice's Research and Documentation Centre (WODC). The aim of the study is to obtain a central and current overview of the activities that the different departments have undertaken to tackle domestic violence. The starting point is the 'Domestic Violence Action Plan up to 2011 - The next phase'.

Two main sources of information were used for this assessment: documents and interviews. The document study enabled us to gather and analyse (written) information on activities that are part of the national approach to domestic violence. Twenty two interviews were conducted with 27 key informants in four subcategories: ministerial departments; professional organizations; criminal prosecution; and other. The status of the interdepartmental approach is described using the multidisciplinary components prevention, signalling and intervention.

Prevention

The departments carried out a number of universal prevention activities, most on behalf of the Ministry of Justice, and a third national domestic violence campaign was started in the autumn of 2009. A child abuse campaign was started in the same year; it will run for two years, while the domestic violence campaign will run every year for six weeks. Both campaigns target prevention and escalation; intervening when a certain degree of violence has already taken place. Although the departments group both components under prevention activities, they can also be seen as activities that encourage reporting (which results in help). At the national level, the departments started limited activities aimed at target groups. In 2008, the education programme 'Stay in Love+', for which pilots are currently running, was developed for youths. This programme addresses prevention at an early stage and is aimed at preventing violence. The results of the studies 'Type and extent of domestic violence' and 'Prevention of intergenerational transmission' can contribute to targeted prevention at an early stage. Independent of the Action Plan, the Ministry of Justice is funding the project *Doorbreek Huiselijk geweld* (Stop Domestic Violence) by the *Nederlandse Vrouwenraad* (Dutch Women's Council) that started in October 2009.

Signaling

The department's activities encourage professionals to report, and are carried out on behalf of different ministries. An important development in this area is the *Wet meldcode huiselijk geweld en kindermishandeling* (Reporting Code Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Act) that will enter into effect in 2011, and the accompanying implementation project that started in 2009. Since then, several activities have been grouped under this Act and/or will be started/resumed within its framework. The *Leren Signaleren* (Learn to Signal) project was transferred to and included in the Reporting Code Act implementation project. Another part of the project is the improvement of expertise in recognizing signals of children that witness domestic violence. According to our study into the workings of the instrument *Kindspoor*, professionals have a need for improvement in their relevant expertise.

The recommendations of the 'Effect of information exchange and professional confidentiality instruments' study will be incorporated in the reporting code project, and consist mainly of educating people about legal (im)possibilities. Strengthening the Domestic Violence Service Centres (*Steunpunten Huiselijk Geweld*) is also part of the reporting code project. The bill for a

mandatory reporting code designates the Domestic Violence Service Centre as reporting centre for domestic violence, making it a legal reporting centre. The goal is to list the DVSC's other basic functions in this bill.

Intervention

Most of the action points in the domestic violence action plan relate to the multidisciplinary component intervention, which includes assistance, shelter and prosecution. The activities that touch on the multidisciplinary component intervention are primarily carried out on behalf of the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. The latter commissions activities that are more related to shelter and assistance. An important step that considerably impacted assistance and the way it is organised, was the entry into force of the Domestic Exclusion Order in January 2009. This act is accompanied by a project that helps the field implement it. A good implementation of domestic exclusion ensures that assistance is system-oriented and cohesive and aimed at stopping the violence. Several studies were carried out to gain insight into the progress of the multidisciplinary collaboration. Moreover, a lot is currently being done to improve the quality of the Domestic Violence Service Centre. The DVSC's tasks and functions must be clearly defined, in particular because the Domestic Violence Service Centre will be designated as a legal reporting point for domestic violence. Finally, it is important to involve the field in the development of registration systems.

Conclusion

Domestic violence is a widespread phenomenon that consists of problems that cover several departments' competences. Components of the domestic violence approach are also part of several ministries' policy plans. Since the Domestic Violence Action Plan started in 2008, several departments have started a number of activities that supplement the domestic violence action plan's multidisciplinary components prevention, reporting and intervention. It was important to make sure that these different measures did not result in a hotchpotch of activities at the local level. Over time, the multidisciplinary activities became more cohesive, among other things because some activities were moved to umbrella activities or resumed as part thereof. In order for an approach to work, activities must be carried out in concert where possible, the needs of the field must be taken into account, and harmonization must be ongoing.