ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS

Strategic Framework

The Executive Office
www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

Summer 2023

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

Foreword

Ending violence of all kinds against women and girls is one of the most difficult challenges facing our society today. It is also one of the most important.

This Strategic Framework sets out meaningful steps, towards a changed society, where women and girls are free from all forms of violence, abuse and harm.

It requires urgent action at all levels, in all spaces and by all people. Every day we see and hear how violence, abuse and harm impacts the lives of women and girls, wherever they learn, live, work and socialise.

This framework has been co-designed with people and organisations from right across government and society, representing different backgrounds and perspectives, and importantly, including those with lived experience; and they have worked together to get to the heart of this challenging issue.

This plan will help us build a movement across our society to prevent violence, abuse and harm before they start, by tackling the root causes.

In practice this will mean working better together across our communities and throughout government to drive the big changes that have been identified in this plan, and that are needed in our schools, sports clubs, families, workplaces, on our streets, in fact, wherever we find ourselves.

This is, of course, about supporting our mothers, sisters, wives, partners and daughters. It's also about creating a better society for all people, including our brothers, our sons, our men and our boys; a place where everyone can have healthy, respectful relationships, where everyone has the chance to thrive.

I am pleased to share this Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls, which sets out clearly what we need to do as a society. Our challenge now is to turn it into action.

This is ambitious and will require all of us to play our part. There is something we can all do. Together, we can end violence against women and girls.

Jayne Brady,
Head of the NI Civil Service

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Executive Summary

This is a seven-year Strategic Framework to End Violence against Women and Girls mandated by the Northern Ireland Executive. It was co-designed by people from many sectors and backgrounds, with diverse perspectives, who are committed to ending violence against women and girls. The Strategic Framework is ambitious, long term, and wide reaching. It is a living document which will be reviewed and adapted along the journey according to emerging needs.

Violence against women and girls is a systemic and deep-rooted problem in our society. It is a problem that is hidden in plain sight and every day we see how it is affecting the lives of women and girls, wherever they learn, live, and work. This Strategic Framework will address the whole range of gender-based violence, abuse and harm which is disproportionately experienced by women and girls, and which is rooted in gender inequality.

Emerging evidence shows that the majority of women and girls in our society have experienced at least one form of gender-based violence, abuse and harm, ranging from everyday misogyny, sexual harassment in a public place or workspace, to more extreme physical violence. This leads to significant health and socio-economic impacts on families, communities, and our society and prevents the achievement of wellbeing for all.

The Strategic Framework has a focus on tackling the root causes of violence against women and girls which include damaging social norms, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours which are discriminatory towards women and girls, and which create a culture that enables violence, harm, and abuse to develop and be sustained.

The vision is **'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'**. This will be achieved through the aim of 'working together as partners across society in public, private, and third sectors, and with the community to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls with a focus on root causes.'

The co-design process identified four main themes which are: Prevention; Protection and Provision; The Justice System; and Working Better Together. Together, these themes make up the core foundation of this Strategic Framework. Under these themes, there are six outcomes which outline the big changes that are needed in our society to end violence against women and girls. Priority areas of focus for each outcome identify key areas where work is needed to bring about the changes.

The overall emphasis of the Strategic Framework is on prevention, tackling the root causes and stopping the violence before it starts. In order to prevent violence against women and girls effectively,

> By working collaboratively, we can build a society wide movement for prevention to drive the transformational change that is needed to end violence against women and girls

there needs to be a society wide focus on changing attitudes, behaviours and social norms, equipping everyone to enjoy healthy, respectful relationships and ensuring that women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere.

Addressing the needs of victims and survivors of all forms of violence against women and girls, and preventing further violence from taking place, are key to achieving the vision. There is a focus on providing high-quality services for women and girls who are victims and survivors of violence, harm and abuse and ensuring that the justice system has the confidence of victims, survivors, and the public in its ability to address violence against women and girls.

Central to everything will be working better together across society and government and this will be built into delivery of the Strategic Framework and key to successful outcomes.

Delivery of the Strategic Framework will take a trauma informed approach, will be evidence based and data driven. It will take a public health approach to prevention, ensuring that lived experience is a central thread. The Strategic Framework has been designed, and will be delivered, with an intersectional lens, ensuring that the needs of women and girls facing additional inequalities and barriers are embedded throughout. It will learn from and embed international good practice ensuring the achievement of the International Standards of the United Nations and the Istanbul Convention.

This Strategic Framework outlines processes and structures for delivery that will ensure a whole of society and whole of government approach which is collaborative, respectful and challenging. 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.

Violence against women and girls is a systemic and deep-rooted problem in our society. It is a problem that is hidden in plain sight and every day we see how it is affecting the lives of women and girls, wherever they learn, live, and work

By working collaboratively, we can build a society wide movement for prevention to drive the transformational change that is needed to end violence against women and girls.

DR. JAYNE BRADY
Head of NI Civil Service

Comment from Co-design Reflection Day

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Introduction

Ending all forms of violence, abuse, and harm against women and girls is one of the most pressing challenges facing our society today and is internationally recognised as a violation of the human rights of women and girls. Violence, abuse and harm against women and girls happens everywhere, every day and impacts how women and girls live, work, and socialise. Many experience violence from someone known to them, while others may experience it from a stranger in a public place or online.

This Strategic Framework addresses the whole range of gender-based violence, abuse and harm which is disproportionately experienced by women and girls and rooted in gender inequality. The interconnected continuum of 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.[1]

In the past, being a victim of violence against women and girls was a shameful secret; hidden, ignored, and accepted but with long-term, life-changing impacts on the lives of women and girls and their families.

SONYA McMULLAN
Women's Aid

Comment from Co-design Reflection Day

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Despite much good work carried out across the voluntary and community sector, by public services and government, all these forms of violence, abuse, and harm against women and girls continue to be a big problem in our society.

We know that the full extent of the range of violence, abuse, and harm remains uncounted and under researched and what is reported is only the tip of the iceberg. Therefore, the data available only partly reflects the ongoing lived experience of women and girls throughout our communities.

The United Nations estimates that almost one in every three women globally will experience physical violence, sexual violence, or both in their lifetime

However, the emerging evidence and lived experience of women and girls presents a disturbing picture of this wide spectrum of violence, abuse, and harm that women and girls disproportionately experience on a daily basis. This is illustrated by the following statistics taken from various recent surveys and research carried out by Queen's University, Ulster University, the Young Life and Times Survey, the Trades Union Congress, and the PSNI:

- 75% of girls aged 16 surveyed experienced street harassment at least once in their lifetime[2]

- 73% of girls and young women surveyed, aged between 12 to 17 years of age, reported having experienced one or more forms of gender-based violence [3] and 98% of adult women surveyed said that they had experienced at least one form of gender-based violence or abuse in their lifetime[4][5]

- 67% of female students surveyed said that they had had at least one unwanted sexual experience during their time in higher education, including experiences of unwanted sexual contact, coercion, attempted rape, and rape[6]

98%

of women interviewed said that they had experienced at least one form of gender based violence or abuse in their lifetime

Every Voice Matters Report, Ulster University

45% of surveyed 16-year-old girls and boys know someone who has verbally harassed a girl or a woman, for example, by cat calling, wolf whistling or shouting at her in the street

Young Life & Times (YLT) 2022

- 3 in 5 women polled across the UK said they have experienced harassment at work – rising to almost 2 in 3 women aged 25 to 34[7]

- 68% of all domestic abuse crimes, recorded by PSNI in 2021/22 were female[8]

- 42 women across our society were murdered from January 2013 to June 2023 – that is 1 every 3 months[9]

According to research from the Women's Policy Group submitted in response to the **Call for Views** to inform this Strategic Framework:[10] [11]

- 82% of women surveyed first experienced men's violence before the age of 20

- 83% of women surveyed have been impacted by men's violence against women and girls but only 21% reported this to the police and 77% of those did not find it useful.

The lives of women and girls cannot be reduced to statistics. The stories behind the statistics are stories about all of us. They are about girls and women we know in our families, and in every part of our lives and communities. Violence against women and girls cuts across all generations, all communities, and all spheres of our society.

It exists everywhere - in our schools, our universities, our workplaces, our sports clubs, our faith communities, our families, our online communities, and on our streets. It is a problem that is hidden in plain sight. Every day we see how it is affecting the lives of women and girls - wherever they learn, live, and work.

ELAINE CRORY
Women's Resource and Development Agency
Comment from Co-design Reflection Day

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In addition to these direct impacts, the threat of violence limits the quality of life for women and girls and reduces their participation in social, civic, and economic life.

90% of women surveyed believe our society has a problem with attitudes of sexism and misogyny and 81 % believe there is stigma surrounding issues of violence against women and girls

Women's Policy Group Survey

It is also important to recognise that while violence against women and girls occurs across all of society, some women and girls may face particular risks to their safety and additional barriers to justice, service provision, and support. This includes those who are deaf and disabled, minority ethnic, LGBTQIA+, older, financially dependent, homeless, those who suffer from addiction, looked after children,[12] as well as those with insecure immigration status and those residing in rural areas.

AISLING PLAYFORD
The Rainbow Project

Comment from Co-design Reflection Day

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The responsibility for the implementation of the Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls lies with everyone

There is something that all of us can do

Throughout our communities, there is a growing awareness and sense of urgency that more needs to be done. In particular, we acknowledge the sustained advocacy, work, and determination of community and voluntary sector organisations, as well as those with lived experience. Increasing numbers of us are saying enough is enough.

This Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls covers a seven-year period, from 2023-2030. It is recognised that the level of change envisioned in the framework will only be achieved over the long term and will most likely need further work after the first seven years.

On 23 March 2021, a motion was tabled in the Assembly which condemned violence against women and girls and called on the Executive to take action.

The mandate from the Executive is clear and specific:

'a cross-sectoral task-group was needed to co-ordinate a strategic approach to tackling the root causes of violence against women and girls, that must be inter-sectional and focus on all forms of violence with a particular emphasis on behavioural and attitudinal change;' and agreed

'to build this approach in the new Programme for Government with the necessary resource, and leadership from The Executive Office.' – 25 March 2021.

The Strategic Framework has been co-designed by a **diverse range of people** representing different organisations from across society and government, including intersectional and lived experience representation.

It sits within the context of a range of international treaties and human rights obligations. The four pillars of **the Istanbul Convention** informed the framing that was used in the process of co-design of the Framework.

There are already several other strategies, either in place or being developed, which are relevant to the issue of violence against women and girls; The Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy 2016-2023 and the draft Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2023-2030 address specific forms of violence, and the proposed Gender Equality Strategy will deal with wider issues of systemic gender inequality. Each of these strategies are gender inclusive.

While violence against women and girls includes domestic and sexual abuse, there is a clear need to have a dedicated focus in tackling the wider spectrum of violence, abuse and harm against women and girls as well as the root causes which are underpinned by systematic gender inequality.

This will mean working strategically and collaboratively across government and society with those who are dealing with other parts of the problem of violence in our society – such as helping victims and survivors of domestic and sexual abuse, action on paramilitary violence, tackling modern slavery, child sexual exploitation, and child criminal exploitation. Our work has mutual impacts and we need to ensure that all of our efforts are joined up, as well as highlighting the specific work needed to ensure that the problem of violence against women and girls is addressed.

Building a better society for everyone

Wellbeing for all is at the heart of what Government aims to deliver in this jurisdiction. The ability to form and enjoy healthy relationships is central to individual wellbeing and vital to building better, more connected communities and a society where everyone can thrive.[13] This is something that we want for all our children, and for every individual and community here.

DUANE FARRELL
Relate NI

Comment from Co-design Reflection Day

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Violence against women and girls in all its forms is a critical obstacle to achieving this goal of wellbeing for everyone. It is damaging to women, girls, men, and boys. We can stop violence against women and girls by changing the attitudes and behaviours that enable it. We can transform the culture or social norms that tells us that this is just the way things are and will always be. We can create a future that is not only better and safer for women and girls, but more just, equal, and respectful for everyone.

Evidence and research tell us that we can end violence against women and girls in our society if we act together. There is something everyone can do, helping to create change where we live, learn, work and socialise. Together we need to build a society wide movement that stops violence against women and girls before it starts, that promotes a culture where healthy relationships are seen as the norm, where violence against women is never accepted, and which enables everyone to thrive and be safe.

CATHY GALWAY
Department of Justice

Comment from Co-design Reflection Day

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PAUL DEIGHAN
Education Authority

Comment from Co-design Reflection Day

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Violence against women and girls is everyone's problem and solving it will need action by everyone.

What is Violence against women and girls?

Violence against women and girls is an umbrella term used to cover a wide range of harm, abuse, and violence against women and girls because of their gender

People sometimes think of violence as physical assault only, however violence against women and girls takes many forms and has deep roots as shown in the Pyramid of Gender-Based Violence.

The Pyramid shows the interconnected continuum between the different types of violence, abuse, and harm. This does not mean that there is a hierarchy of seriousness or severity based on physical force or harm but reflects the spectrum of complex and interlinked experiences of everyday misogyny, harassment, violation, and abuse for individual women and girls which is underpinned by inequality. In the past there has been more focus on the urgent and more recognised issues at the top of the pyramid while less attention has been paid to the important work of tackling root causes which lie at the lower layers.

CRIMINAL OFFENCES

UNWANTED BEHAVIOURS

DAMAGING ATTITUDES & BELIEFS

SYSTEMIC INEQUALITIES & DAMAGING SOCIAL NORMS

Pyramid of Gender Based Violence

The United Nations define Violence Against Women and Girls 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."[14]

This Declaration indicates that such violence is specifically 'directed against a woman because she is a woman, or violence that affects women and girls disproportionately'.

A wider definition of violence against women is provided by The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in their **General recommendation No. 35 from 2017 on gender-based violence against women**.[15]

WHAT IS MISOGYNY?

Misogyny is a way of thinking that upholds the idea that men are superior to women and that it is right for women to have less power and freedom than men. This way of thinking can express itself in attitudes and behaviours which can be controlling, offensive and abusive.

Misogyny includes but is not limited to contempt for women as a group and ranges from disrespecting women and promotion of harmful stereotypes to physical and sexual violence.

WHAT ARE SOCIAL NORMS?

Social norms are the informal, mostly unwritten and unspoken collective rules that define typical, acceptable, appropriate and obligatory actions in a social group, setting or society. They are produced and reproduced by customs, traditions and value systems that develop over time to uphold particular forms of social order.

Social norms are those things people think are normal based on their experiences.

Violence against women and girl can include:

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

JOANNE BARNES
Nexus

Comment from Co-design Reflection Day

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Violence against women and girls requires a multi-faceted and sustained response. This Strategic Framework covers the whole spectrum of violence, abuse, and harm against women and girls and its root causes and sets out how we can work together to end it. Targeted actions to tackle some of these specific harms, such as domestic and sexual abuse, or harms linked to paramilitarism and organised crime gangs are being led by other Departments and Agencies. This Strategic Framework will enable close collaboration with these other initiatives to ensure that we amplify, accentuate, and accelerate each other's work without duplication.

What we know

Acknowledging the scale of violence against women and girls and the impact it is having in the lives of women and girls is an important first step in addressing the problem. Evidence of the prevalence of all forms of violence, abuse, and harm is scarce due to a lack of recorded statistics. Part of what this Strategic Framework will do is to gather and coordinate relevant data and evidence to inform how to address the issues and end violence against women and girls. Part of what we do know is shown below.

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

71%

In UK, **71%** of women of all ages have experienced some form of sexual harassment in a public space

UN Women UK

742

In 2021/22, the median number of days taken to complete cases where the main offence was a sexual offence was **742 days,** the longest for any of the offence categories

Department of Justice, 2022

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

YLT, 2022

Young Life and Times Survey

Almost **1 in 5** young males aged 16, believe posting jokes or nasty comments of a sexual nature on social media, or cat calling, wolf whistling and shouting at someone in the street are acceptable behaviours

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

We know while men and boys also suffer from many of these forms of violence, abuse and harm, the majority of victims are female and violence against women and girls is predominately, but not exclusively, a pattern of behaviour perpetrated by men against women. Therefore, our mandate asks us to focus on violence against women and girls specifically.

78% of all victims of sexual offences recorded by PSNI were female
Trends in Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland

Of those convicted of sexual offences in 2021, at all courts combined, 99% were males
Court prosecutions and out of court disposals statistics, 2021

Root causes of violence against women and girls

Violence against women and girls, though common, is not inevitable. It can be prevented by tackling the root causes. It takes time to tackle this endemic problem; to achieve our long-term goal of preventing violence against women and girls, an important first step is to define and understand the root causes and the impact that they have.

THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

Societal culture and systemic attitudes and beliefs enable violence against women and girls

Developed by Co-Design Group

The core problem that was identified by the co-design group is that the culture of the society that we live within, and the attitudes and beliefs that permeate our institutions and communities, enable violence against women and girls to take place.

Violence against women and girls is not caused by one single factor. It is rooted in historical inequalities, gender-based discrimination, and power imbalances between men and women. International evidence shows a strong and consistent association between gender inequality and levels of violence against women and girls.[16]

These inequalities in our society have led to damaging social norms, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours which are discriminatory towards women and girls, creating a culture where violence, harm, and abuse are more likely to happen, be tolerated, and even condoned. International evidence clearly shows that as the number of these factors and their degree of influence increases, the probability of violence against women and girls also increases.[17] Misogyny, sexist attitudes, harassment, coercive control, and physical violence are abuses of power that stem from gender inequality.

This is made worse through intergenerational trauma resulting from a culture and history that accepts many kinds of harm, abuse, and violence in society, both publicly and privately, as normal.

It is also important to recognise that gender inequality also intersects with other forms of inequalities and discrimination which means that there are increased risks of violence, abuse, and harm for some groups of women and girls.

By tackling the root causes successfully, we can break the cycle of violence against women and girls and stop it before it starts.

The main focus of the Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls will be to address the culture of damaging attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours that can lead to violence against women and girls

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The role for men and boys

We will only end violence against women and girls if men and boys are part of the solution. We are all influenced by a misogynist culture and social norms, to the point where we can be unaware that damaging attitudes and behaviours, learned from the very early years of a child's life, have become normal to everyone; unrecognised but affecting how we react every day.

Men and boys have a very important role to play alongside women and girls to bring about a culture change in attitudes and behaviour, promoting and modelling gender equality, challenging poor behaviour by others and building healthy, respectful relationships in all aspects of their lives.

MICHAEL LYNCH
Men's Action Network

Comment from Co-design Reflection Day

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The impact of violence against women and girls

Most women and girls have become used to limiting where they go and being vigilant in the way they do things, ordering their lives in a particular way because of the fear and real risk of attracting unwanted attention or violence.

These routines of living with everyday misogyny have a cumulative impact on their wellbeing and potential. In essence, women's space to lead their lives as they would choose is curtailed by the very real fear, borne out by experience, that life in our communities can be hostile and even dangerous.

Violence against women and girls can lead to significant and lasting impacts on women and girls' physical, mental, and sexual health, as well as their life chances.

Children who grow up in violent households also suffer severe consequences and may exhibit a host of adverse behaviours and emotions, including anxiety and depression. These can be associated with an increased likelihood of perpetration and being a victim of violence in later life.[18] The potential positive and negative impacts of community influences, peers, and the online world on young people's attitudes and ability to form safe and healthy relationships are also increasingly coming to the fore.

Violence against women and girls also has enormous economic and social impacts which affect our society. Women may suffer isolation, inability to work, loss of wages, and lack of participation in regular activities.

In addition to the costs for the individual women and girls and their families, costs to wider society include health care, housing, police, and court services, as well as costs resulting from the loss of productivity.

We do not yet have a complete picture of the full economic cost of violence against women and girls, but we do know that conservative estimates of the costs of domestic and sexual violence and abuse range between £730 million to £1 billion per year in

GRETA GURKLYTE
Disability Action

Comment from Co-design Reflection Day

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this jurisdiction. This amount does not include the full impacts and costs of all forms of violence, abuse and harm against women and girls in this jurisdiction as we know that we do not have a true picture of prevalence due to underreporting. In addition, the costs do not include the impacts of everyday harassment, in real life and online.

Preventing violence against women and girls by tackling root causes can achieve improvements to the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities and have a wider positive impact on the economy. It removes a direct obstacle to economic and social progress and will help improve overall wellbeing.[19]

> Children who grow up in violent households also suffer severe consequences and may exhibit a host of adverse behaviours and emotions, including anxiety and depression

We do not yet have a complete picture of the full economic cost of violence against women and girls, but we do know that conservative estimates of the costs of domestic and sexual violence and abuse range between £730 million to £1 billion per year in this jurisdiction

The International Context

This Strategic Framework is rooted within the context of the rights and duties in international treaties and human rights standards that the UK has signed up to.

These include:

The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (also known as the Istanbul Convention)

The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which sets out an agenda for action to end all forms of discrimination against women.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which grants all children and young people aged 17 and under a comprehensive set of rights

The International Labour Organisation Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) affirms that everyone has the right to a world of work free from violence and harassment

We have also taken into account our duties outlined in the **Human Rights Act 1998** which incorporates the protections set out in the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law. Additionally, we have considered other statements by international bodies which have been especially influential in the area of ending violence against women and girls, including:

The Beijing Declaration and Global Platform for Action which calls on Governments to take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls
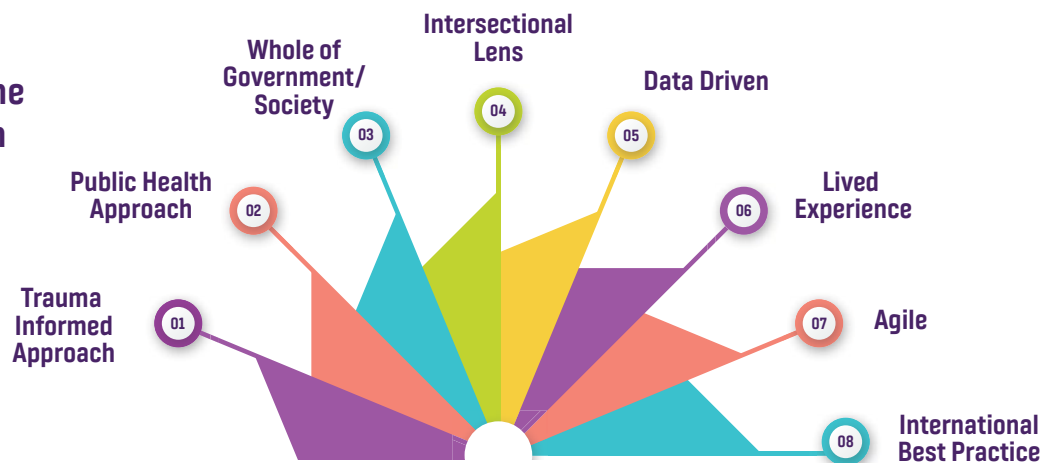
Inquiry concerning the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under article 8 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women of 2018 (CEDAW/C/OP.8/GBR/1)

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security

The Strategic Framework Principles

The way we work together to solve this problem is just as important as the actions that we take. The co-design group established eight principles which will form the basis for the outworking of the Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls in our society.

Guiding Principles for the Implementation of the Strategic Framework

Trauma Informed Approach — 01
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Whole of Government/Society — 03
Intersectional Lens — 04
Data Driven — 05
Lived Experience — 06
Agile — 07
International Best Practice — 08

1. Trauma Informed Approach

A trauma informed approach will be infused throughout the implementation of the Strategic Framework. A trauma informed approach realises the prevalence of trauma in our society, recognises when trauma may have impacted upon a person affecting their behaviour, their coping responses and their relationships. It supports the development of trauma sensitive/trauma responsive skills, which inform service delivery and policy development at all levels, supporting positive outcomes.[20]

2. A Public Health Approach

A public health approach addresses complex health and social problems in a preventive way, using data to identify the best levers to use on a whole of population basis. It focuses on tackling the root causes and on early prevention. A public health approach will ensure that we have information about the populations which require interventions, as well as about risk and protective factors, that will allow us to shape interventions and services appropriately and measure success.

3. A Whole of Society and Whole of Government Approach

Tackling such a deep and widespread problem requires all parts of society and government to focus on the problem together. This will mean embedding collaboration in everything we do and continuing to look at how our work can impact across society.

4. An Intersectional Lens

Many women and girls face multiple intersecting inequalities and barriers to justice and support which can interact to increase their vulnerability to violence. A Strategic Framework which applies an intersectional lens will be more effective in identifying and dismantling these inequalities and barriers, taking account of the power relations and systems and structures that create and maintain them.

5. Evidence based, data driven and joined up – measuring change, outcome based

Data is critical for building our understanding of the problem, measuring our progress toward ending it, and informing funding, service design, and delivery decisions. A deeper, wider evidence base will help us take the specific needs of everyone in our society into account, and measure change well.

6. ## Lived experience as a central thread

The voices of women and girls who have lived experience will be woven throughout the implementation of the Strategic Framework to ensure that solutions are effective to solve real world problems.

7. ## Agile, responsive, and linked to current and future generations

The Strategic Framework needs to respond to evolving and changing culture and practices, such as the expanding forms of online harm, and specific forms of violence that exist in this jurisdiction, including the impacts of violence against women and girls of past conflict and the specific issues of violence suffered by women and girls living in communities currently coerced by paramilitaries or crime groups.

8. ## Embed international good practice

The United Nations and the Istanbul Convention provide useful and evidence-based frameworks and comprehensive standards of good practice for ending violence against women and girls which are already being implemented in other countries. The implementation of the Strategic Framework will continue to learn from these.

The work of the Executive Programme on Tackling Paramilitarism and Organised Crime (EPPOC) was used to inform the framing for the co-design space. Their practice of collaborative whole of government and whole of society working within a trauma informed public health approach to violence prevention is closely aligned with the principles that were developed through the ending violence against women and girls co-design process.

How we got here

The development of the Strategic Framework has been informed by a substantial body of international and local research, using the triple foundation of international best practice, lived experience, and local data and research.

An extensive programme of engagement with a wide range of external and internal stakeholders commenced in early 2022, including meeting with over 100 different groups and individuals with an interest in the issue.

A **Call for Views**[21] was launched and ran from January to March 2022. It received 752 responses from individuals and organisations and has been instrumental in understanding the scale of the problem of violence against women in our society.

The responses to the Call for Views indicated that work to end violence against women and girls should be based on international best practice, adopt a whole of society and whole of government approach, be developed using appropriate and rigorous co-design, and reflect the lived experience of victims and survivors.

BARBARA PORTER
Public Health Agency

Comment from Co-design Reflection Day

CLICK HERE

Ministers were clear that the Strategic Framework should be co-designed. A co-design process began in October 2022 with a representative **group of over 50 stakeholders.** The group reflected the need for a whole of government and whole of society approach and included intersectional and lived experience representation.

The process followed core co-design principles, with a carefully developed methodology built on the evidence-based research. The process ensured that the co-design forum reflected the value of all contributors equally, remaining open to a range of perspectives and opportunities. In early 2023, the co-design outputs were reviewed in detail and the content received from the co-design process was used to prepare the Strategic Framework.

The Strategic Framework Timeline

| **01** Calls for views & engagement | **02** Co-Design with Stakeholders | **03** Framework Development | **04** Consultation on Draft Strategy | **05** Publication of Strategy & Action Plan |

2022   **CURRENT POSITION**   2023

An overview of the Strategic Framework

This co-designed Strategic Framework sets the agenda for all of government and society to end violence against women and girls. It is ambitious, long term, and wide reaching. It is a living document which will be adapted along the journey according to emerging needs.

4 themes
For illustration purposes only

PREVENTION

WORKING BETTER TOGETHER

JUSTICE SYSTEM

PROTECTION & PROVISION

The Vision is one of 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. Everyone across society has a role to play, big and small, to achieve this vision.

It will require all of us to act and to be involved in change wherever we live, learn, work, and socialise. We will need to work together as partners across society, in public, private, third sector, and in the community to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls. We must ensure that all our actions are aligned and underpinned by strong structures, processes, and accountability.
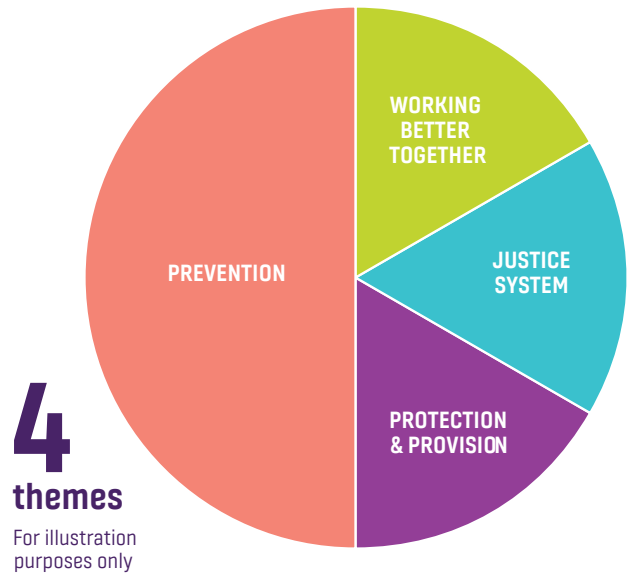
KENDALL BOUSQUET
NI Migrant Centre

Comment from Co-design Reflection Day

CLICK HERE

The overall emphasis of the Strategic Framework is on prevention, tackling the root causes, and stopping the violence before it starts

The overall emphasis of the Strategic Framework is on prevention, tackling the root causes, and stopping the violence before it starts. This work will take account of our society's unique context and history. The outworking of the Framework will be intersectional, trauma informed, take a whole of society and whole of government approach, be informed by lived experience, and focus on change at a population level.

Working collaboratively towards a common purpose, we can build a society wide movement for prevention that will drive the necessary transformation.

The Co-Design group identified six big changes that need to happen in our society. These form the six outcomes of the strategic framework which are:

Outcome 1: Changed attitudes, behaviours, and social norms - Everyone in society understands what violence against women and girls is, including its root causes, and plays an active role in preventing it

Outcome 2: Healthy, respectful relationships – Everyone in society is equipped and empowered to enjoy healthy, respectful relationships

Outcome 3: Women and girls feel and are safe everywhere – Organisations and institutions across government and society embed the prevention of violence against women and girls in all that they do, so that women and girls feel and are safe everywhere

Outcome 4: Quality frontline services, protection, and provision for victims and survivors of violence against women and girls – Provision of high-quality services for women and girls who are victims and survivors of violence against women and girls

Outcome 5: A justice system which has the confidence of victims, survivors and the public in its ability to address violence against women and girls – In the context of violence against women and girls, a system that considers and addresses the needs of people who come into contact with it, holds perpetrators to account, while challenging and supporting them to change, gives victims and survivors a voice and a place in the process, and has the confidence of the public

Outcome 6: All of government and society working better together to end violence against women and girls – A whole system approach with collaboration and cooperation by default across government departments and with, within, and between the community, voluntary, and other sectors

Long term coordinated action is needed on all of these outcomes in order for us to really see change happen and for progress to be made. We want to build a shared understanding of what we all need to do to make this happen. We hope that all of society will have ownership over this Strategic Framework and commitment to its ambitions.

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

The Strategic Framework

This Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls has been prepared from the output of a co-design process that ran from October to December 2022. A group of over 50 stakeholders came together from across government, different sectors, and wider society, including intersectional representation and, importantly, those with lived experience.

Co-design is about designing with, not for; it is designed to ensure everyone was able to participate on an equal footing and to bring their creativity to solving the problem. Therefore, the content of this Strategic Framework has been shaped by people from many sectors and perspectives; people who are committed to making a change across the whole of society and to end violence against women and girls.

This is a seven-year Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls. It is recognised that ending violence against women and girls will require a long-term sustained effort beyond seven years.

THE AIM

HOW WE PLAN TO DO IT:
The aim of the Strategic Framework is to work together as partners across every sector of society to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls with a focus on root causes.

VISION

PREVENTION

CHANGED ATTITUDES, BEHAVIOURS & SOCIAL NORMS

Everyone in society understands what violence against women and girls is, including its root causes, and plays an active role in preventing it

OUTCOME
1

6
OUTCOME

HEALTHY, RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS

Everyone in society is equipped and empowered to enjoy healthy, respectful relationships

OUTCOME
2

ALL OF GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY WORKING BETTER TOGETHER TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

TAHNEE McCORRY
White Ribbon NI

Comment from Co-design Reflection Day

CLICK HERE

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

PROTECTION & PROVISION   ## JUSTICE SYSTEM

WOMEN AND GIRLS ARE SAFE AND FEEL SAFE EVERYWHERE

Organisations and institutions across government and society embed the prevention of violence against women and girls in all that they do, so that women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere

OUTCOME

3

QUALITY FRONTLINE SERVICES, PROTECTION AND PROVISION FOR VICTIMS &SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Provision of high-quality services for women and girls who are victims and survivors of violence against women and girls

OUTCOME

4

A JUSTICE SYSTEM WHICH HAS THE CONFIDENCE OF VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS & PUBLIC IN ITS ABILITY TO ADDRESS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

In the context of violence against women and girls, a system that considers and addresses the needs of people who come into contact with it, holds perpetrators to account, while challenging and supporting them to change, gives victims and survivors a voice and a place in the process, and has the confidence of the public

OUTCOME

5

A whole system approach with collaboration and cooperation by default across government departments and with, within, and between the community, voluntary, and other sectors

- Long term collaborative resourcing for effective delivery
- Robustly evidence based and data informed policy development with measurable outcomes
- Strong and proactive leadership at all levels of government and society to drive transformative change to end violence against women and girls
- Prevention of violence against women and girls mainstreamed in public policy
- Joined up decision making and governance

WORKING BETTER TOGETHER

The Strategic Framework at a glance

This Strategic Framework has been developed by the co-design group and is for all of us as a society. It describes the changes which are needed and the work that needs to be done to bring about an end to violence against women and girls.

This Strategic Framework is made up of: 4 themes; 6 outcomes; and 19 priority areas, which inform a series of actions that will take place over the next seven years.

The changes that are needed - Outcomes

The work that needs to be done to bring about these changes -Priority Areas

Outcome 1

Changed Attitudes, Behaviours & Social Norms

Everyone in society understands what violence against women and girls is, including its root causes, and play an active role in preventing it

1.1 Integrated long-term campaigns to change attitudes, behaviours, and social norms, including online

1.2 Individual sectors promote positive attitudes and behaviours to prevent violence against women and girls at all ages

Outcome 2

Healthy, Respectful Relationships

Everyone in society is equipped and empowered to enjoy healthy, respectful relationships

2.1 Parents, carers, and early years providers support children to develop healthy, respectful relationships during their early years

2.2 Schools, Further, and Higher education support children and young people to develop healthy, respectful relationships

2.3 Youth and community sectors support children and young people to develop healthy, respectful relationships

2.4 Supporting people and organisations who work with those at risk of using violence or those at higher risk of becoming victims of violence against women and girls

Outcome 3

Women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere

Organisations and institutions across government and society embed the prevention of violence against women and girls in all that they do so that women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere

3.1 Individual sectors develop and embed ending violence against women and girls in the design of policies, strategies, services and procedures that prevent violence against women and girls, and create safe environments for women and girls

3.2 Supporting development of policies, procedures, tools and training that help women and girls be safe and feel safe online

The changes that are needed - Outcomes

The work that needs to be done to bring about these changes -Priority Areas

Outcome 4

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

Provision of high quality services for women and girls who are victims and survivors of violence against women and girls (funded, available, accessible, responsive)

4.1 General frontline services are effective in identifying violence against women and girls, provide responsive services, and make appropriate referrals

4.2 Specialist services for victims and survivors of violence against women and girls are available, effective, sustainable, and accessible

Outcome 5

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

In the context of violence against women and girls, a justice system that considers and addresses the needs of people who come into contact with it, holds perpetrators to account, while challenging and supporting them to change, gives victims and survivors a voice and a place in the process, and has the confidence of the public

5.1 Victims and survivors needs are fully taken into account at each stage of the justice process

5.2 Reduce delays in the justice system for cases involving violence against women and girls

5.3 Joined up processes for cases involving violence against women and girls in the justice system

5.4 Effective systems and programmes for perpetrator prevention and management

Outcome 6

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

A whole system approach with collaboration and cooperation by default across government departments and with, within, and between the community, voluntary, and other sectors

6.1 Long term collaborative resourcing for effective delivery

6.2 Robustly evidence based and data informed policy development with measurable benefits/outcomes

6.3 Strong and proactive leadership at all levels of government and society to drive transformative change to end violence against women and girls

6.4 Prevention of violence against women and girls mainstreamed in law and public policy

6.5 Joined up decision making and governance

Prevention

The emphasis of the Strategic Framework is on prevention. Effective prevention can both prevent violence from occurring in the first place and reinforce the response system to interrupt the cycle of violence.

Prevention cannot be a short-term effort, but rather an undertaking that requires ongoing commitment from government, collaboration across society, increased research to inform and monitor progress, and sustained action that addresses violence against women and girls at its source.

In order to prevent violence against women and girls, our main focus will be on:

- changing attitudes, behaviours, and social norms;

- building knowledge and skills of individuals to form healthy relationships;

- ensuring that women and girls are and feel safe everywhere.

Prevention is about addressing the underlying causes of violence against women and girls, to stop it before it occurs.

(UN Women, 2012)

Outcome 1 – changed attitudes, behaviours, and social norms

Everyone in society understands what violence against women and girls is, including its root causes, and play an active role in preventing it.

Violence against women and girls does not happen in a vacuum. It has its roots in damaging beliefs, attitudes, and social norms that are embedded in our society and which need to be addressed. These norms, attitudes, and beliefs contribute to an environment where negative behaviours are seen as normal and go unchallenged, leading to violence against women and girls being carried out across our society, ranging from street and workplace harassment to online abuse, sexual violence, and femicide.[22]

ANTOINETTE McKEOWN
Sport NI

Comment from Co-design Reflection Day

CLICK HERE

In order to achieve the vision of a changed society, it is vital that everyone has a shared understanding of what violence against women and girls is, including its root causes and impact in all its forms. However, understanding on its own doesn't lead to change.

It is equally vital that everyone is empowered to take an active role in preventing violence against women and girls, and equipped with the knowledge, motivation, and skills to play their part.

Effective prevention will change the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours that condone violence against women and girls, creating new social norms and expectations.

Under this outcome the priority areas of focus are:

1.1 Integrated long-term campaigns to change attitudes, behaviours, and social norms, including online

The development of joint campaigns on a whole of society basis is an ongoing and central part of the Strategic Framework and a key tool in prevention work. These campaigns will be informed by stakeholders and lived experience and will be aimed at increasing understanding on all forms of violence against women and girls and their root causes and changing the attitudes, behaviours, and social norms that enable them.

Particular areas of focus will include:

- partnering across government and with stakeholders in wider society to develop joint messaging to address the root causes, drivers, and the impact of violence against women and girls, and on the role that everybody has to prevent it;

- co-creating campaigns with young people and children, and those with lived experience of abuse, harm, and violence

- delivery of campaigns in partnership with different sectors and aimed at all kinds of people across all stages of life

- using innovative ways to spread awareness on key messages to all parts of our society, including collaborative work in sports, arts, leisure, and social media

We need to change attitudes, behaviours and social norms

1.2 Individual sectors promote positive attitudes and behaviours to prevent violence against women and girls at all ages

In order to drive changes across our society, it is vital that every sector and every community has access to resources that allow them to explore and better understand the importance of their role in preventing violence against women and girls and take action.

Particular areas of focus will include:

- building connections in partnership with all sectors, sharing resources and good practice, and co-creating new materials to help more people achieve greater impact in tackling the root causes of violence against women and girls in their organisations and communities;

- implementation of interventions supported by evidence as effective in changing attitudes and behaviours including the active bystander approach. Partners could include employers, sports, education, faith, and community sectors among others

- identification of bespoke interventions with specific sectors, such as the media, to improve the standards of reporting on violence against women and girls

- identifying influencers to support this work within different sectors

- embedding evaluation in the design of programmes from the beginning to identify what works and provide information to partners in the design and selection of effective interventions.

Outcome 2 – Healthy, Respectful Relationships

Everyone in society is equipped and empowered to enjoy healthy, respectful relationships

We know that healthy and respectful relationships are key in promoting an individual's physical, mental, and social wellbeing and protecting against a range of serious negative outcomes. They are also a significant component of wellbeing.[23]

Violence against women and girls in all its forms is an all too prevalent obstacle to achieving this goal of wellbeing for everyone. In order to tackle this challenge, there is an urgent need to focus on our children and young people. This means supporting parents from the very start of their child's life and throughout their earliest years; and working with both formal education and the community, to support our young people throughout their educational career, to post primary and third level education. We want all children and young people to know that any type of violence, abuse, and harm in relationships is never acceptable. Our ambition is for our children and young people to have the right knowledge and skills to have fulfilling and safe relationships throughout their lives.

JACQUI MONTGOMERY DEVLIN
Faith Forum

Comment from Co-design Reflection Day

CLICK HERE

Our young people are exposed to messages online which undervalue, demean and humiliate women and girls, as well as increased access to pornography from a young age. In addition, there has been a recent rise of online influencers who have a toxic influence on men and boys in our society, and negatively impact their views on women and girls. These new influences are layered on top of a context and history of societal violence, gender inequality, and resulting trauma. This is the environment in which our young people are growing up and, without significant action, it can lead to a lack of understanding about what a good relationship looks like and what consent is.

All of this together constitutes a crisis with serious consequences for current and future generations.

Under this outcome the priority areas of focus are:

Everyone should be able to have healthy, respectful relationships

2.1 Parents, carers, and early years providers help children to develop healthy, respectful relationships during their early years

Parents and carers of young children and early years providers have a very important role in helping to prevent violence against women and girls by modelling respect and equality in their relationships, addressing rigid and harmful gender norms and stereotypes, and providing holistic support in a child's early years.

Particular areas of focus will include:

- partnering with government and community to co-design and deliver holistic whole family programmes that embed respectful and healthy relationship education and support across all early years' support programmes

- partnering with parenting, carer organisations, and early years providers to ensure that families and carers have access to the tools, knowledge, and support that they need to promote healthy relationships from a young age

Parents and carers of young children and early years providers have a very important role in modelling respect and equality in their relationships

84% young people, aged 16, have never heard of the term coercive control or are unsure of what it means - Young Life and Times 2020/21

2.2 Schools, Further, and Higher Education support children and young people to develop healthy, respectful relationships

LINSEY FARRELL
Department of Education

Comment from Co-design Reflection Day

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Schools

Schools are very well placed to lead the way in attitudinal and behavioural change, with a whole school environment which equips and supports the empowerment of future generations to develop healthy, respectful relationships and gender equality. Addressing the root causes of violence against women and girls will be a central part of achieving this outcome.

> **A whole school environment which equips and supports the empowerment of future generations to develop healthy, respectful relationships and gender equality**

Particular areas of focus will include:

- research including mapping and evaluating what is presently being done within the education sector that is relevant to violence against women and girls, and scoping emerging issues and promising responses

- introducing whole school approaches to developing healthy and respectful relationships, within a wider safeguarding framework and culture, including policies and interventions that equip and support young people to address harmful attitudes and behaviours

- working together with young people and the education sector to strengthen and mainstream education on strong and healthy relationships throughout the curriculum for all ages and learning needs

- further developing, in collaboration with young people, the design of relationship and sexuality education which is accessible, inclusive, and age and developmentally appropriate, in the context of changes to mandatory content

- equipping teachers at all stages of their careers to respond to the challenges of violence against women and girls and the related attitudes and behaviours within schools

- equipping school leaders, governors, and parents to understand the issues and act on them appropriately

University and Further Education

Within University and Further Education settings there is already lots of coordinated good practice taking place to respond to the high levels of unwanted sexual experiences. This will be built on and scaled up:

Particular areas of focus will include:

- expansion of interventions that equip and support students to understand all forms of violence against women and girls and address harmful attitudes and behaviours. This would include the evidence based active bystander approach

- working together with other external services as part of a holistic University and Further Education wide approach to ensure safety on and off campus

- equipping university and college staff at all stages of their careers to respond to the challenges of violence against women and girls and the related attitudes and behaviours.

67%

67% of female students surveyed said that they had had at least one unwanted sexual experience during their time in higher education, including experiences of unwanted sexual contact, coercion, attempted rape and rape

Unseen at Uni Report

Within University and Further Education settings there is already lots of coordinated good practice taking place to respond to the high levels of unwanted sexual experiences

2.3 Youth and community sectors support children and young people to develop healthy, respectful relationships

Children and young people spend much of their time outside of formal education involved in community, sport, and youth organisations; these can play a pivotal role in the promotion of healthy, respectful, equal, and safe relationships.

Particular areas of focus will include:

- reinforcing work already being done in this sector and scaling it up for increased impact, including promotion of the active bystander approach, relationship education in community settings, and building on the mentoring and role modelling done by youth workers

- integration of young people's voices on what is needed within the education and community sectors to prevent violence against women and girls

- creation of a community fund to support interventions across society that are equipping children and young people in the development of healthy and respectful relationships

- programmes with youth, faith, and sport sector that support the empowerment of women and girls to understand their rights and how to form healthy, safe relationships

- programmes with youth, faith, and sport sectors that support and engage men and boys to equip them to be part of the common goal of ending violence against women and girls

We want all children and young people to know that any type of violence, abuse, and harm in relationships is never acceptable

- equipping professionals who work with children and young people, at all stages of their careers, to respond to the challenges of violence against women and girls and the related attitudes and behaviours in the settings in which they work

- research, including mapping and evaluating what is presently being done within the community and youth sector that is relevant to violence against women and girls, as well as scoping emerging issues and promising responses in collaboration with young people

- creation of a unified platform for sharing effective evidence-based materials and development of new materials to fill gaps

Working together to connect and share learning will be important in this area.

MICHELLE HARRIS
Barnardo's

Comment from Co-design Reflection Day

CLICK HERE

Our ambition is for our children and young people to have the right knowledge and skills to have fulfilling and safe relationships throughout their lives

2.4 Supporting people and organisations who work with those at risk of using violence or those at higher risk of becoming victims of violence against women and girls

Those at risk of using violence or those at higher risk of becoming victims of violence against women and girls require particular help, especially those who have not yet come in contact with the agencies where help is available. Early intervention for these two very different groups can prevent the issue escalating.

Particular areas of focus will include:

- further research to better understand the individual risk factors that make someone more likely to become a perpetrator of violence against women and girls

- creation of partnerships across government and the voluntary and community sector to embed awareness of violence against women and girls in programmes that are dealing with aggravating and reinforcing factors of violence against women and girls, such as exposure to violence during childhood, alcohol abuse, and mental health issues

- campaigns and information sharing to raise awareness of the links between risk factors and violence against women and girls

- review of referral mechanisms between specialist services of violence against women and girls and services dealing with drivers of violence to ensure that people are getting the right help when they need it

- scope the need for evidence based non-adjudicated perpetrator programmes

- map general services to ensure that risks to potential victims are understood and identified and that referral gateways to support operate effectively

- promotion of referral gateways for everyone who wants relevant counselling and relationship support, including for older people and families

Outcome 3 – Women and Girls are safe and feel safe everywhere

Organisations and institutions across government and society embed the prevention of violence against women and girls in all that they do so that women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere.

Sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence abuse and harm in public and private spaces, both rural and urban, are an everyday occurrence for women and girls. This ranges from street harassment, unwelcome sexual gestures and remarks, right up to serious criminal offences against both women and girls.

It can happen to any woman or girl anywhere; including in the workplace, public parks, sports facilities, social spaces and events, public transportation, streets, schools, online, and at home. It includes abuse of women with a public profile, such as political representatives.

This reality affects the ability of women and girls to particpate fully and to thrive within school, work, sport, public life and online, as well as negatively impacting on their health and wellbeing. There are specific issues for groups who face additional risks and barriers which may not be recognised by all service providers.

TRASA CANAVAN
Barnardo's

Comment from Co-design Reflection Day

CLICK HERE

Women and girls should be safe and feel safe everywhere

Under this outcome the priority areas of focus are:

3.1 Individual sectors develop and embed ending violence against women and girls in the design of policies, strategies, services and procedures that prevent violence against women and girls, and create safe environments for women and girls

Organisations, businesses, and institutions can take many different kinds of actions to make their environment safe for women and girls.

Particular areas of focus will include:

- identifying best practice in creating safe environments for women and girls and promoting evidence based interventions

- working collaboratively to identify innovative solutions to improve safety in public spaces, for example risk mapping/reporting apps

- promoting the requirements of the **International Labour Organisation Convention C190 (the Violence and Harassment Convention)** to ensure that workplaces are aware and compliant

- sector specific actions to maximise safety in areas like sport, arts, and faith

- adopting a cross-sectoral approach to ensuring safety of women and girls in the University and Further Education sector

- adopting a cross-sectoral approach to ensuring safety of women and girls in the night-time economy. This will include the implementation of the Hospitality Ulster/White Ribbon led Women's Night-Time Safety Charter[24]

- cross-sectoral review of workplace policies, procedures, reporting pathways and toolkits, and development of common best practice models to ensure safety of women and girls in the workplace

- scoping of the use of conditions in entertainment and premises licensing to enhance safety of women and girls

It will be important to link new work on violence against women and girls in all of these areas to existing safeguarding practices and referral mechanisms.

CLARE MOORE
The Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Co-design participant

CLICK HERE

3.2 Supporting development of policies, procedures, and tools that help women and girls be safe online

The online space is becoming increasingly unsafe for women and girls. Online abuse normalises unacceptable behaviour, inhibits women and girls from expressing themselves in online spaces, and can have long lasting impacts. Abusers can use online platforms to further harass victims and survivors.

Particular areas of focus will include:

- awareness raising on actions to take, including campaigns and development of supports to guard against online harm

- development of a technology challenge fund to stimulate innovative approaches to addressing this issue

- development of specific interventions to address harassment of women in public life

- promoting media literacy skills and providing information to help users to keep themselves safe online and develop critical skills in regard to online material.

- inputting to UK wide legislation to deal with degrading or abusive material online

Sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence abuse and harm in public and private spaces, both rural and urban, are an everyday occurrence for women and girls

59%

Almost 3 in 5 girls (59%), aged 16, have been sent unwanted sexually explicit pictures, photos, or videos online at least once in their lifetime.

Young Life & Times 2022

This reality affects the ability of women and girls to particpate fully and to thrive within school, work, sport, public life and online, as well as negatively impacting on their health and wellbeing

Protection and Provision

Outcome 4 – Quality frontline services, protection, and provision for victims and survivors of violence against women and girls

Provision of high-quality services for women and girls who are victims and survivors of violence against women and girls –funded, available, accessible, responsive.

LINDSAY FISHER
PSNI

Comment from Co-design Reflection Day

CLICK HERE

Everyone in our community should be able to access help and support, such as that provided by doctors, social services, lawyers, social housing providers, and social security offices. In this section, we call this 'general frontline support'.

Victims and survivors of violence against women and girls should also be able to access specialist services to protect and support them and their families and ensure they have access to what they need. In this section, we call these 'specialist services.'

Most specialist services are available to everyone in society in the same way. Some groups facing additional inequalities, such as members of minority ethnic communities, LGBTQIA+ or deaf and disabled women and girls among other groups, who suffer violence against women and girls may need to receive specialist services in a tailored way which addresses the needs of these groups and removes or mitigate the barriers to justice and support facing them.

When there is a risk of violence, general frontline services need to provide relevant support to women and girls and signpost to other relevant services; while specialist services are needed to protect and support victims and survivors and their families, ensuring that they have access to what they need, whilst taking account of the needs of groups facing additional inequalities and barriers.

There is a need to ensure services for victims of violence against women and girls provide early intervention, deliver a coherent and consistent trauma informed response across a diverse range of needs, are informed by lived experience, and have long term funding.

Violence against women and girls will impact different people in different ways. Lived experience and better data will help us understand the needs of groups facing additional inequalities and barriers who may be at higher risk and aid us in ensuring that they can access quality services when they need it.

Women and girls who are victims of violence should be well looked after by support systems

Under this outcome the priority areas of focus are:

4.1 Support for general frontline services so they are effective in identifying violence against women and girls, provide responsive services, and make appropriate referrals

4.2 Support for specialist services for victims and survivors of violence against women and girls so they are available, effective, sustainable, and accessible

Particular areas of focus will include:

- ensuring that general frontline services move towards an integrated response towards violence against women and girls that is easy to navigate from the first point of contact, with information shared across services in an appropriate and sensitive way

- mapping provision by general frontline services of support for women and girls at risk of violence, including referral gateways

- undertaking a gap analysis in general frontline service provision including for those with complex needs facing additional barriers to support

- developing and delivering, in partnership with professional training bodies, a training framework targeted at professionals in general frontline services who come into contact with the at-risk population of women and girls in their work

- research to identify prevalence of violence against women and girls among those at risk who do not access services and to use it to develop appropriate interventions and support pathways

Particular areas of focus will include:

- mapping provision by specialist services of support for victims and survivors of violence against women and girls, including referral gateways

- undertaking a gap analysis in specialist service provision including for those facing additional barriers to support

- capacity building for existing specialist services based on identified need for groups facing additional inequalities and barriers

- targeted and agile work to allow a short period of intense focus on areas which may need particular attention

- scoping an accessible single site online communication platform linked to campaign and education material to provide signposting and advice for all services relating to violence against women and girls

The Justice System

Outcome 5 – A justice system which has the confidence of victims, survivors, and the public in its ability to address violence against women and girls

In the context of violence against women and girls, a justice system that considers and addresses the needs of people who come into contact with it, holds perpetrators to account, while challenging and supporting them to change, gives victims and survivors a voice and a place in the process, and has the confidence of the public.

The role of the criminal justice system is significant in that it must hold perpetrators to account and discourage violence, whilst ensuring appropriate care for victims and survivors. The civil and family justice systems, also have an important role in dealing with dispute resolution and protection orders for those who may have experienced violence against women and girls.

Similarly, many victims and survivors of violence against women and girls may be involved in other forms of proceedings, such as tribunal proceedings. These proceedings should also take into account the context of trauma for the victim. There is also a need to prevent and reduce reoffending through working with perpetrators to challenge them and support them to change.

We know that victims and survivors have diverse lived experiences and will be affected by violence and trauma differently, which means they may have different needs in terms of their journey through the justice system.

> **Everyone should be able to have confidence in the justice system to address violence against women and girls**

Evidence from the Call for Views highlighted that there are potential barriers to accessing justice which can occur at all stages.

Some women and girls are generally hesitant to report violence. This can be due to a variety of factors, including concerns about stigma, social pressure, fear of retribution from perpetrators or others, unwillingness to refer family members to the criminal justice system, concerns about the investigative process, the cross-examination process, length of time it takes for cases to conclude, and/or low conviction rates and sentencing.

Some victims and survivors who have engaged with the justice system have found their interactions to be traumatic, causing additional harm to that inflicted by the perpetrator. The experience, including giving evidence in adversarial proceedings and traditional cross-examination, can be daunting and victims can find that there is a lack of access to support services before, during, and after proceedings. Factors like these can influence victims' to abandon their case.

CIARAN McQUILLAN
Public Prosecution Service

Comment from Co-design Reflection Day

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The fact that many victims and survivors choose not to engage with the criminal justice system, decide to discontinue their cases, or proceed only through the civil courts, means that the true scope of violence against women and girls is concealed.

As well as ensuring that the needs of victims and survivors are effectively addressed, it is important to focus on the offender to ensure that they are held accountable, supported and challenged to change their behaviour.

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> **As well as ensuring that the needs of victims and survivors are effectively addressed, it is important to focus on the offender to ensure that they are held accountable, supported, and challenged to change their behaviour**

Many of these issues have already been recognised and are being addressed by other strategies and through work being led by various statutory bodies an community and voluntary sector organisations. It will be important to ensure that all our efforts are joined up, utilising performance indicators that are meaningful across the board so that we can see what is working and what may need some more attention. The role of the Strategic Framework under this outcome will mainly be to support existing initiatives in partnership with those leading other strategies, with a clear focus on avoiding unnecessary duplication, and to identify areas where further development would be helpful.

The Justice System

Under this outcome the priority areas of focus are:

5.1 Victims and survivors' needs are fully taken into account at each stage of the justice process

Particular areas of focus will include:

- identifying and increasing awareness of the needs of women and girls involved in proceedings who are victims and survivors of violence against women and girls. A focus will be required on identifying and tackling additional inequalities and barriers to support faced by some groups of women and girls

- ensuring victims and survivors have access to appropriate support services with good signposting and are kept informed about the process

- trauma informed training for professionals who come into contact with victims and survivors

- considering specific measures in the field of criminal legislation and sentencing to enhance the confidence of victims, survivors, and the general public in the justice system

- introducing and supporting champions who will take the lead in promoting good practice within their profession

Particular concern was expressed in the Call for Views and during the co-design process about the barriers in accessing justice for victims and survivors with no recourse to public funds because they are subject to immigration control. This has been identified as a suitable topic for an early Task Group Sprint.

5.2 Reducing delays in the justice system for cases involving violence against women and girls

Particular areas of focus will include:

- identifying options to reduce delay and improve efficiency of the justice system in cases involving violence against women and girls. Avoidable delays are known to add to the trauma inflicted on victims and survivors and it is vital that women and girls have the confidence to use the justice system

5.3 Joined up processes for cases involving violence against women and girls

Particular areas of focus will include:

- improved consistent data capture across the systems to ensure better understanding of cases involving violence against women and girls

- enhanced sharing of information across the system for effective management of cases involving violence against women and girls

- practical arrangements which can improve victims and survivors feeling of safety within the court environment

- identifying options for streamlining the key interfaces between different courts (criminal/civil/family) that deal with cases involving violence against women and girls

- identifying arrangements which optimise the expertise of courts dealing with cases involving violence against women and girls

5.4 Effective systems and programmes for perpetrator prevention and management

Particular areas of focus will include:

- ensuring appropriate adjudicated and non-adjudicated perpetrator behavioural programmes are available

- research to further understand the aggravating and reinforcing factors for offending which can include adverse childhood experience (ACE's), substance misuse, and mental ill health

- identifying support pathways for those at risk of offending to address risk factors commonly found alongside offending related to violence against women and girls, including mental health, substance use, accommodation and employability

- exploring the development of a multi-agency approach to the management of high risk and repeat offenders with an agreed common framework such as the Multi Agency Tasking and Coordination (MATAC) model in Scotland

We know that victims and survivors have diverse lived experiences and will be affected by violence and trauma differently, which means they may have different needs in terms of their journey through the justice system

Working Better Together

Outcome 6 – All of government and society working better together to end violence against women and girls

A whole system approach with collaboration and cooperation across government departments and with, within, and between community, voluntary, and other sectors

In order to effectively tackle violence against women and girls, it is essential that we work in a more strategic and joined up way, embedding good practice. The following priority areas are strategic enablers, the threads of good practice that will drive forward implementation of the Strategic Framework. Each of them relates to all of the other 5 outcomes and are critical to effective delivery:

Joined up/ governance	Mainstream in public policy	Proactive leadership	Evidence based	Collaborative resourcing

Components of Good Practice informing implementation of the Strategic Framework

In addition, agile work groups, bringing together lived experience and other subject matter experts, will be set up to allow for short periods of focused work to investigate particular challenges and co-create potential solutions (Task Group Sprint methodology).

6.1 Long term collaborative resourcing for effective delivery

Particular areas of focus will include:

- ambitious but realistic costing of all our initiatives and achievement of adequate funding to tackle this systemic and ingrained problem

- exploring innovative resourcing models that promote collaborative working and joined up thinking will optimise the impact of our resources

- developing a training and knowledge transfer approach to ensure expertise, skills, and new thinking is shared across the wider public sector and civic society

6.2 Robustly evidence based and data informed policy development with measurable benefits/outcomes

Data is essential for understanding the problem of violence against women and girls, measuring our progress toward ending it, and informing funding, service design, and delivery decisions. Data capture and data-sharing mechanisms need to be comprehensive, joined up, gathering consistent and high-quality data to use across the system.

Particular areas of focus will include:

- **Data (evidence base)**
To understand the landscape fully, it is necessary to develop the evidence base and strengthen data collection across all sectors and age cohorts of society. Data mapping will be crucial to identify data already available and explore the gaps, including a requirement for disaggregated data within existing data collection methods.

CHRIS GARDNER
The Executive Office

Comment from Co-design Reflection Day

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• **Measurement and evaluation**

In order to ensure that our actions are working we need to monitor and evaluate. To do this we need high quality data which is not constrained by silos.

• **Lived experience**

In addition to the quantitative data, we want the voices of lived experience (qualitative data) to be part of designing a system that works for all. A mechanism is required to allow these voices to be heard in a manner which will respect the rights of those involved.

• **Knowledge & Network Hub – share information and embed good practice**

A key element of an evidence and data driven foundation for this work is the creation of a Knowledge and Network Hub which can give all partners access to the best international and local research, data, communication resources, and good practice and make appropriate links with other local violence prevention and reduction programmes and initiatives.

6.3 Strong and proactive leadership at all levels of government and society to drive transformative change to end violence against women and girls

Collaborative and proactive leadership, both political and civic, is of vital importance in the creation of a society wide movement and to drive change in all sectors and across our community to end violence against women and girls.

Particular areas of focus will include:

• identifying change agents across civic society and co-creating opportunities to champion the issue, such as a civil society pledge

• working with political champions and developing opportunities to provide leadership on the issue

such as an all-party agreement or working group to encourage collaborative working across party lines

• embedding ending violence against women and girls into the Programme for Government to ensure a focus on ending violence against women and girls throughout government

• exploring options to drive collaboration and accountability in this area such as creating legislative powers and duties

6.4 Prevention of violence against women and girls mainstreamed in public policy

Particular areas of focus will include:

• encouraging partners within government to think proactively about violence against women when developing and delivering policies and services

• maximise the potential of existing government mechanisms, such as procurement or licensing, to mainstream ending violence against women and girls good practice

6.5 Joined up decision making and governance

Particular areas of focus will include:

• establishment of appropriate governance structures for the Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls

• establishment of mechanisms which allow for cooperation and coordination with other intersecting strategies, especially where there are interdependencies;

• establishment of arrangements to facilitate working with other jurisdictions

• consideration of the potential of gender budgeting as a mechanism to assist in this area

Our Approach to Delivery

Our Approach to Delivery

In order to end violence against women and girls, it is essential that we work in a more strategic, collaborative, and joined up way, embedding good practice. This ethos helped to shape the process of co-design, which was foundational to the development of the Strategic Framework and will inform our approach to delivery and supporting arrangements.

Engagement

Through working together in co-design to get to the heart of this challenging issue, a strong and connected network of key stakeholders has been formed. New relationships have been forged and a clear commitment from all to the ambition of ending violence against women and girls. We will continue to engage with key stakeholders across society and government for the life of the programme, and we will explore other partnership opportunities.

Expertise and Advice will be sourced through the establishment of the creation of agile engagement arrangements, covering expertise by lived experience, local service providers, and international and local academic research. In developing these arrangements, we will ensure appropriate alignment including with those supporting the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy.

Ways of working

Our aim is to work together as partners across every sector of society to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls with a focus on root causes.

The Executive mandate is to coordinate work across Departments and sectors at a strategic level. This can best be done in different ways and in different contexts. The Strategic Framework ensures that

where relevant work is already ongoing, it will not be duplicated. Instead, we will work to amplify, accelerate, and augment. Where new work is required, discussions will be held on where best to locate it and how best we can support it, whether by leading, investing, collaborating or joining up. The Executive Office and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls team will provide a range of functions to ensure that the following work proceeds successfully at pace, which includes:

A Knowledge & Network Hub will be created within The Executive Office to provide a central resource for everyone. The Hub will include data and evaluation expertise, engagement with reference groups, international research and dissemination of good practice, communications and campaigns, and ensure institutional memory. It will also make appropriate links with other local violence prevention and reduction programmes and initiatives.

A Programme Management Office will be established to provide central coordination and to support governance and any formal external review of the work at appropriate junctures.
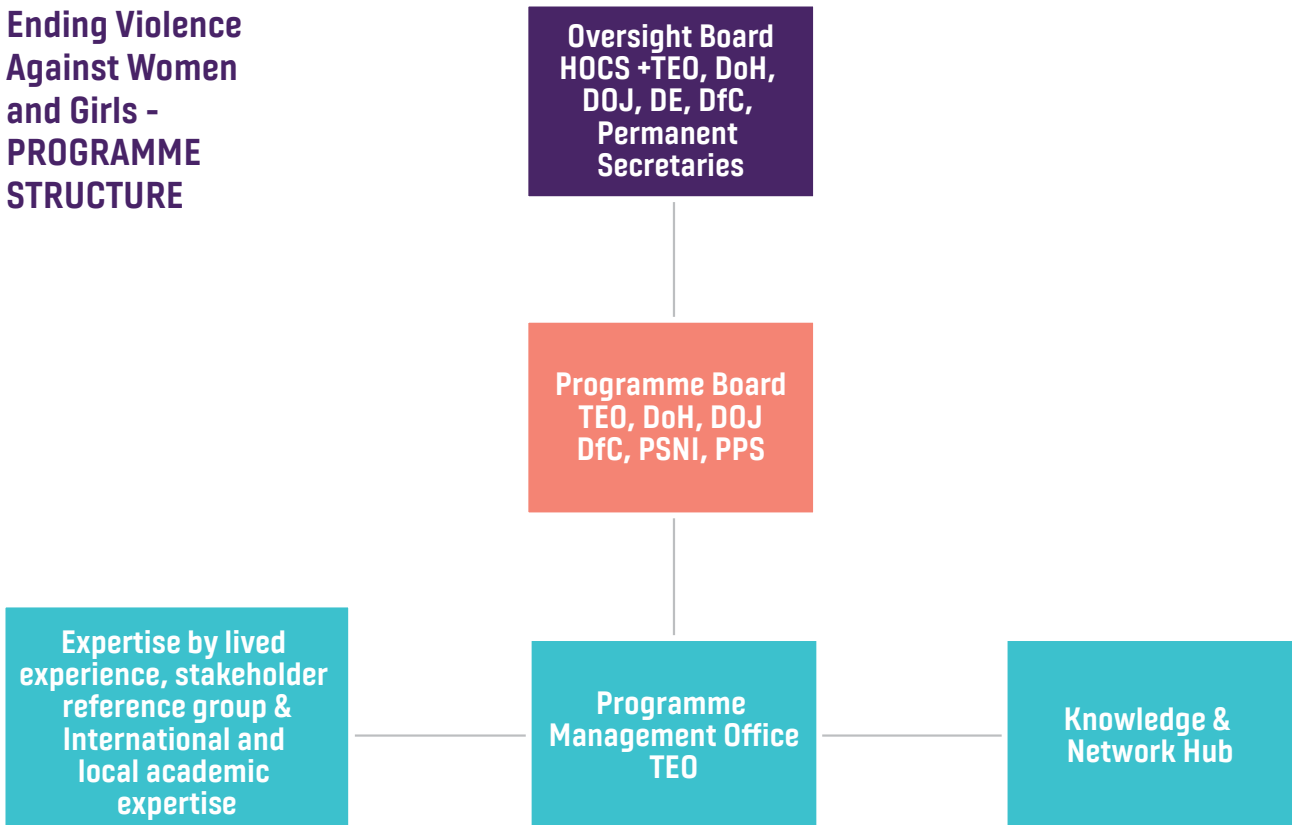
A Task Group Sprint approach will be deployed to facilitate focused, short-term projects on identified issues, bringing together relevant expertise from across departments, statutory agencies, lived experience, community, voluntary, and other sectors as necessary.

Oversight and Accountability

This is a whole of society and whole of government approach and it is important that we are able to measure impact and that there is accountability for delivering progress in all areas. Building on this foundation of a collaborative and creative approach to engagement, the interim governance and accountability structures are being formed to provide effective focussed oversight while remaining agile to promote collaborative, connected delivery. Each element of the arrangements will contribute in different ways to ensuring effective delivery of the Strategic Framework and Action Plans. As delivery progresses, these arrangements may change to better reflect our needs.

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls - PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

Oversight Board
HOCS +TEO, DoH, DOJ, DE, DfC, Permanent Secretaries

Programme Board
TEO, DoH, DOJ DfC, PSNI, PPS

Expertise by lived experience, stakeholder reference group & International and local academic expertise

Programme Management Office TEO

Knowledge & Network Hub

The Oversight Board chaired by Head of Civil Service (HOCS), will include the Permanent Secretaries of key delivery Departments. This Board will review and monitor the implementation of the Strategic Framework taking account of the wider strategic context including other relevant strategies.

Programme Board – this Board will oversee and ensure delivery of the Strategic Framework and will monitor programme progress against agreed timelines and milestones. Membership will be drawn from key delivery partners and stakeholders.

Cross Departmental Liaison Group – this working level group will add value by ensuring that there is coordinated and collaborative delivery of commitments made by Executive Departments and their statutory bodies, including joined-up working with other strategies in relation to ending violence against women and girls.

Action plans and supporting monitoring framework – these will be developed to deliver the Strategic Framework. The monitoring framework will be developed using 'Outcomes Based Accountability' and will be informed by an outcomes focused data driven approach, while enabling measurement of high-level change towards the outcomes. Where appropriate, we will seek to align actions, indicators and the way we measure progress towards our outcomes, with those being used in other related strategies including the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy.

An independent mid-term review will be conducted to examine progress to date against the outcomes and priority areas, to assess the impact of the strategy, and review governance arrangements.

Delivery of the Strategic Framework and Action Plan will also be subject to established accountability arrangements (to Ministers and The Executive), to scrutiny by the Assembly and its Committees and to any relevant International Treaty monitoring mechanisms, such as those for the Istanbul Convention.

Concluding Remarks

Violence against women is a serious and widespread societal problem. Ending it is a significant task, a generational challenge which requires a strong society wide vision for transformational change. This co-designed Strategic Framework sets out a journey to achieve this change.

Violence against women and girls is preventable. We can stop it before it starts. Prevention can help create a future that is not only safer for women and girls, but is more respectful, just and equal for everyone in our society.

To achieve the widespread societal transformation necessary to prevent violence against women and girls, we need systematic and coordinated investment and effort at the widest possible scale, at all levels of government and society.

There is something everyone can do. Let's get started.

Annexes

Annex A - The Strategic Landscape

This Strategic Framework forms part of a web of support for everyone in our society. Ensuring it is joined up and protects everyone is part of our challenge. There are many other strategies and programmes of work across government which are relevant to ending violence against women and girls and we will be coordinating with them as necessary. It will also be important to work with local government and other partner agencies with this same goal in mind.

Some of the most relevant strategies and programmes of work are set out below.

The draft **Domestic and Sexual Abuse (DSA) Strategy 2023-2030**, led by the Department of Justice and Department of Health, will build on the first **Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in NI Strategy (2016-2023)**. It sets out a renewed focus on tackling domestic and sexual abuse regardless of gender or gender identity. In addition, the **major review, conducted by Sir John Gillen** into the law and procedures applied in serious sexual offences in NI made recommendations for systemic reform and is currently in implementation phase.

Recognising the cross-cutting nature of violence against women and girls, and the emphasis on early intervention in this Strategic Framework, we are working closely with the **Department of Education** in order to ensure that ending violence against women and girls is mainstreamed into policy development, service delivery and the curriculum.

The proposed suite of four **Executive Social Inclusion Strategies (Anti-Poverty, Disability, Gender Equality, and Sexual Orientation)** development of which is being led by the Department for Communities, focuses on identifying and addressing the issues, barriers, and disadvantages that undermine equality of opportunity in our community. Close co-operation and the sharing of information will ensure that we complement each other's work and collaborate where possible. **The Executive Programme on Paramilitary Organised Crime (EPPOC)** is an Executive wide public health-based strategy to end paramilitary violence and organised crime. We intend to share with them a cross-departmental structure and a foundation in datadriven public health approaches to violence prevention.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) have also developed an **Action Plan: Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls** which will contribute to a society in which violence and abuse against women and girls in any form, anywhere, is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. It will also aid in building trust and confidence in policing.

The Public Prosecution Service (PPS) is in the final stages of developing a revised Sexual Offences Policy and Domestic Abuse Offences Policy. They are working closely with the PSNI to develop a joint strategy on cases involving serious sexual offences and to promote a prosecution team approach in tackling domestic abuse. There is also regular consultation via the PPS Stakeholder Engagement Forum.

Annex B - Glossary

Abuse: Is any action that violates a person's human rights or civil rights. It can take many forms and involves a number of factors. It can occur anywhere, and the abuser could be a stranger, a partner, a carer, a family member or someone else in a position of trust or authority.

Active Bystander Approach: An intervention approach which aims to equip people to become active bystanders as opposed to passive ones. It helps develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to safely intervene when challenging harmful attitudes, language, or behaviour that supports violence.[25]

Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE): Refers to some of the most intensive and frequently occurring sources of stress that children may suffer early in life. Adverse childhood experiences include multiple types of abuse, such as neglect, violence, and/or serious household dysfunction, for example, alcohol and substance abuse and may have lifelong impacts.[26]

Child Marriage: UNICEF defines child marriage as any formal marriage or informal union between a child under the age of 18 and an adult or another child. It describes child marriage as a harmful practice as children, given their age, inherently lack the ability to give their full, free, and informed consent to their marriage or its timing.[27] In our jurisdiction, marriage of young people of 16 and 17 years of age is permitted with their parents' consent.

Co-Design: Co-design is a methodology about designing with people, not for people. it is a design led process using creative and participatory methods. Using a carefully designed approach to engagement and consultation, and built on evidence based research, a space is created to reflect the value all contributors to the process equally, remaining open to a range of perspectives and opportunities. The people in the co-design room are all important to the success of developing the proposition. We have used this approach to design this Strategic Framework.

Coercive Control: Coercive control is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation, or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten a victim who is usually in an intimate partner or family relationship with the abuser. This controlling behaviour is designed to make a person dependent by isolating them from support, exploiting them, depriving them of independence, and regulating their everyday behaviour.[28]

Consent: In this Strategic Framework we use 'consent' specifically to describe an agreement between participants to engage in sexual activity or enter into marriage. It must be freely and actively given and cannot be provided by someone who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol or by someone underage. Consent is specific, meaning that consent to one act does not imply consent to any others, and reversible, meaning that it may be revoked at any time.[29]

Cyberstalking: Involves the use of information and communications technology to perpetrate more than one incident intended to repeatedly harass, annoy, attack, threaten, frighten, and/or verbally abuse individuals.[30]

Domestic Violence (DV): All acts of physical, sexual, psychological, or financial abuse that occur within the family or domestic unit, irrespective of biological or legal family ties, or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence as the victim.[31] Domestic violence is also known as domestic abuse and includes but is not limited to intimate person violence.

Drivers of violence against women and girls: The underlying causes that are required to create the necessary conditions in which violence against women occurs. They relate to the particular structures, norms and practices arising from gender inequality in public and private life, but which must always be considered in the context of other forms of social discrimination and disadvantage.[32]

Emotional violence: Emotional violence includes undermining a person's sense of self-worth through constant criticism; belittling one's abilities; name-calling or other verbal abuse; damaging a partner's relationship with the children; or not letting a partner see friends and family.[33]

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): Comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The practice is mostly carried out by traditional practitioners in certain cultures.[34]

Femicide: Refers to the intentional murder of women because they are women, but may be defined more broadly to include any killings of women or girls.[35]

Forced Marriage: A forced marriage is where one or both people do not or cannot consent to the marriage, and pressure or abuse is used to force them into marriage. It is also when anything is done to make someone marry before "they are of an age when they can validly consent, or where they lack mental capacity to do so, even if there is no pressure or abuse". Forced marriage is illegal in the UK. It is a form of domestic abuse and a serious abuse of human rights.[36]

Financial Abuse: Financial abuse is an aspect of coercive control which involves a perpetrator using or misusing money which limits and controls their partner's current and future actions, as well as limiting freedom of choice. It can include using credit cards without permission, putting contractual obligations in their partner's name, and gambling with family assets. Financial abuse can leave victims with no money for basic essentials, such as food and clothing. It can leave them without access to their own bank accounts, with no access to any independent income, and with debts that have been built up by their abusive partner.[37]

Gender: Gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with others. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time.[38]

Annexes

Annex B - Glossary

Gender-based discrimination: Any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex or gender which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil, or any other field.[39]

Gender-based violence: Refers to harmful acts directed at an individual or a group of individuals based on their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power and harmful norms. The term is primarily used to underscore the fact that structural, gender-based power differentials place women and girls at risk of multiple forms of violence. Women and girls suffer disproportionately from gender-based violence, however men and boys can also be targeted.[40]

Gender budgeting: Gender budgeting is an important public governance tool that governments can use to assess how budget decisions impact gender equality. When implemented effectively, gender budgeting helps expose how gender inequalities may have inadvertently become embedded in public policies and the allocation of resources. It also promotes budget measures that will be effective at closing gender gaps.[41]

Gender equality: Involves equality for people of all genders. This term is used in the substantive sense to mean not only equality of opportunity, but also equal or just outcomes (sometimes also called equity). Achieving gender quality requires the redistribution of power, resources and responsibilities between men and women in particular, and the transformation of the underlying causes and structures that create and sustain gender inequality.[42]

Gender Identity: One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.[43]

Gender norms: The dominant beliefs and rules of conduct which a society or social group see as normal in relation to the types of roles, interests, behaviours and contributions expected from girls and boys, men and women. Norms are not neutral in their effect but rather create and maintain unequal relations of power.[44]

Gender stereotype: A gender stereotype is a generalised view or preconception about attributes or characteristics that are or ought to be possessed by women and men or the roles that are or should be performed by men and women. They can be both positive and negative.

Gender stereotyping: The practice of ascribing to an individual woman or man specific attributes, characteristics, or roles by reason only of her or his membership in the social group of women or men.[45]

General support services: Refers to government public social welfare services such as social services, housing services, (un)employment services, public education and training services, advocacy and legal services, financial support services, and health care services.

Grooming: Grooming is when a person builds a relationship with a child, young person or an adult who's at risk so they can abuse them and manipulate them into doing things. Grooming can take place online or in person and it can happen over a short or long period of time..[46]

Harm: Harm includes all harmful contact, and in particular, conduct that causes physical harm, psychological harm by causing fear, alarm or distress; unlawful conduct which appropriates or adversely affects property, rights or interests; conduct which causes self-harm.[47]

Harassment: Unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for that individual.[48]

Harmful Sexual Behaviour: Sexual behaviours expressed by children and young people under the age of 18 years old that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards self or others, or be abusive towards another child, young person, or adult. These behaviours, which often occur in schools, can range from inappropriate and problematic behaviours, like sexist name-calling and non-consensual image sharing, through to abusive or violent behaviour, like unwanted touching and penetrative assaults. This behaviour can be between children and young people of any age, gender, and/or sexual orientation.[49]

Honour-based violence or abuse: Honour based violence is a violent crime or incident which may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family or community. It is often linked to family members or acquaintances who mistakenly believe someone has brought shame to their family or community by doing something that is seen as being not in keeping with the traditional beliefs or culture.[50]

International Labour Organisation (ILO) Violence and Harassment Convention 2019 (No. 190): ILO Convention 2019 (190) is the first international treaty to recognise the right of everyone to participate in a world of work that is free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment.

Image-Based Sexual Abuse (IBSA): Refers to creating, threatening to share, sharing, or using of recordings (still images or videos) of sexually explicit or sexualised materials without the consent of the person depicted and/or for the purposes of exploitation.[51]

Intergenerational Trauma: Refers to a discrete form of trauma which occurs when traumatic effects are passed across generations without exposure to the original event.[52]

Intersectionality: The concept of intersectionality describes the ways in which systems of inequality based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class, and other forms of discrimination "intersect" to create unique dynamics and effects.[53] An intersectional approach to ending violence against women and girls includes a consideration of where gender intersects with other inequalities/oppressions (sexual orientation and gender identity, ethnicity, immigration status, disability) to produce unique experiences of violence.[54]

Annex B - Glossary

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV): Intimate partner violence refers to behaviour by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm. Violent behaviour may include physical aggression, psychological abuse, sexual coercion, and/or controlling behaviours.[55]

LGBTQIA+: An acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, and asexual with a "+" sign to recognise other sexual orientations and gender identities that are not mentioned.

Misogyny: Misogyny is a way of thinking that upholds the idea that men are superior to women and that it is right for women to have less power and freedom than men. This way of thinking can express itself in attitudes and behaviours which can be controlling, offensive and abusive. Misogyny includes but is not limited to contempt for women as a group and ranges from disrespecting women and promotion of harmful stereotypes to physical and sexual violence.

An alternative definition: Misogyny is a way of thinking that upholds the primary status of men and a sense of male entitlement, while subordinating women and limiting their power and freedom. Conduct based on this thinking can include a range of abusive and controlling behaviours including rape, sexual offences, harassment and bullying, and domestic abuse..[56]

NIC-ICTU: Northern Ireland Committee-Irish Congress of Trade Unions

NISRA: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

Online or Digital Violence Against Women and Girls: Refers to any act of violence that is committed, assisted or aggravated by the use of information and communication technology (mobile phones, the Internet, social media, computer games, text messaging, email, etc) against a woman because she is a woman.
Online violence can include:

- Cyberbullying which involves the sending of intimidating or threatening messages
- Non-consensual sexting which involves the sending of explicit messages or photos without the recipient's consent.
- Doxing involves the public release of private or identifying information about the victim. [57]

Physical Violence: Involves hurting or trying to hurt a partner by hitting, kicking, burning, grabbing, pinching, shoving, slapping, hair-pulling, biting, denying medical care or forcing alcohol and/or drug use, or using other physical force. It may include property damage. [58]

Programme for Government (PfG): The PfG is a long term, strategic Programme for Government, to be agreed by the Executive under the Northern Ireland Act 1998, based on a shared and strategic vision for the future which aims to improve wellbeing for all.

PSNI: Police Service of Northern Ireland

Psychological Violence: Involves causing fear by intimidation, threatening physical harm to self, partner, or children, destruction of pets and property, "mind games," or forcing isolation from friends, family, school, and/or work.[59]

Reinforcing factors: Factors which become significant within the context of the drivers of violence. These factors do not predict or drive violence against women and girls on their own. However, they each play a role in influencing the occurrence or dynamics of violence against women and girls. Reinforcing factors are contextspecific; they have an influence in particular circumstances and manifest differently at the individual, community and society levels.[60]

Relationships and Sexual Education (RSE): RSE helps children and young people acquire knowledge, understanding, and skills, as well as developing attitudes, beliefs, and values about relationships, sexual identity, and intimacy. RSE encourages children and young people to value themselves as individuals, and to make responsible and well-informed decisions about their lives.[61]

Settings: Environments in which people live, work, learn, socialise, and play.

Sexism: Discrimination based on gender and the attitudes, stereotypes and cultural elements that promote this discrimination.[62]

Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse is when someone is forced, pressured or tricked into taking part in any kind of sexual activity with another person. It could be online or in person, and it can happen to anyone. Rape and sexual assault are types of sexual abuse, as well as sexual harassment. It includes sexual slavery, pornography, child abuse, and sexual assault.[63]

Sexual Exploitation: An actual or attempted abuse of someone's position of vulnerability (such as a person depending on you for survival, food, education, access to technology, transport, or other services), differential power, or trust, to obtain sexual favours by offering money or other social, economic, or political advantages. It includes trafficking and prostitution.[64] It can be commercial or noncommercial. It includes **child sexual exploitation** which is a form of child sexual abuse. This occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.[65]

Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment encompasses non-consensual physical contact, like grabbing, pinching, slapping, or rubbing against another person in a sexual way. It also includes non-physical forms, such as catcalls, sexual comments about a person's body or appearance, demands for sexual favours, sexually suggestive staring, stalking, and exposing one's sex organs.[66]

Sexual Orientation: An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people.
Note: an individual's sexual orientation is independent of their gender identity.[67]

Annex B - Glossary

Sexual Violence: Sexual activity that happens where consent is not obtained or freely given. It occurs any time a person is forced, coerced or manipulated into any unwanted sexual activity, such as touching, sexual harassment and intimidation, forced marriage, trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, sexual assault, and rape. Sexual assault is only one type of sexual violence and does not include sexual harassment, or broader and complex forms of sexual violence, such as technology-facilitated or image-based abuse.[68]

Social norms: The informal, mostly unwritten and unspoken collective rules that define typical, acceptable, appropriate, and obligatory actions in a social group, setting or society. They are produced and reproduced by customs, traditions and value systems that develop over time to uphold particular forms of social order.[69]

Social structures, (including and the systems which support them): These structures are reinforced through government, institutions and laws that serve to organise society, determining who has social and political power. Social change processes challenge those social structures and political and cultural institutions, and thus the organisation of society and the distribution of power and resources.[70]

Specialist services: Refers to services that are specifically focused on supporting victims and survivors of violence against women and girls, for example shelters, helplines, collection of forensic medical evidence, trauma care, rape crisis centres, and specific services for children as victims and survivors. This includes services who work with marginalised communities who can face specific or multiple levels of inequality.

Street harassment / Public Sexual Harassment: Harassment refers to unwanted comments, gestures, and actions directed at someone in a public place without their consent. Harassment can happen anywhere. It can take place on the streets or any public space – parks,

gyms, university campuses, transport or shopping centres.

Structural Inequalities: Embedding of gender inequalities in social structures, based on institutionalised conceptions of gender differences.[71]

Structures: Macro-level mechanisms and structural forces (economic, political, cultural, organisational) that maintain social order and the status quo and which, in turn, shape our lives.

Systems and Structures: Macro-level mechanisms, both formal (policies, institutions and laws) and informal (social norms), which serve to organise society, and create power relationships between different groups of people and patterns of social and political power.[72]

Systemic Social Inequalities: A pattern of discrimination that is reflected within social norms and reinforced through law, education the economy, healthcare and politics and results in the privileging of certain groups and individuals over others.[73]

Trafficking: The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of people through force, fraud, or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit. The traffickers often use violence or fraudulent employment agencies and fake promises of education and job opportunities to trick and coerce their victims.[74]

Trauma Informed Practice (TIP): Trauma Informed Practice is a way of increasing the understanding of trauma and its impact through supporting development of skills and knowledge throughout the workforce. It also recognises the correlation between trauma and poorer outcomes which may be caused by the direct impact of the trauma, the impact of the trauma on a person's coping response, or the impact of the trauma on a person's relationships with others.[75]

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG): Violence against women and girls is defined 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 and girls, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. Violence against women and girls encompasses, but is not limited to, physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family or within the general community, and perpetrated or condoned by the State.[76]

Women's Night Safety Charter: The charter is a commitment by organisations and businesses operating at night to support the Northern Ireland Executive Office's work to end violence against women and girls. Hospitality Ulster and **White Ribbon NI** have joined forces to adopt the Women's Night Safe Charter and support its rollout in Northern Ireland. [77]

Workplace Sexual Harassment: Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, or

- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or

- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.[78]

Young Life and Times Survey (YLT): The Young Life and Times (YLT) survey is an annual survey run by **ARK** in Northern Ireland. It is a repeated cross-sectional survey and records the views of 16 year olds on a range of issues such as community relations, health, politics, sectarianism and education. ARK is Northern Ireland's social policy hub based across the campuses of Ulster University and Queen's University Belfast. ARK's primary goal is to increase the accessibility and use of academic data and research and it provides robust and independent evidence, which forms the basis for critical policy debate and informed policy making.

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Annex D – Co-Design Partners

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- Allstate NI
- Barnardo's
- Department for Communities
- Department of Education
- Department of Health
- Department of Justice
- Diocese of Down and Connor
- Disability Action
- Diversity Mark
- Education Authority
- Labour Relations Agency
- Men's Action Network
- Migrant Centre NI
- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)
- Nexus NI
- NI Sports Forum
- Northern Ireland Committee – Irish Congress of Trade Unions (NI-ICTU)
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE)
- Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network (NIRWN)
- Ofcom Northern Ireland
- Police Service Northern Ireland (PSNI)
- Presbyterian Church in Ireland
- Probation Board for Northern Ireland
- Public Health Agency
- Public Prosecution Service
- Queen's University Belfast Students Union
- Queen's University Belfast Teachers Training
- Relate NI
- Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI)
- Society of Local Authority Chief Executives SOLACE NI
- Sport NI
- The Executive Office
- The Rainbow Project
- Ulster University
- Victim Support NI
- Voice of Young People In Care (VOYPIC)
- White Ribbon NI
- Women with Lived Experience
- Women's Aid Federation NI (WAFNI)
- Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA)
- Youth Action NI

Annex D - Co-Design Partners

Vox Pop Recordings from Co-design members: The Strategic Framework was co-designed by people from many sectors and backgrounds, with diverse perspectives, who are committed to ending violence against women and girls. On the final Co-design Reflection Day, Monday 27th March 2023, a number of participants came together to comment on the process.

These voices and others that participated in co-design all reflected the level of involvement, the passion and the commitment in creating a Strategic Framework that will bring about the big changes needed to end violence against women and girls.

DR. JAYNE BRADY
Head of NI Civil Service

Comment:
CLICK HERE

SONYA MCMULLAN
Women's Aid

Comment:
CLICK HERE

ELAINE CRORY
Women's Resource and Development Agency

Comment:
CLICK HERE

AISLING PLAYFORD
The Rainbow Project

Comment:
CLICK HERE

DUANE FARRELL
Relate NI

Comment:
CLICK HERE

CATHY GALWAY
Department of Justice

Comment:
CLICK HERE

PAUL DEIGHAN
Education Authority

Comment:
CLICK HERE

JOANNE BARNES
Nexus

Comment:
CLICK HERE

MICHAEL LYNCH
Men's Action Network

Comment:
CLICK HERE

GRETA GURKLYTE
Disability Action

Comment:
CLICK HERE

BARBARA PORTER
Public Health Agency

Comment:
CLICK HERE

KENDALL BOUSQUET
NI Migrant Centre

Comment:
CLICK HERE

TAHNEE MCCORRY
White Ribbon NI

Comment:
CLICK HERE

ANTOINETTE MCKEOWN
Sport NI

Comment:
CLICK HERE

JACQUI MONTGOMERY DEVLIN Faith Forum

Comment:
CLICK HERE

LINSEY FARRELL
Department of Education

Comment:
CLICK HERE

MICHELLE HARRIS
Barnardo's

Comment:
CLICK HERE

TRASA CANAVAN
Barnardo's

Comment:
CLICK HERE

LINDSAY FISHER
PSNI

Comment:
CLICK HERE

CIARAN MCQUILLAN
Public Prosecution Service

Comment:
CLICK HERE

CHRIS GARDNER
The Executive Office

Comment:
CLICK HERE

CLARE MOORE
The Irish Congress of Trade Unions

Comment:
CLICK HERE

Annex E - Help and Support

Nexus NI

provide a specialised professional counselling service primarily focused on enabling positive change for those impacted by sexual abuse and abusive relationships.

Web: **About | Nexus NI**

Email: **info@nexusni.org**

Tel: 028 90326803

24 hour Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline:

Freephone: 0808 8021414 Email: **help@dsahelpline.org**

Women's Aid NI

work to provide trauma informed support services to women, children, and young people who have experienced domestic abuse.

Web: **Get help - Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland**

Email: **info@womensaidni.org** Tel: 028 90249041

Victim Support NI

helps people affected by crime, including hate crime, eCrime, and sexual and domestic violence crime.

Web: **Victim Support Northern Ireland**

Email: **info@victimsupportni.org.uk**

Tel: 028 90243133

NSPCC

provides therapeutic services to help children move on from abuse, as well as supporting parents and families in caring for their children.

Web: **NSPCC** Email: **help@nspcc.org.uk**

Tel: 08088005000

24/7 Childline Helpline Web: **Childline** | Childline Tel: 08001111

The Rainbow Project

is a health organisation that works to improve the physical, mental, and emotional health and well-being of LGBTQIA+ people and their families.

Web: **Rainbow Project** Email: **info@rainbow-project.org**

Tel: 028 90319030

Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)

are taking specific actions to tackle violence against women and girls.

Website: **What we are doing to tackle violence against women and girls?**

Report an emergency: Call 999

Report a non-emergency:

Call 101 or online: **Online Incident Reporting**

Men's Advisory Project NI

offers services of support to any man who has faced, or who is facing, domestic abuse across all of Northern Ireland.

Web: **MapNI** Email: **info@mapni.co.uk**

Tel: Belfast: 028 90241929 / Foyle: 028 71160001

Annex F - Endnotes

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