

Policing Plan 2016 – 19 consultation **questionnaire**

- 1. Member of organisation** – Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland
- 2. Area** – organisation based across Northern Ireland
- 3. The police do a good job in keeping people safe?** – Agree
- 4. Policing in Northern Ireland – What are the 3 most important issues that the police should do to keep people safe in NI?**
 - (i) Better Policing of violence against women, including domestic & sexual violence, FGM, forced marriage and 'honour' based violence. Perpetrators of violence against women are criminals, and there should be greater focus on working to bring them to justice through arrests, prosecutions and convictions for their crimes. This could be aided by pushing forward with victimless prosecutions, widespread use of body-worn cameras and the establishment of systems to track serial perpetrators of domestic violence.
 - (ii) Training. Given that DVOs are now centralised and only dealing with the most high-risk cases, it is more crucial than ever that responding officers are thoroughly trained in how to respond to domestic abuse and sexual violence related call-outs. A responding officer's knowledge about the nature of domestic violence, what to look for at a scene, how to engage with vulnerable victims and manipulative perpetrators, and how to act to ensure the future safety of a victim, can make a huge difference to the safety and protection of domestic violence victims.
 - (iii) Consistency in policing across Northern Ireland. The Policing Plan must be able to constructively address inconsistencies between districts in policing service and delivery, and ensure that the strategic response is consistent across Northern Ireland. There should be a strong link between this regional plan and local operational plans and the work of PCSPs. The Plan should also focus on consistency in protecting those victims of crime who are most vulnerable and susceptible to harm and abuse, such as victims of domestic and sexual violence. Areas that could be improved include engagement with victims after incidents to ensure their safety, consistency of response to rape and sexual violence crimes, consistent access to The Rowan and forensic evidence collection for all victims of rape or sexual crime, immediate informing victims of bail decisions, consistent early referral of victims to support organisations like Women's Aid in 'low' and 'medium' risk cases, and employing Women's Aid Justice Support Workers in police stations across Northern Ireland.

What do you think are the main challenges for policing over the next 3 years?

- (i) Ensuring that the more centralised model of operation is delivering an effective, fit-for-purpose service for victims of crime
- (ii) Tackling historical sexual abuse in post-conflict Northern Ireland. It is now beyond doubt that sexual abuse of women and children took place during the Troubles. Many of these victims have lived in fear and silence, and have endured the impact of the crimes committed against them without justice or support. It is society's duty to seek justice for these victims, and the PSNI will play a pivotal role in bringing perpetrators from all sides of the community to justice.
- (iii) Preventing loss of confidence in police. If time and resources are diverted away from responding to domestic and sexual violence, and perpetrators continue to commit crimes with impunity, this will inevitably lead to a loss of confidence in the police. Such an outcome is increasingly likely if resource cuts lead to a gap in response to victims of low and medium risk cases that come to the attention of the PSNI, and abuse is allowed to escalate to dangerous and life-threatening levels before statutory agencies including police respond effectively.