

## Plan to combat domestic violence outlined

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MINISTER FOR Justice Dermot Ahern has insisted that a national strategy to improve the State's response to domestic violence will be properly resourced despite cuts in funding for the sector.

Cosc, the department's body for dealing with domestic and gender-based violence, had its budget reduced by 13 per cent to €2.7 million this year.

A five-year strategy published yesterday seeks to reduce the prevalence of domestic violence and to encourage more people to report these types of crimes.

Mr Ahern said his department was committed to improving services.

"My number one priority is the fight against crime and that's where my concentration will be. But this is a crime as well and I know that a significant level of domestic violence goes unreported . . . It's important that when people do report it, they get the response they deserve."

The strategy is aimed at delivering a more co-ordinated response to domestic violence across Government. By the end of 2014, it hopes there will be:

- Greater confidence in high-quality and consistent services
- Increased safety for victims
- Greater recognition and understanding of domestic violence
- Increased accountability for the perpetrator

Eimear Fisher, the head of Cosc, said the strategy would help ensure State bodies and non-governmental organisations work together to deliver services. "This is a new way of working. There are new initiatives, but they don't require vast amounts of money."