



# Measures to combat violence in the family and in intimate relations

## National action plan

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VIOLENCE IN THE FAMILY  
AND IN INTIMATE RELATIONS**  
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Holmens Kanal 22  
DK-1060 Copenhagen K

Tel.: +45 33 92 93 00

E-mail: [sm@sm.dk](mailto:sm@sm.dk)

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## 1. Foreword

Each year, some 29,000 women and 10,000<sup>1</sup> men are exposed to violence from a former or current partner. Around 28,000 children grow up in homes with violence, and these children face higher risks of bringing a pattern as a perpetrator and/or a victim with them into their relations in adult life.

Violence in the family and in intimate relations is still a problem in Denmark. The Government is determined to combat this violence. Therefore the Government has set an ambitious social 2020-goal to the effect that the percentage of women in women's crisis centres needing more than one stay must be reduced by at least 30% by 2020. Violence in intimate relations does not reflect our opinion of a society based on respect and gender equality.

Today, we have well-functioning health, social and legal systems with a wealth of preventive, treating and supporting measures. In addition, the Government has taken a large number of targeted initiatives to bring an end to violence in the family. Initiatives supplementing the established measures and interacting with this action plan, including the Strategy to combat honour-related conflicts, and a number of rate adjustment pool projects, including establishment of intervention centres and psychological assistance for female victims.

The focus of the Government's measures has been and still is to combat violence against women and children. There are many indications that the number of women exposed to violence in the family and in intimate relations is declining, but the number is still high. But people other than women may be exposed to violence in the family and in intimate relations. Surveys<sup>2</sup> show that the number of men who are exposed to violence in the family has increased, and that far too many young people are exposed to violence from a girlfriend or boyfriend. This is not acceptable. All people must have the possibility of a life free from violence.

Violence in the family and in intimate relations is seen in all layers of society. It creates insecurity and results in health problems, loss of welfare and it limits the individual's quality of life and possibility of having a full life. For women, this may be ongoing psychological and physical violence as part of comprehensive control and display of power in the relationship. For men exposed to physical and psychological violence from a female partner, there is the extra barrier that partner violence against men is – if possible – even more tabooed than against women. And some young people do not realise that they are actually exposed to violence, and they do not know how to respond to it.

Regardless of the form and expression of the violence and who it affects, everyone is entitled to a life without violence. That is why the Government assumes responsibility for combating violence in the family and in intimate relations. With this action plan, the Government will continue, enhance and improve measures in favour of a broad target group of people exposed to violence. Short term, the action plan is to supplement the existing services and facilities and spotlight new problems. Long term, the aim is to reduce violence in the family and in intimate relations even further, and thus to achieve a better and more equal society.

**Manu Sareen**

Minister for Children, Gender Equality,  
Integration and Social Affairs

**Karen Hækkerup**

Minister for Justice

**Nick Hækkerup**

Minister for Health

**Christine Antorini**

Minister for Education

## 2. Introduction

Violence in the family and in intimate relations is a serious problem; no matter who is exposed to the violence, for the children witnessing the violence, for the individual family and for society as a whole. The violence also reflects a lack of gender equality and respect between the perpetrator and the victim.

Surveys<sup>3</sup> indicate that an estimated 29,000 women a year are exposed to violence from a former or current partner, and that even more women are exposed to violence once in the course of their lives.

The violence not only has costs for the individual. It also costs the Danish society many resources. Calculations show that violence against women costs the Danish society about DKK 500 million a year. Of this amount, the annual costs related to partner violence against women are estimated to be at least DKK 280 million<sup>5</sup>.

The health, social and legal systems offer a wide range of preventive, treating and supporting measures targeted at different forms of violence: violence in the family, in the street, in the workplace, sexual violence and honour-related violence.

The measures relating to violence in the family and in intimate relations can generally be divided into three phases: 1) detection and prevention, 2) treatment, support and care for the victim and treatment of the perpetrator, 3) aftercare/reintegration. For each of these phases, a number of functions have been established to support the various target groups, including women, men, children, young people, ethnic minorities exposed to violence and the perpetrators.

Over time, violence in the family has primarily been perceived as violence against women. The authorities have therefore also particularly focused on helping women exposed to violence and their children. For instance, in the agreement on local government finances 2015, it is agreed that the Government and Local Government Denmark will, in the autumn of 2014, discuss the possibilities of implementing measures strengthening the local authorities' control instruments with a view to providing holistic measures for citizens staying at a women's crisis centre. Violence against women is still at the core of the measures in this area as women – both quantitatively and as far as the extent, severity and consequences of the violence are concerned – remain the ones affected the most.

However, the patterns and target groups of the violence change over time. Different groups of people exposed to violence will often have different needs for support and help. The key point is that the violence is unacceptable, regardless of who is exposed to it and that all people exposed to violence have access to support and help. For instance, the established system has so far not been focusing particularly on bi-directional violence between the adults in a family, on the fact that men may also be exposed to physical and psychological violence, on support for victims of stalking or on preventing and treating the consequences of the non-honour-related violence among ethnic minorities. Finally, it has proved difficult to address violence in relationships between young people, and the various services and facilities for young people who have been exposed to dating violence typically depend on whether the young person is above or below the age of 18.

Since 2002, three national action plans have developed and strengthened the existing measures, and these action plans have over the years met the need to intervene in relation to particularly vulnerable groups. The experience gained from earlier action plans<sup>6</sup> forms the basis of the measures outlined in this action plan, just as relevant authorities and voluntary players have provided input to the initiatives in the plan. The action plan builds on and supports the earlier plans, but also focuses on the fact that the patterns and target groups of violence change over time.

The long-term goal of the action plan is that the violence seen in the family and in intimate relations must be reduced even further to achieve a better and more equal society.

Both long-term and short-term goals must be achieved through the implementation of targeted and specific initiatives in the following four key action areas:

### **1. Strengthened handling and accumulation of knowledge about different forms of violence in the family and in intimate relations**

- Pilot studies will be developed and carried out to help the players in the area work cost-effectively with targeted services and facilities, relevant counselling and support for different target groups.
- Targeted, specific services and facilities will be established in terms of counselling, information and support for people exposed to different forms of violence.

### **2. Strengthened measures and more knowledge about male victims of violence in the family and in intimate relations**

- Knowledge about men's needs and situations will be developed to strengthen measures in favour of them.
- Ideas for solutions relating to counselling, information and specific support for men exposed to violence will be developed.

### **3. Early measures in relation to young people exposed to dating violence**

- Specific information measures will be implemented for young people about the consequences of dating violence.
- Counselling, support and treatment targeted at young people exposed to dating violence will be developed and tested.

### **4. Increased debate and knowledge about the consequences of violence in intimate relations**

- Knowledge and information about the extent and nature of different forms of violence in the family will be collected.
- Knowledge about violence will be communicated to the population to promote increased respect and gender equality.
- Information will be communicated to people exposed to violence and to professionals in order to increase their knowledge about the consequences and signals of violence as well as the options available for support and help.

The action plan supplements the existing measures in the social, health and legal systems, respectively, but also develops new ideas for solutions and gives priority to new areas.

The action plan is structured in such a manner that chapter 3 gives an account of the new initiatives and chapter 4 provides a general description of the services and facilities that a person exposed to violence can expect to receive under the auspices of the established system. Chapter 5 contains a description of how the plan will be implemented and organised.

## The action plan must produce results in the four key areas with the following activities:

### 1. Accumulation of knowledge and strengthened handling of the different forms of violence in the family and in intimate relations

- Pilot studies will be undertaken with measures targeted at all members of the family exposed to violence. This can happen, e.g. through enhancement of the local family services and facilities so that they are able to handle violence and bi-directional violence in the family.
- Pilot studies will be undertaken with temporary accommodation facilities for male perpetrators so that women and children can stay in their familiar settings.
- A national hotline will be established, which people exposed to any form of violence in the family and in intimate relations can call for counselling and support.
- Knowledge-based information material will be prepared for professionals on bi-directional violence in the family, men exposed to violence, etc.
- A strengthened information campaign for ethnic minority women, including women having stayed at a crisis centre, will be launched.
- A risk assessment tool will be developed and implemented to improve the police's opportunities to handle stalking cases as appropriately as possible, and guidelines will be prepared and lectures about stalking will be given in the police districts.
- Specific and practice-based initiatives of counselling and support targeting victims of stalking and their specific needs will be implemented.

### 2. Strengthened measures and more knowledge about male victims of violence in the family

- Gender-specific support measures will be developed so that men exposed to violence will be offered socio-professional support, legal assistance and psychological support. Moreover, pilots with accommodation facilities for men exposed to violence will be performed, e.g. under the auspices of the already existing facilities.
- Knowledge about men exposed to violence will be communicated to professionals, especially at the local authorities.

### 3. Early measures in relation to young people exposed to dating violence

- Tests will be conducted in the treatment of young people who suffer from the consequences of dating violence.
- School competitions will be held on dating violence with a view to informing young people and involving them in debates about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour between girlfriends and boyfriends.
- Information/theme days will be organised at schools about domestic violence and dating violence.

### 4. Increased information and debate about the consequences of violence in intimate relations

- Campaign activities will be implemented as part of the fight against violence in the family and in intimate relations, including in relation to men exposed to violence, stalking, violence in same-sex relationships, etc.
- The national survey of violence in the family and in intimate relations will be continued.
- Surveys/mapping of the occurrence of and background to bi-directional violence will be undertaken.
- An evaluation of this action plan will be performed.



## 3. Initiatives

With this action plan, the Government has singled out four key action areas to supplement the existing system. The four areas are presented below and the new initiatives are described.

### 1. Accumulation of knowledge about and strengthened handling of the different forms of violence in the family and in intimate relations

Violence in the family and in intimate relations can change its patterns and forms over time. To be able to provide optimum help and support to victims and perpetrators, it is important that focus is on the fact that violence comes in various forms and in different contexts and that it, regardless of its nature, has immense negative consequences for the involved women, men and children in terms of emotions and well-being

A significant part of the emergency measures in relation to violence in the family has for many years been to offer women exposed to violence and their children to stay at a women's crisis centre. Nationally, about 2,000 women and about 2,000 children each year have left their homes to take refuge at a women's crisis centre, which, in several cases, has been situated far away from their local areas and thus away from, e.g., their work, networks, schools and day care centres.

Moreover, violence in intimate relations may constitute specific problems for some groups of women. Many ethnic minority women exposed to violence live in isolation, do not know their rights and do not have knowledge about where to find help. At national level, about half the women staying at a women's crisis centre have non-Danish backgrounds, and at the City of

Copenhagen's crisis centres, for instance, 63% of the women in 2012 had non-Danish backgrounds.

According to the report "Mapping the experience of aftercare and needs for new support options"<sup>7</sup>, abused women with non-Danish backgrounds have special needs for support and counselling in connection with contact with authorities and GPs and in connection with meetings about their children. Women's special needs are, for instance, attributable to linguistic barriers and a lack of knowledge about the Danish society. In addition, this group of women has a greater need for legal assistance on divorce, basis for residence, access and custody than ethnic Danish women exposed to violence. The measures to combat violence against women must constantly be strengthened and further developed. This is the case both in this action plan and in connection with the Government's 2020 goals.

However, some players in the field have been increasingly focusing on the fact that violence in the family can be bi-directional. This means that both parties in the relationship use violence to suppress and control each other<sup>8</sup>. When parents use violence against each other, the children are put in an extremely difficult situation. Bi-directional violence and the problems related to it are not always known and recognised, and they can often be difficult to handle for the established system, which primarily has experience of supporting the victim and which may not necessarily have knowledge of how to handle the fact that the violence is bi-directional.

#### Facts on bi-directional violence

US research<sup>9</sup> indicates that situational partner violence is the most common physical form of aggression among married and cohabiting parties. The phenomenon represents its own "form" of violence, which most often arises out of quarrels, which may develop into physical violence and into serious physical violence in some situations. Actual fear of the partner does not arise until the violence becomes regular and results in physical injury. Men and women are often equally to blame for resorting to violence.

Moreover, focus on stalking has been increasing. Stalking means systematic and persistent persecution and harassment. Surveys indicate that stalking can take many forms and include a number of different actions, ranging from text messages and harassment in the social media to long-term persecution and violent behaviour. Stalking can have serious and wide-ranging consequences for the victims. This is not least the case in the severe cases of stalking, which often have a dramatic effect on both victims and their potential children's possibilities of living a safe and secure life. In some cases, victims of stalking need to

be on sick leave from work, while others give up their residence and identity for safety reasons. Female victims of stalking are more often than male victims exposed to stalking by a person with whom they have had a close relationship, and there is a tendency that the stalking more often has had consequences for the people having been stalked by a person with whom they have had a close or intimate relationship<sup>10</sup>. Children of stalking victims are involved as new victims. Their well-being and childhood are affected, they have learning difficulties and their mental development is threatened<sup>11</sup>.

### Facts on stalking

**Stalking** affects between 100,000 and 132,000 people<sup>12</sup> of both sexes every year and with different victim/stalker relationships. Every tenth person of those having been exposed to stalking has experienced the stalking as a very serious experience. Seen over a life, the risk of women being exposed to stalking is almost twice that of men.

A range of studies<sup>13</sup> show that abused women may find it difficult to distinguish their partner violence experiences from stalking, as the stalking behaviour started in the relationship in the form of daily surveillance and control, etc. Stalking by a former or current partner differs from other types of stalking in that it includes prior intimacy between the parties. The interpretation of the actions is influenced by the intimate relation, and it may be difficult for the victims to distinguish actions expressing closeness, intimacy and care from actions that are offensive and controlling. This form of stalking is also characterised by the stalker having special knowledge of the former partner's weaknesses, fears and secrets and by this knowledge being exploitable in connection with the stalking<sup>14</sup>.

### Strengthened measures targeted at different forms of violence and different needs will include the following activities:

#### 1.1 Pilot study with measures targeted at all members of the family exposed to violence

In families exposed to violence, including families where the violence is bi-directional and has become a permanent element in the relationship between the adults in the family, there is a need for comprehensive and coordinated interdisciplinary measures. Pilots shall therefore be performed with special counselling and supporting measures for these families, e.g. under the auspices of the local authorities' family counselling service, which addresses the problems in the whole family, but also attends to the individual family members' problems at the same time.

#### 1.2 Strengthened preventive and informative measures for ethnic minority women, including women having stayed at crisis centres

Women with an ethnic minority background often have poor knowledge about the Danish society, their rights and possibilities of help in connection with violence in the family. These women will also often need special counselling as

regards education, work, contact with the public authorities, establishment of new networks and handling of linguistic challenges after staying at a crisis centre.

The information about rights and possibilities of help in connection with violence in the family and in intimate relations must therefore be strengthened. For example, this may be achieved on the basis of residential areas with a large concentration of citizens with non-Danish backgrounds. To involve the local community and embed the measures locally, outreach initiatives may be launched in cooperation with social housing projects, associations, community centres, networks, etc.

Moreover, the ethnic minority women staying at crisis centres must be informed of how to contact local administrations and other public authorities. Furthermore, the women must be advised on existing support services, including offers of legal assistance, networking initiatives, how to improve their knowledge of Danish, education, employment, society and an independent life free from violence. This can be achieved, for instance, by enhancing the skills of the local family counsellors, who are often in contact with these women, so

that they become able to provide the above support and counselling.

### **1.3 Pilot study with temporary accommodation facilities for male perpetrators**

Sometimes it may be expedient for a woman exposed to violence and any children to maintain their affiliation with the local area and everyday life by remaining in the home instead of moving into a crisis centre. **The Danish Ouster Injunction Act** allows the police to remove a male perpetrator from the home. To support the application of the possibility of removing a male perpetrator, a pilot study must be performed in which temporary housing is made available to the male perpetrator, who has been removed from the shared home pursuant to the act. For example, the pilot study could be established in cooperation with local authorities focusing on this problem.

### **1.4 Establishment of a national hotline for all people exposed to violence in intimate relations**

The national hotline for women must be continued. However, a need exists to the effect that all people exposed to violence in the family and in intimate relations (women and men, victims of mutual violence, young people and victims of stalking) can receive counselling and support through a 24-hour hotline. A study must therefore be established with a hotline, which offers anonymous counselling on the different forms of violence to all the different groups of people exposed to violence.

In connection with the hotline, a website will be set up, targeted at different groups with specific counselling and information about the different forms of violence and support options.

### **1.5 Knowledge and information for professionals about bi-directional violence in the family, etc.**

Professionals in the public system are in need of more qualified knowledge about bi-directional violence in the family, violence against men and dating violence to provide optimum support for the people and families where violence is part of everyday life. The National Board of Social Services' website, *Violence in the family*, must be enhanced to provide knowledge about how professionals can better identify and handle the different forms of violence.

### **1.6 Development and implementation of a risk assessment tool and preparation of guidelines and stalking lessons in police districts**

The consequences of aggravated stalking can be serious and have radical effects for the person exposed to stalking. Thus, as part of the police's anti-stalking measures, a risk assessment tool must be developed and implemented to

improve the police's chances of assessing at an early stage the level of threat and thus also the need for necessary supportive measures and support and counselling for victims of stalking as well as the extent to which a need exists to intervene against the perpetrator.

### **1.7 Mapping the area of stalking and launching specific initiatives**

Stalking may have serious and wide-ranging consequences for the victims. The extent and nature of the stalking may vary, just as the perpetrator may have different relations with the victim. A need exists to strengthen counselling and treatment programmes for victims of stalking and their networks, e.g. through telephone counselling and targeted treatment programmes as well as through counselling for the social and professional specialist networks on stalking. Consequently, specific and practice-based initiatives aimed at victims of stalking and their specific needs will be implemented. Measures are to be coordinated with the national hotline, etc.

## **2. More knowledge about and strengthened measures for men exposed to violence**

In 2010, some 10,000 Danish men<sup>15</sup> reported that they were exposed to physical violence from a partner. This represents a small increase compared to previous estimates. According to Dialogue against Violence, one fifth of the perpetrators they treat are women.

Men are most often exposed to psychological violence from their partner. Men have many of the same emotions and experiences as women exposed to violence, including a feeling of shame, loss of self-esteem and a lack of courage to break out of the violent relationship. Men who have been exposed to violence thus face barriers in terms of reporting the violence to the police and receiving help, one reason being that they feel that they are not taken seriously.

A Norwegian survey from 2012<sup>16</sup> points out that men exposed to violence first and foremost need someone to talk to, but that they also need practical help and support. The aftercare survey<sup>17</sup> also points out that men with children are in need of legal counselling in relation to divorce, custody and access, of handling of psychological consequences to the children and help in relation to contact with the authorities in general.

At present, Denmark has eight centres for men and two crisis centres that can potentially counsel and support men who are exposed to violence from their partner. At four of these centres,

men can stay temporarily, but none of the centres are specifically targeting this group.

This means that men are not always offered suitable services and facilities in the established system, and the services and facilities only have a limited aim of re-orientation towards networks, education and employment<sup>18</sup>.

**Strengthened measures for men exposed to violence will include the following activities:**

**2.1. Development of socio-professional support, legal assistance and psychological support for men exposed to violence**

Men exposed to violence in the family or in intimate relations do not receive the same support to get free from the violence and its consequences as women exposed to violence. This being the case, practice-based studies must be undertaken which, on the basis of knowledge and reasoned assumptions about the needs of men exposed to violence, offer, e.g., legal, socio-professional and psychological counselling and support to build up networks. In continuation of this, a number of pilot projects with temporary special accommodation facilities for men having been exposed to violence in intimate relations must be organised. The studies shall comprise accommodation facilities where men exposed to violence can bring their children. The projects must clarify whether a need exists for temporary 24-hour facilities and disclose what specific needs such 24-hour facilities are to meet.

These support measures must be coordinated with the national hotline, which can inform men exposed to violence of their possibilities and rights, including support services, relations with their children, family law issues, etc.

**2.2. Knowledge about men exposed to violence for professionals**

The experience of handling men exposed to violence is limited for professionals in the local authorities, etc. Also, violence against men is subjected to special taboos. A need therefore exists to offer professionals knowledge and information about this group of people exposed to violence. The National Board of Social Services' website *Violence in the family* was established as part of the previous national strategy to combat violence and is used extensively by local authority professionals. The website is to be supplemented with information about violence to men from their partner and men's special needs for support to escape this form of violence.

### 3. Dating violence

Young people exposed to dating violence represent a large part of the total number of women and men exposed to violence from a present or previous partner. Surveys show that about 19,500 women and 12,000 men between 16 and 24 every year are exposed to psychological, physical or sexual violence from their girlfriend/boyfriend. Also, many things suggest that young girls and boys often find it difficult to define when they are exposed to violence and when they should say no. Young people exposed to violence are predisposed to mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety – also after the violence has come to an end. A survey thus shows that young women having been exposed to dating violence use more sedatives one year after the violence incident than young women who have not been exposed to such violence<sup>19</sup>. Moreover, the young women often report sadness, depression, headaches, stomach aches, dizziness and difficulty sleeping.

The young people's problems can be complex and often require treatment by professionals with special knowledge about dating violence. Professionals can help the young people to process their problems so that they avoid bringing them into adult life. Furthermore, there are indications that some of the girls and boys experiencing violence in childhood will accept violence in a relationship or become violent themselves. Thus, 78%<sup>20</sup> of the men who are receiving treatment from Dialogue against Violence have themselves been exposed to violence or have experienced violence in the family, when they were children. An American study indicates that dating violence can be a risk factor as regards being exposed to partner violence later in life<sup>21</sup>.

Young people exposed to dating violence rarely seek help. They feel ashamed of the violence and think that they are to be blamed for it, because they have chosen the wrong girlfriend/boyfriend. They point to a number of possibilities of preventing the violence, particularly through education and information campaigns in line with campaigns about partner violence among adults<sup>22</sup>.

There are only a few actual victim programmes particularly targeted at young women and men exposed to violence, and, often, professionals in the public system lack knowledge about and attention to this specific problem. At the same time, the young people only have limited knowledge about the existing counselling services<sup>23</sup>. Moreover, young people<sup>24</sup> ask for knowledge about how to distinguish a good relationship from a bad one, and they call for a forum where they can discuss and exchange opinions on dating violence and relationships in general<sup>25</sup>.

**Strengthened measures for the various target groups will include the following activities:**

**3.1. *Victim programmes for young people exposed to dating violence***

Young people exposed to dating violence rarely seek help, and the existing programmes are largely aimed at adults. A need exists for victim programmes for young people aged 15-18 who suffer from the consequences of having been exposed to dating violence. The victim programme must prevent young people exposed to dating violence from being so affected by the violence that they are unable to live normal lives in relation to school, education, networks, etc. The programmes must also help the young people escape the spiral of violence so that they do not continue in violent relationships later in life. Undertaken as an experiment, the victim programme can be group programmes or individual programmes. Several local authorities can join forces on the victim programme or local authorities can set up partnerships with voluntary organisations.

**3.2. *Dating violence competition for students***

Knowledge about dating violence can help to set a focus on young people having to know their own limits and say no to violence in intimate relations. A need exists to continue debate-provoking and informative activities targeted at grades 8-10 and youth education programmes across the country in the form of school competitions. The Crime Prevention Council, the NGO for Children Exposed to Domestic Violence and the Department of Gender Equality have successfully completed such competitions in recent years. By means of the competition, young girls and boys are informed of dating violence where after they express their feelings about the subject through short stories, songs, poems and various visual expressions.

**3.3. *Information/theme days on domestic violence/dating violence***

Young people are in need of a broad range of information about violence and of the opportunity to have answers to questions about violence in the family and between girlfriends and boyfriends. A number of annual theme days on domestic violence and dating violence shall therefore be organised at schools throughout the country. The theme days at schools will help inform the students of dating violence and what characterises a good and respectful relationship.

**4. Increased information and debate about violence in intimate relations**

The Danes' opinion on violence in the family and in intimate relations has changed over the past 20 years. From primarily being a private problem, violence in the family is now much more considered a societal problem. Repeated information campaigns and targeted measures over the past 10 years have contributed to reducing the taboo of violence against women, and a feature on TV typically results in an increased number of inquiries to LOKK's hotline.

The visibility of this form of violence has an awareness-raising and preventive effect. However, the number of women exposed to violence is still too high so a need exists to continue the information activities in this area. There is also a need to step up the information activities to include partner violence against men and dating violence, just as there is a need for more attention to and knowledge about other forms of violence, which have not previously been in focus.

**Strengthened measures to create debates and provide information about the various forms of violence will include the following activities:**

**4.1. *Campaign activities to break the silence about violence in the family and in intimate relations***

Violence in the family and in intimate relations is unacceptable. This form of violence does not only target women but also men, and the violence may go both ways between the parties in a relationship, be they of the same or different sexes. Something indicates that the extent of violence among young girls and boys is on the rise. Therefore, opinion-influencing campaigns shall be launched that inform both the specific target groups and also the population as a whole that violence in the family can take many forms and have serious consequences for both the individual and for society.

**4.2. *National quantitative survey of violence***

In recent years, national surveys have been conducted of the extent of violence in the family and in intimate relations in Denmark. The national violence database is important when the trend in violence in the family and in intimate relations is to be followed up and in order to meet international obligations to have updated knowledge and statistics available. Thus, this national database must be followed up.

**4.3. *Surveys/mapping of the occurrence of and background to bi-directional violence***

In some families, the violence goes both ways between the adults. There is a growing awareness of this, but the Danish knowledge about the area has not been mapped systematically, and the knowledge about the situational or bi-directional violence and its patterns and consequences is limited among the professionals who are to act and intervene in relation to the violence. A survey must be conducted of the patterns that characterise the mutual violence which can help break these patterns.

**4.4. *Action plan evaluation***

An external evaluation must be made of the target achievement and efficiency of the action plan.

## 4. Overview of existing preventive, supporting, treating and police measures in the public system

The Danish society has a wealth of services, facilities and initiatives in the social, health and legal systems when it comes to violence in the family and in intimate relations. Any person in Denmark who is exposed to violence is entitled to help and support in the public system. Professionals (local caseworkers, health care staff, the police, teachers, child and youth educators, consultants, etc.) are working on a daily basis with women, men and children exposed to violence, just as the people exposed to violence can find support and treatment through, e.g., accommodation facilities/crisis centres, hotlines, psychological and legal counselling services, intervention centres, etc. The range of players involved in the existing measures is very broad and includes, for instance, the central government, the regions, the local authorities, NGOs and interest organisations.

The handling of violence in the family and in intimate relations can generally be divided into three phases: 1) Prevention and detection, 2) Treatment of and support for the person exposed to violence and treatment of the perpetrator, 3) Aftercare/reintegration. Legal action against perpetrators helps ensure that violence exercised in the family and in intimate relations is punished.

The following gives a general account of the existing measures in each of the three phases on the basis of the options of help available to the individual person exposed to violence.

### Phase 1: Prevention and detection

Detecting cases of violence in the family and in intimate relations is a key task for the established system. Detection is, e.g., about disclosing whether children and young people are exposed to violence, if they experience violence in the family or are in need of help from the social, health or legal system.

**Local authorities** are obliged to offer citizens counselling and guidance. If it turns out in the course of this process that a person is in need of services under the legislation, the local authorities must refer the person to the right body. Through early counselling and guidance, local caseworkers can help prevent conflicts from escalating into violence and minimise the detrimental effects of the violence.

Pursuant to section 19 of the Danish Act on Social Services, the local authorities are under an obligation to have politically approved emergency services for prevention, early detection and consideration of cases of abuse of children and young

people, including violent abuse. The local authorities must thus focus clearly on intervening in favour of the children who are exposed to or at risk of being exposed to violence.

Furthermore, pursuant to sections 153-154 of the Danish Act on Social Services, private individuals and professionals, including the police, are under an obligation to notify the local authority if they know that children are exposed to violence.

In 2013, five so-called "children's houses" were opened that are local examination units, which intervene in cases where local authorities in connection with a child protection examination know of or suspect abuse of children and young people. The children's houses cooperate with the police and the health authorities. The children's houses have facilities, which mean that the child or the young person can be in contact with the different authorities in one physical location, because these have been gathered at the children's house. The authorities will in this way go to the child instead of vice versa, and professional skills in the area are collected and coordinated in these five houses. The results of the examinations in the children's house are included in the local authority's overall child protection examination and form the basis of the local authority's decision to provide support pursuant to the Danish Act on Social Services.

In relation to preventive measures, particularly child and youth educators and primary and lower secondary school teachers play important roles. Schools and day care centres help give the students an understanding of their own limits and a respect for those of others, which may help prevent violence in the family and in intimate relations.

**GPs and health care staff** have gained increased knowledge about violence in the family and in intimate relations thanks to measures from the Danish Health and Medicines Authority and may now identify signs of violence and ask patients relevant questions in case of suspected violence. If signs of violence are found, GPs and health care staff can advise citizens on where to seek support and help.

**The Danish National Police**, which holds the overall responsibility for the police measures in terms of preventing and combating violence in the family and in intimate relations, has established a National Prevention Centre whose objective is to set the course of, coordinate and support the police districts' crime prevention work, including the prevention of violence in intimate relations. Students in the new basic training programme at the Danish Police School and College have lessons about "violence against women" as a separate theme in the prevention module of the programme.

The measures to combat violence in intimate relations are, however, mainly rooted in the police districts. The police districts focus on ensuring that the area is handled in a targeted and professional manner, also with regard to timely prevention, and several police districts are active in relation to prevention of violence, e.g. in relation to preventing dating violence by means of presentations on this subject at schools. Several police districts have drawn up operational plans regarding the subject, and the districts also cooperate with relevant external parties, including the national organisation of women's crisis centres LOKK and Dialogue against Violence.

Pursuant to the Danish Ouster Injunction Act, the police can decide that a person suspected of having exposed a member of his or her household to violence can be removed from his or her home<sup>26</sup>. Effective for a period of up to four weeks, a removal implies that the person must not turn up or stay in his or her own home for a specified period, the objective being to prevent further violence, etc.

The police may also — on the basis of a concrete threat of violence or the like to a person who has been exposed to violence — issue an attack alarm to that person. A specific assessment must be made to establish whether, in the individual case, such a threat is aimed at the person in question so that an attack alarm should be offered as a safety-inducing and preventive measure. An attack alarm is a temporary measure, and so, on an ongoing basis and not later than three months after the issue of such an alarm, an assessment must be made to establish whether the basis for issuing the alarm still exists.

Citizens also meet the preventive measures through recurring campaigns and other types of information. These campaigns provide information, for instance, about the detrimental effects of the violence and about how to ensure respectful and non-violent relations in the family. Finally, through a telephone counselling service and websites, voluntary organisations help communicate knowledge and information about violence in the family and about where to obtain help to prevent, stop or escape from the violence.

### **Phase 2: Treatment/support/care for people exposed to violence and treatment of perpetrators**

Both local authorities and civil society organisations play significant roles in the treatment and support measures. Section 109 of the Danish Act on Social Services puts the local authorities under an obligation to ensure that the necessary number of temporary accommodation facilities is available to women exposed to violence or threats of violence in intimate relations. The accommodation facility provides support and care, protection and counselling as well as measures aimed at accompanying children. The rate adjustment pool for 2012 has set aside funds to a pilot scheme for women staying at a women's crisis centre who can get sessions with a psychologist in order to clarify their situation. The women's crisis centres' services for women exposed to violence have been of great significance in terms of putting "violence in the family" on the agenda. Women and children exposed to violence can at the women's crisis centres meet each other and exchange experiences, and also meet a staff with specific knowledge in the area able to intervene with support and counselling.

Men exposed to violence from a partner and needing to leave the home will, pursuant to section 110 of the Danish Act on Social Services, be able to stay in shelters for the homeless or at another accommodation facility. Grants have been given from the rate adjustment pool to special centres for men and men's crisis centres. The target group of these centres is not men exposed to violence, but men who are in crisis, e.g. because of divorce, unemployment or other life crises.

A pilot scheme has been established with intervention centres that offer counselling for both perpetrators and victims. These intervention centres can help reduce the consequences for people exposed to violence and their children, if any. The intervention centres offer counselling to both the victim and the perpetrator, and they assist in clarifying and referring both the victim and the perpetrator to further help, including local services and facilities. The rate adjustment pool has also in recent years supported the development and operation of male



perpetrator programmes with a view to reducing the extent and consequences of violence in intimate relations.

The regions also play a role in relation to victims. The health care staff at Denmark's emergency rooms offer emergency treatment and care. Midwives and staff in GPs meet people exposed to violence at the hospital and in connection with appointments and can also play significant roles in spotting victims of violence. In connection with the treatment of victims, the health care staff can help establish contact with relevant social authorities or crisis centres.

Health care staff are subject to the extended duty of notification if, during their treatment and care of children and young people under the age of 18, they learn of circumstances giving reason to believe that the child or the young person is in need of special support.

A number of hospitals have established special interdisciplinary teams that work with disadvantaged pregnant women, including pregnant women having been exposed to violence. In addition to providing support and treatment, the interdisciplinary teams can also refer victims to other relevant health care units or authorities. These teams also have close cooperation with the relevant local authorities, especially with the health care sector and the Mothers' Aid Organisation. Teams have been set up at a number of hospitals in the Copenhagen metropolitan area, just as hospitals in the two regions of southern and central Denmark have set up interdisciplinary teams for disadvantaged pregnant women.

Special services and facilities have been established within the health sector for rape victims. The reception of male and female rape victims is handled at nine centres for rape victims, placed at selected hospitals in each region. The services at the centres comprise, e.g., emergency medical examination and treatment, psychological support and involvement and counselling of relatives. The victims can receive treatment and support anonymously, just as the centres do not require the victims to report the assault to the police. In the agreement on the rate adjustment pool for 2013-2016, an annual amount of DKK 4.4 million has been earmarked for a significant improvement of the services at the centres. The improvements concern, e.g., medical treatment, supplementary training of

staff, better psychologist treatment services and greater involvement of relatives.

### Phase 3: Aftercare/reintegration

The Danish Act on Social Services does not contain specific provisions on aftercare. During or after the stay at a crisis centre, a woman may need support pursuant to the Danish Act on Social Services or other legislation, including the Danish Act on Active Employment Measures. Women exposed to violence may also be offered an action plan in support of their return to a life outside the crisis centre. The local authorities have a special obligation as regards battered women with children to provide family counselling in connection with the transition from a crisis centre. The family counselling service must help support the woman to set up a new and independent life in terms of employment, housing, her children's schooling, etc. Children accompanying their mother to a crisis centre must be offered psychological assistance. Part of the family counselling may be provided after the woman has left the crisis centre.

### Legal action

The Director of Public Prosecutions holds the overall responsibility for the prosecution's handling of criminal cases, including cases of violence in intimate relations. The Director of Public Prosecutions has laid down guidelines for the police's and the prosecution's handling of cases of domestic violence offences, including cases of violence in intimate relations. The Director of Public Prosecutions has also prepared leaflets with information for victims of persecution, harassment or stalking and leaflets for victims of violence and other violent offences against the individual. In addition, the Director of Public Prosecutions has in all police districts educated police graduates and lawyers involved in cases of ouster orders and eviction about the new rules in the area. Furthermore, the Director of Public Prosecutions offers the course "Violence in intimate relations – when the spouse is the perpetrator" to prosecutors and judges.

The measures of the police districts are based on the general principles of investigation, formal charging and punishment, and both the police and the prosecution focus significantly on ensuring efficient investigation and legal action as regards criminal offences in respect of violence in intimate relations.

## 5. Implementation and organisation

The action plan has been prepared by the Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs under the auspices of the inter-ministerial working group to combat violence in the family and in intimate relations with the participation of the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Employment and the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, a large number of organisations have contributed input to the contents of the action plan: LOKK, Danner, Mothers' Aid Organisation, Dialogue against Violence, Alternative to Violence, Fundamentet, Danish Women's Society, Local Government Denmark, the police, Women's Council in Denmark, Mandecentret in Copenhagen, National Institute of Public Health, NGO for Children Exposed to Domestic Violence, University of Southern Denmark, etc. The plan has been funded through the Finance Act agreement for 2014 with the Danish Liberal Party (V) and the Conservatives

(K) with a total of DKK 36 million over a period of four years (2014-2017).

The action plan will be implemented by the Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs with the involvement of the relevant ministries, etc. The distribution of funds to executing parties will generally be based on tenders.

An ongoing external evaluation will be made of the action plan, to which all players are expected to contribute.

### Notes

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