

Action Plan



Summer 2023

It is only through a collaborative approach across society and government that we can start to build transformative change

This is everyone's problem and solving it will need action by everyone.

Together we all need to build a society wide movement that stops violence against women and girls before it starts; one that promotes attitudes and behaviours that make healthy, respectful relationships possible, so that everyone can thrive and be safe.

Men and boys have a very important role to play to change bad attitudes and behaviours towards women and girls. They can set a good example and be great role models for other men and boys to follow.

Evidence and research tell us that we can end violence against women and girls in our society if we act together to create change where we live, learn, and work.

There is something everyone can do

For further information, please contact:

Ending Violence Against Women
and Girls Directorate

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Our Vision

A CHANGED SOCIETY
WHERE WOMEN AND
GIRLS ARE FREE FROM
ALL FORMS OF GENDER-
BASED VIOLENCE, ABUSE
AND HARM

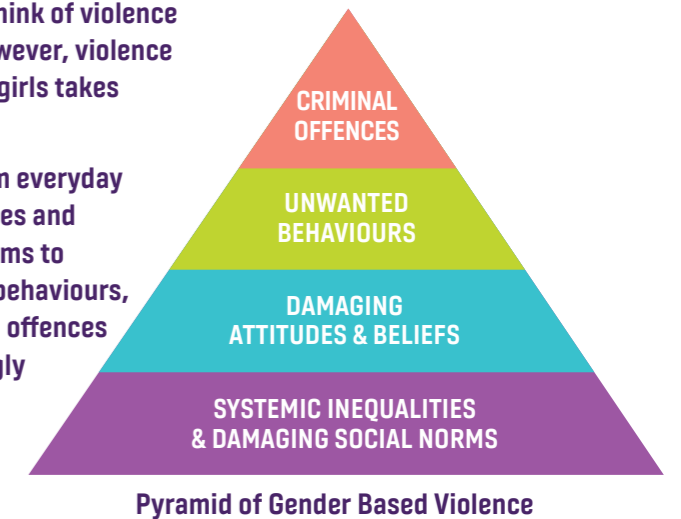
INCLUDING THE
ATTITUDES, SYSTEMS
AND STRUCTURAL
INEQUALITIES THAT
CAUSE THEM

NOTE:
VAWG: Violence against women and girls
EVAWG: Ending violence against women and girls

What is Violence against women and girls?

Sometimes people think of violence as only physical, however, violence against women and girls takes many forms.

Violence ranges from everyday misogynistic attitudes and damaging social norms to harmful, unwanted behaviours, and serious criminal offences and is overwhelmingly but not exclusively carried out by men.



The United Nations define Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) as:

“any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”

(UN General Assembly, 1993, p.2.)

Violence against women and girls includes:

physical, sexual, psychological and emotional violence occurring in the family (including children and young people), in the general community, or in institutions, including coercive control and stalking

harmful sexual behaviour which is sexual behaviours expressed by children and young people that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards self, or abusive to others

sexual harassment, bullying, and intimidation in any public or private space

online abuse including cyberstalking, sexual harassment, grooming for exploitation or abuse, image-based sexual abuse

workplace sexual harassment ranging from sexual jokes or comments to unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favours and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature

financial abuse such as controlling a woman's or girls access to their money, taking loans or credit cards in their name, or using their money without their permission;

commercial and non-commercial sexual exploitation of women and girls, trafficking, child sexual abuse, so-called honour based violence, including female genital mutilation, forced and child marriages, and so-called honour crimes

everyday harm which includes everyday misogyny, sexist jokes and language, and discrimination

Action Plan

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS

What is this about?

Ending violence against women and girls is one of the biggest challenges facing our society today. Throughout our communities there is a growing awareness and a sense of urgency that more needs to be done.

In 2021, the NI Executive set out the need to co-ordinate a new approach to tackling the root causes of violence against women and girls. They said it must be intersectional and consider all forms of violence, with particular focus on behavioural and attitudinal change.

Since then a draft **Strategic Framework** to End Violence Against Women and Girls has been developed; it has been co-designed by a range of people representing different organisations from across society and government, including people with lived experience.

A series of key actions were also developed, which will mark the start of a seven-year road map to bring about meaningful change and effective delivery of these actions.

The Action Plan sets out a foundation of activity to get things started. In a year where budgets are challenging for everyone we want to do as much as possible to get this work underway.

What we Know

There is still not enough information on how much all the different types of violence, abuse and harm takes place, and the impact it has on the lives of women and girls, their families and the communities around them. We know that what is reported is only the tip of the iceberg.

The information we have doesn't reflect the true size of the problem as a lot of violence, abuse and harm against women and girls goes unreported. We plan to improve information gathering.



Almost **4 in 5** victims of sexual offences, recorded by PSNI in 2021/22, where the gender of the victim was known, were female

PSNI, 2022



75% of girls experienced street harassment at least once in their lifetime

YLT, 2022

Young Life and Times Survey



1 in 2 girls, aged 16, have received an unwanted intimate photo/video at least once in their lifetime

YLT, 2022

Young Life and Times Survey

It is recognised that there is much good work already being done across government and society. It is vital to build on this and work together to ensure it is sufficiently joined up, prioritised, and consistently evaluated in a way that mutually meets all the outcomes.

ACTION PLAN - YEAR 1

Prevention

Changed Attitudes, Behaviours & Social Norms

Healthy, Respectful Relationships

Women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere

1. Develop a society wide communications and engagement strategy to change attitudes, behaviours and social norms.
2. Adopt the Task Group Sprint Model to consider the needs (including Intersectional needs) of specific groups.
3. Establish a forum to coordinate work on equipping and supporting families, children and young people to enjoy healthy, respectful relationships using the curriculum (including Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE)), policies and practices in early years, schools, youth and community sectors.
4. To embed structures and processes which give space for young people's voices to participate and influence decision makers in ending violence against women and girls (EVAWG) work.
5. Establish a cross sectoral Further and Higher education working group to develop a plan to address EVAWG on and off campus.
6. Establish a cross-sectoral workplace forum (including unions, Labour Relations Agency, employers' organisations and other professional bodies) to develop workplace policy toolkits/guidance and to promote workplace training/best practice in professional standards on EVAWG, Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) to lead good practice in public sector.
7. Support the cross-sectoral group addressing EVAWG issues in the hospitality sector and the night-time economy.

Protection & Provision

Quality frontline services, protection, and provision for victims and survivors of violence against women and girls

8. Map and undertake gap analysis of violence against women and girls (VAWG) provision in general frontline services to help inform further policy development and service delivery.
9. Map and undertake gap analysis of VAWG provision in specialist frontline services including a review of referral gateways to help inform further policy development and service delivery.



These actions form the foundation of work to be delivered for year one of the Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls

Justice System

A justice system which has the confidence of victims, survivors and the public in its ability to address violence against women and girls

10. Develop further tools for communicating information on the justice system and processes to improve information sharing and enhance confidence amongst victims/survivors in support of implementation of the Victim and Witness Strategy.
11. In the context of care and protections for victims in the justice system, (a) evaluate agreed interventions that are providing support to victims to access the Justice System; (b) support research on victim attrition rates in serious sexual offences and domestic abuse cases, as part of implementation of Gillen Programme and Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy.
12. Explore with partners options to create specialism in VAWG cases in court proceedings including information provision for juries.
13. Undertake a review of international best practice perpetrator prevention and management systems to inform policy development and practice in support of the review under the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy.
14. Undertake a review of trends in aggravating and reinforcing factors of VAWG to inform policy development and practice.

Working better Together

All of government and society working better together to end violence against women and girls

15. Create a Knowledge and Network Hub within the Executive Office (TEO) to provide an accessible central resource on EVAWG research, data & evaluation and communication & engagement.
16. Establish a cross sectoral group located within the Knowledge and Network Hub to develop and lead the programme of EVAWG work on data and evaluation.
17. Through the Knowledge and Network Hub, develop and deliver an agreed annual EVAWG research programme with advice and support from a cross jurisdictional panel of academic research experts.
18. Through the Knowledge and Network Hub create reference groups to engage with lived experience, service provision, and academic research expertise in the development of the EVAWG work programme.
19. Create a five jurisdiction officials forum to share best practice and encourage cross jurisdictional shared learning.
20. NICS will identify and implement mechanisms including Programme for Government (PfG) to mainstream opportunities to EVAWG in public policies and strategies at all levels.
21. Develop funding strategy for sustainable EVAWG work across departments and other sectors.
22. In order to build widespread support for a changed society where women and girls are free from all forms of gender-based violence, abuse and harm including the attitudes, systems and structural inequalities that cause them - to seek endorsement of EVAWG strategic framework and active participation in the whole of society programme of actions by political and civic leaders.