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Tackling Violence at Home

**A STRATEGY FOR ADDRESSING
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE
IN NORTHERN IRELAND**



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OCTOBER 2005



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Foreword

This document sends a clear message from Government. Domestic violence is a crime and is not acceptable in any circumstances.

Domestic violence and abuse is a serious problem. It has a devastating impact on victims and their families. Each year in Northern Ireland around 5 people are killed and over 700 families have to be re-housed as a result of violence in the home. On average, every week, the police attend over 400 domestic incidents and deal with over 100 domestic assaults on women and men, yet we know that most domestic-related incidents are not reported.

The abuse affects people right across our society - from all walks of life, from all cultural, social and ethnic backgrounds and across all age groups. The vast majority of victims are women, but a significant number of men are also affected and abuse also occurs in same-sex relationships. Violence in the home is particularly disturbing for children and we know from local research that at least 11,000 children here are living with domestic violence on a daily basis. These are staggering figures and the problem requires a strategic response.

The Government is determined to hold perpetrators of this insidious crime to account for their abuse. The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 focuses more attention on perpetrators and provides better protection for victims, for example, by giving the police greater powers of arrest.

The Government acknowledges the excellent work that has been done over the past 30 years by Women's Aid in Northern Ireland in raising awareness about domestic violence and supporting female victims. We also wish to acknowledge the inter-agency relationships developed over the past decade by staff in all the relevant voluntary and statutory agencies at both regional and local level. This inter-agency approach has been of enormous benefit in raising the standard of services for victims. The commitment and efforts of all those agencies is greatly appreciated and their experience and expertise will be invaluable as we seek to implement a new strategy by building on the solid foundations they have laid.

This strategy and the associated action plan set out a vision for the future, with aims and targets focusing on preventive measures and



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on the provision of better protection, justice and support services for victims and their children. All the statutory and voluntary agencies are committed to working in partnership on the Regional Steering Group and on Local Domestic Violence Partnerships and that commitment is vital to successful implementation of the strategy.

We must encourage everyone to end the silence on domestic violence. We must educate children and the wider general

public that violence and abuse in the home is totally unacceptable. Through our on-going media campaigns, we will encourage the many silent victims to come forward and seek help through the freephone Helpline and from the various agencies who provide such valuable support.

Working together we can achieve our common goals and we can make a real difference to the lives of victims and their families.

David Hanson MP
Minister of State for
Northern Ireland

Shaun Woodward MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of
State for Northern Ireland

Jeff Rooker
Minister of State for
Northern Ireland

Angela Smith MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of
State for Northern Ireland

Rt Hon Peter Hain MP
Secretary of State for
Northern Ireland

Executive Summary

Introduction

Domestic violence and abuse is a serious problem in Northern Ireland. It occurs right across our society and it has devastating consequences for the victims and their families. It accounts for one in five cases of violent crime here. On average every year 5 people are killed as a result of domestic violence and about 700 families have to be re-housed. Every day about 12 women and 4 men report an assault by a partner to the police, yet it is known that violent incidents in the home are seriously under-reported.

Children are very much the silent victims of domestic violence. They may witness it or be subject to it but often their voices are not heard. Local research indicates that at least 11,000 children here are living in violent homes. Their experiences can affect their emotional, psychological, physical and sexual development and the abuse can have long-lasting consequences for them in childhood and in later life.

Millions of pounds are spent every year across a range of services in dealing with

domestic violence and its consequences. It is estimated that the direct cost of services plus the loss of economic output in Northern Ireland due to domestic violence could amount to about £180 million each year, and this figure does not include the “intangible costs” associated with the pain and suffering of victims.

Purpose

This document sets out a new strategy covering the next 5 years for tackling domestic violence and abuse in the 3 key areas of **prevention; protection and justice; and support**. The strategy is the product of a wide-ranging consultation and collaboration process involving all the relevant government departments and all the relevant statutory and voluntary agencies.

Vision

The strategy’s vision focuses on meeting the needs of all victims who experience abuse through the development of better, more equitable, accessible and effective services; and on working towards the development of a society in which domestic violence is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. The ultimate goal is to put in place all practicable

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measures towards the elimination of domestic violence and abuse.

The strategy sets out the commitment of Government and all the partner agencies to adopting a consistent and long-term approach to the prevention of domestic violence and an effective response where it occurs.

Overall Aims

The overall aims of the strategy are:

- To improve services and support for all victims of domestic violence
- To develop and deliver a high quality, co-ordinated multi-agency response to domestic violence
- To further increase and develop awareness generally about domestic violence and the measures in place to help the victims
- To educate children and young people and the wider general public that domestic violence is wrong and is unacceptable and to enable them to make informed choices
- To hold perpetrators/abusers accountable and provide effective interventions for their behaviour.

Structures and Implementation

Structures are in place at regional and local level to ensure that the strategy will be implemented consistently across Northern Ireland. All of the relevant agencies are committed to working in partnership to ensure there is a strategic joined-up approach taken to tackling domestic violence.

An initial Action Plan, which is published alongside this strategy, sets down a number of key action proposals and target dates for achieving progress over the next 18 months. Further Action Plans will be developed annually from 2007 onwards. The implementation of the strategy and the Action Plans will ensure a more effective response to domestic violence across Northern Ireland. Performance Indicators will be put in place across a range of services to measure the success of the strategy.

Domestic Violence. Anyone can suffer – so anyone can call 0800 917 1414

Introduction

This strategy aims to provide better protection, justice and support for victims of domestic violence and provide a sharper focus on prevention by addressing the causes of domestic violence and abuse.

Background

It is 10 years since the publication of the previous policy document **Tackling Domestic Violence: A Policy for Northern Ireland**¹.

This new strategy, which will be subject to ongoing review through the development of annual action plans, sets the scene for the next 5 years. It builds on the 1995 policy document and on the subsequent achievements of the voluntary and statutory agencies involved in the former Regional Forum on Domestic Violence and the existing local Domestic Violence Inter-Agency Fora.

The strategy is the outcome of a full public consultation exercise and a collaboration process involving all the relevant statutory and voluntary agencies. The October 2003 consultation paper² and the early framework for a strategy were developed by an Inter-Departmental Working Group on

Domestic Violence, which was brought together in August 2003 and jointly chaired by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Northern Ireland Office. It involved representatives from a number of relevant Government Departments. The Working Group's objective was to create a joined-up approach to domestic violence, building on existing good practice, and to develop a cross-cutting strategy plotting the way forward on a number of fronts. A list of members of the Inter-Departmental Working Group is included at Annex 1.

Further development of the strategy has been taken forward by the Regional Steering Group on Domestic Violence. This Group was established in December 2004 and comprises representatives of all the relevant statutory and voluntary bodies. A list of members of the Regional Steering Group is included at Annex 2.

Responses to the 2003 consultation indicated clearly that more needs to be done to achieve an effective response to domestic

¹ Tackling Domestic Violence – A Policy for Northern Ireland. The Department of Health and Social Services and the Northern Ireland Office (1995) ISBN 1 899203 05 2

² Tackling Violence at Home – The Government's Proposals on Domestic Violence in Northern Ireland. The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Northern Ireland Office (October 2003) Ref 163/2003



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violence³. A more effective system of communication and collaborative working between departments and agencies is needed, to ensure that the needs of victims are met and that perpetrators are challenged and held responsible for their actions.

Victims: throughout this strategy there are many references to victims. The term is intended to be all-inclusive to cover all persons who are affected by or who are survivors of domestic violence and abuse. This includes children and young people and persons in all of the equality categories covered by section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 - these equality categories are set out at Annex 3.

Outline of the Strategy and Action Plan

The strategy identifies what is required to tackle domestic violence and abuse effectively. It describes the overall strategic approach which will be adopted to achieve the aims. Action Plans will be developed annually and these will set out specific action points to translate the strategy's principles and aims into practice. The initial Action Plan,

which is published alongside the strategy, sets out the key actions to achieve progress across a range of services over the next 18 months.

The Way Forward

The publication of this strategy is only the beginning of a process to address the serious problem of domestic violence and abuse. All the relevant departments and agencies are working together as partners on the Regional Steering Group to oversee the implementation of the strategy. There are also three dedicated sub-groups on: **Domestic Violence and the Law;** **Children and Young People;** and **Information.** The sub-group members are listed at Annex 2. The Regional Steering Group and its sub-groups will be responsible for ensuring that the strategy continues to evolve and that further Action Plans are drawn up annually, starting in 2007, to address new problems and priorities, including the need for additional resources. At a local level implementation of the strategy will be the responsibility of the Local Domestic Violence Partnerships which will bring together the existing local domestic violence fora and community safety

³ Tackling Violence at Home – Summary of Responses to the Consultation. The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Northern Ireland Office (March 2004) Ref 371/2003

partnership personnel to further the strategy's aims.

Success will only be achieved if all of the partners involved at regional and local levels commit to taking positive action to address domestic violence through the implementation of the strategy.

Note about terminology: throughout the strategy references are made to **domestic violence; domestic violence and abuse; and domestic abuse**

these terms are deliberately used inter-changeably to highlight the fact that the problem is not restricted to physical violence but involves also psychological, verbal, sexual, financial and emotional abuse. See section on **What is Domestic Violence and Abuse?**

Other Strategies

This Strategy will complement the proposed Gender Equality Framework Strategy⁴ "Gender Matters" which highlights gender-

related violence and abuse as one of the key action areas to be tackled by Government departments and their agencies. It will also help to deliver on some of the priority outcomes set out in the over-arching Strategy for Children and Young People⁵, in particular those which relate to the safety of children and young people and support for parents/carers and families. It will also complement other relevant strategies which have been issued or are being developed, such as:

- The Supporting People Strategy 2005-2009
- The new Regional Strategy for Health and Well-Being - due for publication late 2005
- The Strategic Framework for Children, Young People and Families - consultation due early 2006
- The Sexual Violence Strategy - consultation due early 2006
- Strategic Action Plan on Sexual Orientation – consultation due Autumn 2005
- The Family and Parenting Strategy - consultation due mid - 2006
- The New Strategic Direction for Drugs and Alcohol in Northern Ireland - consultation due early 2006

⁴ The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister published a proposed Gender Equality Framework Strategy "Gender Matters" for consultation. The final strategy is to be published in December 2005

⁵ The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister published its Draft Strategy for Children and Young People in November 2004. The Final Strategy is to be published in December 2005



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What is Domestic Violence and Abuse?

Domestic violence and abuse is essentially a pattern of behaviour which is characterised by the exercise of control and the misuse of power by one person over another within an intimate relationship or a family. It is usually frequent and persistent. It can include violence by a son, daughter or any other person who has a close or blood relationship with the victim.

Domestic violence occurs right across society. It knows no boundaries as regards age, gender, race, ethnic or religious group, sexual orientation, wealth, disability or geography, but in the majority of reported cases women are the victims.

The abuse can go beyond actual physical violence. It can involve emotional abuse - for example: undermining of self-confidence; threats to others including children; controlling behaviour such as isolation from friends and family; control over access to money, personal items, food, transportation or the telephone; the destruction of property and stalking.

Domestic violence can include violence inflicted on, or witnessed by, children. The wide adverse effects of living with domestic violence for children must be recognised as a child protection issue. The effects are linked to poor educational achievement, social exclusion and to juvenile crime, substance misuse, mental health problems and homelessness from running away.

It is acknowledged that domestic violence can also manifest itself through the actions of immediate and extended family members through the perpetuation of unlawful activities, such as forced marriage, so called 'honour crimes' and female genital mutilation. Extended family members may condone or even share in the pattern of violence.

Why did my children have to lose everything including every photo of them growing up... everything that we ever owned, due to one man and his violence?

Definition

The definition of domestic violence and abuse which is used for the purposes of this strategy and which all relevant agencies are encouraged to use is: **“threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on one person by another where they are or have been intimate partners or family members, irrespective of gender or sexual orientation.”**

I was five months pregnant and due to his beatings and kickings, I finally lost the baby.



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Patterns and Prevalence of Domestic Violence and Abuse

Domestic violence is a crime. It is abhorrent and often hidden. Within our society, traditionally, the issue has been a taboo subject, not discussed openly and dismissed by many as a private matter, with little or no emphasis on prevention. However, organisations such as Women's Aid at regional and local level, local domestic violence fora, child care agencies, the police and probation services have worked hard for many years to raise awareness about the problem, to prevent repeat abuse and to support victims.

Some myths exist about the causes of domestic violence and abuse. These myths include loss of control by, or provocation of, the perpetrators. Many people also believe that alcohol is the main cause. There are clear links between alcohol misuse and domestic violence, in that the problem may be exacerbated and the violence more severe when there is alcohol involved, but alcohol is not the cause. In reality domestic violence and abuse is usually a pattern of persistent behaviour by the perpetrator designed to achieve power and control over the victim.

Cases reported to the police indicate that about 3 to 4 times more females than males are victims of domestic violence. Most cases, therefore, involve violence perpetrated by men against women, but there are also male victims of female abuse and there are victims within the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities.

Research and statistics indicate that:

- Domestic violence accounts for approximately one-fifth of all recorded violent crime in Northern Ireland.⁶
- On average, there are five people killed each year as a result of domestic violence in Northern Ireland.⁷
- On average every day in Northern Ireland, 12 women and 4 men are victims of domestic - related assaults.⁶
- The police attend an average of 60 domestic-related incidents per day, but recognise that there is still a large amount of under-reporting of this type of crime.⁶
- It is estimated that one in five women and one in nine men will

⁶ Police Service of Northern Ireland Statistics 2004/05

⁷ Police Service of Northern Ireland Statistics

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experience domestic violence in the course of their lifetime.⁸

- Domestic violence often starts or escalates during pregnancy.⁹
- It is estimated that at least 11,000 children in Northern Ireland are living with domestic violence.¹⁰
- Repeat victimisation is common. No other type of crime has a rate of repeat victimisation as high.¹¹
- Victims are at greatest risk of homicide at the point of separation or after leaving a violent partner.¹²
- Each year about 700 families in Northern Ireland have to be re-housed because of domestic violence.¹³

⁸ Experience of Domestic Violence in Northern Ireland: Findings from the 2003/04 Northern Ireland Crime Survey

⁹ Violence Against Women – Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists

¹⁰ Children in Northern Ireland – Domestic Violence and Professional Awareness (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2002) page 7

¹¹ British Crime Survey England and Wales 2000. London: Home Office, 2000

¹² Lees, S. 'Marital rape and marital murder', IN Hanmer, J et al. Home Truths about Domestic Violence: Feminist Influences on Policy and Practice: A Reader. London: Routledge, 2000.

¹³ Statistics from Northern Ireland Housing Executive



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The Cost of Domestic Violence

Each year in Northern Ireland millions of pounds are spent across a range of services in dealing with domestic violence and its consequences. Significant resources are committed annually through:

- The criminal justice system (the police, the prosecution service, the courts, the probation service) in relation to victims and perpetrators
- The civil courts in dealing with family proceedings
- The provision of legal aid
- The various health and social services (in hospitals and in the community) in providing services for victims and their families
- The housing services in providing housing, refuge accommodation and out-reach services
- Funding of voluntary organisations such as Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation for the Domestic Violence Helpline, Victim Support Northern Ireland and other services in support of victims.

Although it is not possible, at present, to put a hard figure on the **total** overall cost

annually to society, because cases related to domestic violence and their associated costs are not currently tracked by the courts, health and social services trusts and other relevant agencies, this will change in the future. As agencies adopt domestic violence policies under the strategy and the collection of statistical data improves, it will be possible in future years to track cases and their associated costs and to assess annually the overall cost to the public of dealing with domestic violence.

In the meantime some indication of the annual cost of dealing with domestic violence within Northern Ireland can be derived from recent research undertaken in England and Wales.

Research published in September 2004¹⁴ estimated the cost of domestic violence to society in England and Wales at £23 billion **each year**. The methodology used was based on the Home Office's framework for costing crime. £6 billion of the total estimate for England and Wales was related to the direct cost of providing services to deal with

¹⁴ The Cost of Domestic Violence – Sylvia Walby (University of Leeds) September 2004

domestic violence (police, criminal justice system, health and social services care, housing, and civil legal cases) and to the loss of economic output through time off work due to victims' suffering.

The research indicated that it would be misleading and incomplete to restrict the economic costs of domestic violence to those associated with services and employment only. Like other crimes, domestic violence generates significant "intangible" costs associated with pain and suffering, and the research acknowledged that to omit these in relation to domestic violence would falsely represent this type of crime as less costly than other violent crimes. The research therefore followed the practice adopted by government departments, such as the Home Office and the Department for Transport, by estimating these human and emotional costs on the basis of the public's 'willingness-to-pay' to avoid pain and suffering - this element accounted for £17 billion of the estimated £23 billion annual cost for England and Wales.

There has been no similar research undertaken in Northern Ireland. However, an

approximate estimate of the annual costs here can be obtained by extrapolating the research figures for England and Wales on a pro-rata population basis. Using this process it is estimated that the **direct cost of services** (i.e. for police, criminal justice system, health and social services care, housing, civil legal cases and legal aid) plus the loss of economic output in Northern Ireland due to domestic violence, could amount to about £180 million each year. A similar estimate for the "intangible costs" associated with the pain and suffering of victims could amount to some £500 million each year in Northern Ireland.

These figures highlight the enormous cost of domestic violence to society generally and the immense human and emotional costs to individuals and their families who suffer the violence and its consequences. The figures also underline the need to adopt a more strategic and co-ordinated approach to tackling the violence, making the best use of available resources to provide better support to victims, and to make perpetrators more accountable for their actions.

Domestic Violence. End the Silence. Call 0800 917 1414. The Helpline is open to anyone affected by domestic violence.



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The Response to Date and the Problems in Tackling Domestic Violence

The Response to date

It is important to acknowledge that a lot of excellent work has been done over the past decade, and continues to be done, by a number of voluntary and statutory agencies across Northern Ireland to address the many different aspects of domestic violence.

Following publication of the 1995 policy document, structures were put in place at regional level (the Regional Forum on Domestic Violence) and at local level (11 Local Domestic Violence Fora) to bring together all the key players to share knowledge and experiences, to undertake awareness raising and some training and to address issues at local level. Much progress has been made since then and the fora and the agencies involved deserve much credit for the significant contribution they have made in working together to address the problems, to raise the profile of domestic violence, and, most importantly, to provide help and support to victims.

It is also important to acknowledge some of the key initiatives which have been introduced over the last decade to help victims and their families. For example, the introduction in 1995 of a 24-hour Helpline by Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation and the continuing development of Women's Aid services at local level, including their refuge and outreach services, have provided enormous support for female victims and their children. The Helpline has since been developed to introduce a textphone facility for hearing impaired people and interpretation facilities for non-English speaking callers and more recently into a free-phone service for any victim regardless of gender.

In recent years, organisations such as Men's Advisory Project, Men-to-Men and Rainbow have developed some support and counselling services for male victims and victims in same-sex relationships.

Another important development has been the introduction of the Supporting People

The caller to the Helpline had recently given birth by caesarean section. Her husband had kicked her in the stomach and thrown her outside.

initiative in 2003, which allows the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to provide accommodation - based support to domestic violence victims. Many households experiencing domestic violence need housing-related support either to allow them to remain safely in their own homes or to help if they need to move. The Housing Executive published its first Supporting People Strategy this year and it highlights how the Housing Executive will work with all its partners to address the needs of domestic violence victims.

In recent years the Police and the Courts have developed better support for victims through the provision of dedicated PSNI Domestic Violence Officers and through the introduction of more informal proceedings and special measures in court (such as live link and the use of screens) to assist victims. There is also speedy access to the courts for ex-parte civil orders. Resident Magistrates allocate time for applications in private at any court hearings within the relevant Petty Sessions District or County Court Division.

In addition, the Probation Service, in conjunction with Social Services and

Women's Aid, has undertaken some successful work with perpetrators aimed at reducing the incidence of re-offending while offering increased support to victims.

Clearly, therefore, a lot of good work has already been done. These developments and the ongoing work of a variety of agencies have collectively contributed to an increasing awareness among the general public about domestic violence and its consequences and about the services available to victims.

However, feedback from the 2003 consultation exercise indicated that there is a need to raise the profile much further; to develop preventive work; to change attitudes; to make improvements in service provision; to develop education and training; and to improve co-operation and co-ordination among the range of policy-makers and service providers who have a role in addressing the problem.

Problems In Tackling Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a complex issue that requires a strategic approach. It can be very difficult to deal with because much of the violence and abuse takes place behind closed

Why should we leave our home? Why should our children be taken from their schools, family and friends? My children and I are not criminals... but HE IS.



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doors. Many victims suffer in silence, afraid for themselves and their children and so most incidents of this crime go unreported. Some myths and outdated attitudes remain within our society about a form of violence that was historically acceptable. The abuse occurs in relationships where emotions may be high and loyalties divided. Victims may disregard their own safety and stay in abusive relationships for reasons such as embarrassment, fear and confusion, financial insecurity or a desire to keep their families together.

It is also clear from the responses to the consultation that these difficulties may have been complicated by an overall response which has not always been consistent and has not been co-ordinated across Northern Ireland. In addition, data on domestic violence cases has not been collected routinely nor in a standard format by many of the relevant agencies. There has also been constrained access to services for victims through: a lack of information; confusion about the roles of the various service providers; inconsistent geographical provision; lack of or inconsistent funding;

and a lack of overall training, co-ordination and monitoring.

I can't believe it! He's such a nice guy!

The Government's Vision and Commitment

The Government acknowledges that domestic violence is a serious problem in Northern Ireland and is committed to working towards its eradication. Every person should be able to live in a safe and secure environment in a society where domestic violence and abuse is unacceptable. The Government recognises that it has a duty to do what it can to secure such an environment. It is committed to improving protection for all victims of domestic violence and to providing them with appropriate information and support. All victims must be aware of the options open to them so that they can make informed decisions about the route they wish to take to end the violence and rebuild their lives. Whether or not they seek the protection of the courts, victims must be made aware of, and have access to, all the support that is available from all the statutory and voluntary agencies. Government is also committed to a more effective response to people who perpetrate violence and to persons convicted of domestic violence offences.

The Government's vision for effectively addressing domestic violence incorporates

positive and consistent action as set out below. The subsequent sections on the strategy's aims and delivery plans then detail how the vision can be achieved.

The Vision

The Government's vision incorporates:

Consistent positive action from the Government Departments and their Agencies, including:

- A clear, unequivocal message that domestic violence is a crime, is unacceptable and will not be tolerated
- A consistent demonstration of the importance of joint-agency collaboration and joint-agency policy implementation including good information-sharing
- The provision of dedicated resources to address policy and practical issues
- Research and replication of best practice, effective responses and interventions.

The development of better, more equitable, accessible and effective service provision providing:

We need to know that our abusers will face stiff penalties. We need to know that there is security and safety for us. We need to know that we can keep our homes.



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- A co-ordinated network of services that meet the needs of all victims
- Appropriate protection and support for all victims experiencing domestic violence
- Appropriate safe solutions for all victims escaping domestic violence
- Easily accessible information to ensure that help is available for any victim
- Education and training to help prevent domestic violence or to identify it early and provide help and support.
- Less public silence and more debate about domestic violence and abuse and its consequences for victims and their children
- Co-ordinated services which prioritise victims' and their children's safety
- A range of services, sufficiently flexible to meet individual needs yet standardised enough for victims to be able to safely rely upon them
- An approach that encourages empowerment and self-determination.

Improved protection and support for victims and effective deterrents through:

- Holding perpetrators accountable for their behaviour
- Changing the criminal and civil law where necessary.

What does the vision mean for victims, for children, for perpetrators, for service providers, and for society generally?

For victims who experience domestic violence and abuse, there should be:

- A clear message that domestic violence is a crime and that it will not be tolerated

For children who live in violent homes there should be:

- Services that protect them from the consequences of being exposed to domestic violence
- Help, support and advocacy to ensure that they are not left to deal with their experiences alone
- Information that the violence they have experienced is wrong, legally and morally
- Opportunities to share their experiences with other children so as to reduce their isolation.

I am disabled and I fear reporting the abuse because I rely on him for personal assistance and financial support. What if I can't find another carer?

For perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse there should be:

- Interventions designed to hold them accountable for their behaviour
- Opportunities to help them to address their offending behaviour
- Negative consequences sufficient to act as a deterrent.

For practitioners who provide services there should be:

- Training and support for all relevant staff
- Standard definitions relating to domestic violence service provision allowing all agencies to work towards a common purpose
- Good practice guidelines and standards against which services can be assessed and compared.

For departments and agencies that resource domestic violence services there should be:

- Monitoring to track the effectiveness of the strategy
- Better data to ensure that future services can be targeted effectively.

The benefits for the population generally should be:

- Increased understanding of domestic violence and its unacceptability
- Better information for victims and their family and friends who provide support
- A reduction in the prevalence and severity of domestic violence
- A reduction in repeat victimisation
- A reduction in the long-term negative consequences of domestic violence for victims and their children
- A reduction in the direct and indirect costs associated with domestic violence
- A safer community

I went to the police once... the gist was "Look at the size of you. Go home and sort it out yourself".



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Roles and Responsibilities

The key requirement for successful implementation of the strategy is commitment to a shared purpose across all the relevant partner departments and agencies, at both regional and local level. The Government is committed to achieving sustained and effective action across a wide range of agencies and professional fields in pursuit of the strategy's aims and objectives.

The relevant Government Departments and their agencies will:

- ensure that the Government's commitment to tackling domestic violence and abuse in Northern Ireland is known at all levels
- work together proactively and in **partnership** with voluntary and community organisations and with local domestic violence partnerships to take forward the strategy on a corporate basis
- ensure, as far as is possible, that adequate additional resources are allocated to implement the strategy
- ensure that other agencies to which they relate and employers generally are

encouraged to proactively address domestic violence and contribute to the implementation of the strategy

- ensure that appropriate sanctions and sentencing options are available to courts
- promote equality of opportunity for all in accessing services
- ensure there is monitoring and feedback about progress on implementation of the strategy across all departments and agencies.

The Criminal Justice Agencies (i.e. the Police Service, the Public Prosecution Service, the Court Service and the Probation Service) will:

- ensure that domestic violence is dealt with as a crime wherever appropriate
- recognise that the way in which they respond to cases of domestic violence is critical to effective implementation of the strategy
- work effectively with other key partners at regional and local level to take forward the strategy on a corporate basis

The violence is bad, but it's the emotional side of what happens - the shame, the embarrassment and, because I'm a man, the not being believed is worse.

A STRATEGY FOR ADDRESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

- promote equality of opportunity for all accessing protection and justice services
- facilitate court-mandated perpetrator programmes in partnership with Women's Aid.

Local Domestic Violence Partnerships will:

- ensure that they involve in their partnerships representatives of all relevant agencies in their localities, including community safety partnerships, to take forward the strategy on a corporate basis
- adopt Regional Good Practice Guidelines and Standards and audit and monitor their effectiveness
- develop local initiatives in line with the strategy's aims
- work with each other, with all the relevant agencies and with the Regional Steering Group to implement the strategy
- promote equality of opportunity for all in accessing domestic violence services.

Relevant Voluntary Organisations will:

- work together proactively and in partnership with all the relevant bodies

(statutory and voluntary) at regional and local level to take forward the strategy on a corporate basis

- promote equality of opportunity for all in accessing domestic violence services
- provide constructive feedback on services received from various agencies and departments and make suggestions for improvement
- participate in relevant training initiatives for statutory departments and agencies.

All the statutory and voluntary agencies are committed to working in partnership on Local Domestic Violence Partnerships and on the Regional Steering Group.



A STRATEGY FOR ADDRESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The Aims of the Strategy

The ultimate goal is to put in place all practicable measures towards the elimination of domestic violence and abuse. Progress towards that goal can be achieved through the following aims.

Overall Aims

The overall aims of the strategy are:

- To improve services and support for all victims of domestic violence
- To develop and deliver a high quality, co-ordinated multi-agency response to domestic violence
- To further increase and develop awareness generally about domestic violence and the measures in place to help the victims
- To educate children and young people and the wider general public that domestic violence is wrong and is unacceptable and to enable them to make informed choices
- To hold perpetrators/abusers accountable and provide effective interventions for their behaviour.

These aims will be achieved through the successful implementation of all the elements of the strategy, the initial Action Plan and subsequent annual Action Plans.

The strategy is aimed at everyone in Northern Ireland: victims who experience or witness domestic violence, the perpetrators of abuse, politicians, policy makers, service providers, people working within the justice system, and the general public - all have a role in the elimination of domestic violence and abuse.

I am elderly, treated like a child and isolated from my friends. Cheques have been cashed without my authorisation and I have been coerced into signing documents.

Delivering on the Aims

This section sets out in some more detail, under the headings of **Prevention; Protection and Justice; and Support**:

- the main issues that need to be addressed
- the progress that has already been made
- broad proposals for achieving the aims of the strategy in the future.

A section on **Other Priorities** is also included to highlight other key issues which do not fall neatly under **Prevention; Protection and Justice; and Support** headings, but which are nevertheless crucial to the delivery of the strategy's aims.

Further and more specific details on initiatives, which translate the broad aims and themes into action points and target dates for achievement, are then set out in the accompanying Action Plan.

Prevention

Preventing domestic violence occurring in the first place is a priority. It is essential that **anyone** affected by domestic violence has access to information and advice and that

professionals know how to respond to early signs of abuse. Actions under the Prevention strand of the strategy are therefore aimed at:

- preventing domestic violence happening in the first place, through changing public attitudes to it (particularly among young people)
- general public education and media campaigns
- identifying and tackling risk factors e.g. during pregnancy; and links with alcohol and substance misuse
- providing help for all victims of domestic violence as early as possible to prevent the abuse recurring
- providing advice and information to all victims on how to get access to support services and legal protection
- preventing offenders, wherever possible, from re-offending.

Progress to date

There has been some significant progress in this area in recent years. Examples are:
A successful 2-year pilot project on Non-

If sporting institutions took the issue of domestic violence seriously it could be a really effective way to influence boys' and men's behaviour.



A STRATEGY FOR ADDRESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Violent Relationships to reduce the level of domestic violence, was run in Belfast by the Probation Board, 2 Health and Social Services Trusts and Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid, working with male perpetrators and their female partners and with young people.

A high-profile publicity campaign was successful in raising awareness and promoting the new Free-phone Helpline service for **anyone** affected by domestic violence.

A successful pilot scheme to routinely ask pregnant women about domestic violence was undertaken by midwives at the Royal Jubilee Maternity Unit in conjunction with Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid and NI Women's Aid Federation. Other HSS Trusts have now also introduced Routine Enquiry and consideration is now being given to the policy being rolled out across all maternity units.

Preventive education work has been carried out in a number of primary and secondary schools using programmes developed by NI Women's Aid Federation. Programmes such as "Helping Hands" and "Heading for

Healthy Relationships" have been delivered by local Women's Aid Groups.

Some employers, including South and East Belfast HSS Trust, Derry City Council and the NI Court Service have introduced workplace policies on domestic violence to provide help and support to victims at work. Agreement has also been reached with the Northern Ireland Civil Service Departments and the Northern Ireland Office to introduce a civil-service-wide policy and guidance on Domestic Violence and the Workplace.

Key Preventive Measures for the future

It is acknowledged that considerable further benefit can be achieved in the area of prevention. Further developments and initiatives to be rolled out under Action Plans will therefore include:

Educating children and young people in school so that future generations know about healthy relationships, are informed that domestic violence is a crime and is unacceptable. The introduction of the revised curriculum will provide opportunities through various learning areas and contributory

I was really lucky to have a boss who supported me when my ex-partner began hanging around where I worked.

strands to get these messages across to children.

Educating the wider general public is also a vital component to open up debate on the seriousness of the problem and to focus more attention on perpetrators. Publicity campaigns will therefore be organised on an ongoing basis. Information for victims will be further developed so that details about the help and support available from various agencies is readily accessible to anyone seeking it.

All professional and other relevant staff, particularly those in the health and social services and education sectors, but also those in a range of other statutory, voluntary and community sector organisations need to have appropriate guidance and training to enable them to identify victims of abuse early and offer help and support. Good practice guidance, toolkits or resource manuals will therefore be developed along with a multi-agency training strategy.

Workplaces generally provide excellent opportunities to offer help and support to victims. All major employers in the public,

private, voluntary and community sectors will be encouraged to adopt workplace policies on domestic violence.

Another important factor in helping to prevent the recurrence of abuse will be the further development of projects on work with perpetrators to help them to take full responsibility for their actions and to change their behaviour.

Summary of key preventive measures for the future

- educating children and young people
- raising awareness and improving information
- training professional and other staff
- encouraging workplace policies
- working with perpetrators

Protection And Justice

It is vital that victims of violence and abuse have access to information about the criminal and civil law protections available to them and that they receive a positive response from government, the police and the criminal

Domestic Violence. End the Silence. Call 0800 917 1414. The Helpline is open to anyone affected by domestic violence.



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justice agencies. Actions under the Protection and Justice strand of the strategy are therefore aimed at:

- ensuring the safety of all those affected by domestic violence and holding perpetrators accountable for their behaviour
- ensuring a consistent and effective police response to every reported incident of domestic violence
- engaging victims of domestic violence with the prosecution process
- ensuring that sentences are available that reflect the crime
- ensuring that victims are not deterred by the way they are treated at any stage of the justice process
- making sure that the civil and criminal law offers the maximum protection to all victims to stop the violence recurring
- updating the law on domestic violence to give further protection to victims.

Progress to date

There has been substantial progress in both the civil and criminal justice systems' response to domestic violence over the past few years. Examples are:

Under the criminal law, the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 will provide new powers in respect of:

- the availability of restraining orders when a defendant has been acquitted;
- the establishment of Domestic Homicide Reviews; and
- a new power of arrest for common assault (introduced July 2005).

Under the civil law, the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Order 2005 extends and clarifies the categories of people who can apply for non-molestation and occupation orders, including those in same-sex relationships. It also clarifies the period of time for which ex-parte orders can be made and increases the tariff for breach of protective orders.

The PSNI has developed and issued a new domestic violence policy. The policy aims to provide a consistent, pro-active and effective response to every domestic incident. Where a power of arrest exists, then only in exceptional circumstances will the

I was in tears most of the time I was in court. Just being that close freaked me out even though I knew he couldn't do anything to me.

perpetrator not be arrested. Domestic Violence Officers are now responsible for the investigation of serious assaults including repeat offences. PSNI has also agreed to serve all ex-parte and non-consent non-molestation and occupation orders.

The Public Prosecution Service has developed an enhanced range of services for victims, including victims of domestic violence. Regional Community Liaison teams have been established in the Belfast Region and in the Western and Southern Region. These dedicated, specially trained units provide a telephone information line service. On request, victims can be directly referred to specialist support agencies such as the NSPCC or Victim Support. Information is also sent via letter to victims at key stages in the prosecution process. Extensive training of both prosecutors and law clerks has also been carried out in respect of special measures to ensure application is made to the court for them when appropriate. This training is ongoing in respect of new lawyers. A dedicated special measures intranet resource is also available to all staff in the organisation.

The PPS recently launched its draft "Policy for Prosecuting Cases of Domestic Violence" for consultation. This draft policy outlines how cases of domestic violence are dealt with and what the public can expect from the PPS in respect of these cases.

There are a range of special measures available to victims of domestic violence on application to the court (for example, giving evidence by way of live link, removal of wigs and gowns, giving evidence in private, use of screens) and many court venues have been equipped to enable victims to access these.

The Northern Ireland Court Service has carried out domestic violence awareness training for Court Clerks, staff on counter duties and security service providers. This was facilitated by Women's Aid, PSNI and Victim Support. All new court-based Court Service staff will receive domestic violence awareness training on induction. The NI Court Service has also introduced a Domestic Violence Workplace Policy and Guidance for its staff.

The Victim Support Court Witness Service (for adult prosecution witnesses) and the NSPCC Young Witness Service (for young prosecution

She has threatened to stab me some night when I am sleeping. I can't sleep properly now. She will just open the door and that is me awake all night.



A STRATEGY FOR ADDRESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

witnesses) are available in all Crown Courts in Northern Ireland. They provide a range of support services to victims and witnesses called to give evidence at court. The services available include: a visit to the court prior to the trial; an explanation of what happens at the court; advice about any concerns; providing a quiet place for the witness to wait before and during the hearing; and accompanying the witness into the court room to give evidence. A pilot Court Witness Service has also been available in Belfast Magistrates Court from June 2004.

Key Protection and Justice Measures for the future

The criminal justice agencies recognise the need to intensify their efforts to ensure that victims are given the protection they deserve and that perpetrators are held fully accountable for their crimes, and to increase public confidence in their services. Further developments and initiatives to be addressed under Action Plans will therefore include:

Ensuring that information on the civil and criminal law and the court process is consistently available.

Training for the Court Service on domestic violence and the availability of special measures for victims.

Developing, in partnership with criminal justice and voluntary agencies, a training programme for lawyers in respect of the Public Prosecution Service's domestic violence policy.

Developing further the consistent sharing of relevant and appropriate information between civil and criminal courts and the criminal justice agencies.

Streamlining processes within the Public Prosecution Service through, for example, the implementation of an advanced case management system and the introduction of Causeway IT Programme.

Further developing and implementing positive interventions through court-mandated perpetrator programmes.

Establishing Domestic Violence Homicide Reviews to identify the lessons to be learnt and to improve inter-agency working.

The physical aspect is bad enough, but the scars eventually heal through time. The emotional scars never heal.

Exploring the feasibility of a one-stop-shop to provide multi-agency support for victims, and through this holding perpetrators accountable for their behaviour.

Summary of key Protection and Justice measures for the future

- Providing consistent information on the law and legal process
- Training for the Public Prosecution Service and the Court Service
- Improved sharing of information
- Enhancing services for victims within the Public Prosecution Service
- Developing perpetrator programmes
- Reviewing Domestic Violence Homicides
- Exploring a one-stop-shop option

Support

Victims must have access to the range of support services available from different agencies. Actions under the Support strand of the strategy are therefore aimed at:

- increasing the range of accommodation options, with better help to support victims to stay in their own homes if appropriate, outreach and resettlement services, plus better advice and information
- helping victims who have ended or left a violent relationship to rebuild their lives
- providing support to children and young people affected by domestic violence
- providing information to anyone affected by domestic violence, through the Domestic Violence Helpline service and also via specific agencies, about the range of support services available
- making sure that child contact arrangements in domestic violence cases ensure, as far as is possible, the safety of children and their adult carers.

Progress to date

There has been some good progress in the provision of support to victims of domestic violence. Examples are:

Where a power of arrest exists, then only in exceptional circumstances will the police not arrest the perpetrator.



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A Free-phone Domestic Violence Helpline service is now available to **anyone affected by domestic violence**. The Helpline has a textphone facility for hearing-impaired callers and language line for non-English speaking callers. Where appropriate, callers are sign-posted for more specific advice and support to local women's aid groups or to other organisations such as Men's Advisory Project, Men-to-Men and Rainbow. The Helpline is managed and run by NI Women's Aid Federation.

Barnardo's, in conjunction with some Health and Social Services Trusts, have successfully piloted a Risk Assessment Model to assist social work practitioners in assessing the risks presented by domestic violence for children and to help practitioners make decisions about the types of interventions needed for those children.

Floating support services, to support women in the community and enable them to retain their tenancies, have been developed by Women's Aid in Belfast and Lisburn, Ballymena, Causeway, Cookstown and

Dungannon, Fermanagh, Foyle, Newry, North Down and Ards and Omagh.

Local churches and voluntary organisations have developed child contact centres in a number of areas to facilitate contact between children and non-resident parents following family breakdown.

Key Support Measures for the future

Further developments and initiatives to be addressed under Action Plans to improve support services for victims of domestic violence and their children will include:

Further development of the Free-phone Domestic Violence Helpline Service.

Improving collaboration and information sharing among the various agencies.

Considering the current provision and possible development of child contact services.

Extending the range and scale of housing support services, in particular floating support

She had just been beaten by her partner and was at the police station with her two children. They were all distressed and crying. The officer contacted the Helpline staff who arranged accommodation for them in a local refuge.

services, to support all victims of domestic violence under the Housing Executive's Supporting People Strategy 2005-2009 and associated Annual Plan.

Working with and providing funding to the relevant voluntary organisations who provide support services to victims of domestic violence and their children.

Developing services for identifying and supporting children and young people affected by domestic violence.

Summary of key Support measures for the future

- Developing the Domestic Violence Helpline Service
- Improving collaboration and information sharing
- Considering the provision and development of child contact centres
- Developing Supporting People services
- Working with and funding relevant voluntary organisations
- Developing services for children and young people

Other Priorities

There are a number of other priorities that do not fall neatly within any of the above paragraphs on **Prevention; Protection and Justice; and Support**. They relate to training and administrative arrangements, inter-agency cooperation and sharing of good practice and they are equally important to the successful implementation of the strategy. Progress to date and key measures for the future on these fronts are set out below.

Progress to date

There has been substantial progress to date on these fronts. Examples are:

The development of Good Practice Guidelines by local fora and the good inter-agency co-operation and communication that has been developed over a number of years among the key voluntary and statutory agencies at regional and local levels. Some training on domestic violence has also been delivered.

The appointment by some local domestic violence fora/partnerships of a full-time or part-time co-ordinator at local level.

We will encourage the many silent victims to seek help through the Helpline and from the various agencies who provide such valuable support.



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A common definition of domestic violence and abuse has been agreed (see page 10) and is recommended for use by all relevant agencies.

The establishment of a dedicated Domestic Violence Unit to co-ordinate many of the proposals outlined in the strategy and the Action Plan will ensure that action is taken to progress and implement decisions taken by the Regional Steering Group and its sub-groups.

The involvement of departmental officials in the Inter-Governmental Raising the Standards Committee (an initiative to help address domestic violence throughout the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland and Guernsey) has been very beneficial in learning from the problems encountered by other countries and adopting some of their initiatives and good practice guidance.

Key Measures for the future

Some of the other priorities on which further progress needs to be achieved include:

The development and implementation of a Multi-Agency Training Strategy on Domestic

Violence to provide different levels of training to different people in all the relevant organisations.

The development of Good Practice Guidelines and Standards for adoption by all local domestic violence partnerships and relevant agencies to improve consistency of approach across Northern Ireland.

Improving the collection and sharing of domestic violence information and statistics within and among all relevant agencies.

The production of Annual Action Plans at regional and local levels to highlight the changing priorities and target dates for developing services.

Ongoing involvement in the Inter-Governmental Raising The Standards Committee to share our experiences with other countries and learn from theirs.

We will implement the strategy by building on the solid foundations laid by the multi-agency partnerships at local and regional level.

Summary of key miscellaneous measures for the future

- Developing and rolling-out a Multi-Agency Training Strategy
- Developing Regional Good Practice Guidelines and Standards
- Improving the Collection and Sharing of Information
- Producing Annual Action Plans
- Working with other countries to share experiences and raise standards

Working together we can achieve our common goals and make a real difference to the lives of victims and their families.



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Action Plans

The initial Action Plan, which is being published separately but simultaneously with this strategy, sets out under each of the 4 headings **Prevention; Protection and Justice; Support; and Other Priorities:**

- what action is proposed for implementation within the next 18 months (until March 2007);
- which Department or Agency is responsible for progress (and the lead department/agency where more than one is involved); and
- target date(s) for implementation of each action point.

The Action points in the Action Plan are linked to the Overall Aims of the strategy as set out earlier and to the previous section on Delivery. Further Action Plans will be developed annually from April 2007.

Each organisation, when planning or implementing an Action Plan proposal, will also be responsible for consideration of possible adverse impacts in terms of any of the nine equality dimensions of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

The fact that it happens within the home only makes the crime worse. Home is the place where everyone should feel safest.

Standards, Resources, Structures and Review

Development Of Minimum Standards

The strategy sets out a basic framework for the delivery of effective services to domestic violence victims. Essentially, however, the aims of the strategy will only be realised if there is a commitment across all the relevant service providers to minimum standards of service, and, ultimately, to the implementation of best practice. It is imperative, therefore, that all agencies ensure that they have the appropriate mechanisms in place to improve their responses to domestic violence.

A set of Regional Good Practice Guidelines and Standards, aimed at service providers, is being developed using models already produced by local domestic violence fora and those existing in other countries. These guidelines will assist in achieving a **consistent** approach to domestic violence and abuse across Northern Ireland and should also ensure the promotion of equality of opportunity for all in accessing domestic violence services.

Resources

As already indicated in the earlier section on **The Cost of Domestic Violence**, millions of pounds of public money are spent every year in dealing with domestic violence and its consequences. These resources are committed across a range of services, including: health and social care; housing solutions including refuge accommodation; police and other criminal justice services; civil proceedings; and through the funding of voluntary organisations who support victims of domestic violence.

The effective implementation of the strategy will clearly have resource implications for the partner departments and agencies. Partner departments and agencies will need to ensure that appropriate resources are allocated to the implementation of the strategy. Additional resources are being made available to implement the strategy from 2005/06. In future, Departments should consider the submission of a single multi-departmental bid for resources to fund domestic violence initiatives which are

I have moved about 40 miles away from my husband but I still feel that fear. I still look over my shoulder. I still peer round corners. I still search a room for him before I dare go in.



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dependent on an inter-agency or multi-agency approach.

More importantly, however, it is the people working within all the relevant departments and agencies who will be crucial to success. The training of all relevant staff will be vital to the early identification, protection, and provision of support to victims. The commitment of all the partner departments and agencies to embrace the strategy's vision together with the proposed roll-out of a multi-agency training strategy will also be central to achievement of the strategy's aims.

Structures

Successful implementation will also be heavily reliant on the co-operation of all the people and the agencies who work together at local and regional levels. The structures which are in place to facilitate implementation are set out in Annex 4.

Measuring Success and Reviewing the Strategy

The strategy requires monitoring, evaluation and the capacity to change. Assessing the success of the strategy will require the development of a collection of performance

indicators that cross departmental and agency boundaries and reflect the individual components of the strategy. Government departments, in partnership with all the relevant agencies, will therefore develop a set of performance indicators, against which year-on-year trends in the incidence of domestic violence and the successful implementation of the strategy can be assessed. Further details are included at Annex 5.

There should also be a review undertaken, by or on behalf of the Regional Steering Group, after a 5-year period to assess the continuing relevance of the strategy itself.

Domestic Violence. Anyone can suffer – so anyone can call 0800 917 1414

ANNEX 1

Members of the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Domestic Violence

Leslie Frew (joint Chair)	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Conal Devitt (joint Chair)	Northern Ireland Office
Stephen Baird	Department of Social Development
Marna Bell	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Tom Clarke	Northern Ireland Office
Clare Dornan	Northern Ireland Office
Brendan Devlin	Department of Social Development
Sharon Harley	Northern Ireland Office
Jacqui Durkin	Northern Ireland Court Service
Edell Fitzpatrick	Public Prosecution Service
Hilary Harbinson	Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
Clare Irvine	Department of Finance and Personnel, Office of Law Reform
Stephanie Irwin	Regional Forum on Domestic Violence
David Mann	Department of Education
Marie Austin	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Kevin Shiels	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety



A STRATEGY FOR ADDRESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

ANNEX 2

Members of the Regional Steering Group on Domestic Violence

Andrew Hamilton (Chair)	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Conal Devitt	Northern Ireland Office
Leslie Frew	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Brendan Devlin	Department for Social Development
David Mann	Department of Education
Clare Irvine	Department of Finance and Personnel, Office of Law Reform
Hilary Harbinson	Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
Jacqui Durkin	Northern Ireland Court Service
Edell Fitzpatrick	Public Prosecution Service
Robin Dempsey	Police Service of Northern Ireland
Paul Doran	Probation Board for Northern Ireland
Michael Graham	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
John Devaney	Eastern Health and Social Services Board
Liz Shaw	Southern Health and Social Services Board
Margaret Black	Northern Health and Social Services Board
Eamon McTernan	Western Health and Social Services Board
Anne Graham	Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation
Pauline Leeson	Children In Northern Ireland
Maxine McCutcheon	Men's Advisory Project
James Knox	Rainbow Project
Margaret Donaghy	Multi-Cultural Resource Centre/Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities
Grace Henry	Help The Aged/Age Concern
Peter O'Brien	The Law Society

A STRATEGY FOR ADDRESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Susan Reid
Deirdre Webb

Victim Support Northern Ireland
Eastern Health and Social Services Board

Sub-group Chairs

Ken Wilson

Social Services Inspectorate, Department of Health,
Social Services and Public Safety

Catherine Reilly

Ulster Community Hospitals Trust

Ken Nixon

Resident Magistrate

Secretariat

Kevin Shiels

Domestic Violence Unit

Marie Austin

Domestic Violence Unit

Elaine Farrell

Domestic Violence Unit

SUB-GROUP ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Ken Wilson (Chair)

Social Services Inspectorate, Department of Health,
Social Services and Public Safety

John Devaney (Deputy Chair)

Eastern Health and Social Services Board

Joan McGovern

Barnardos

Hilary Wells

Office of Care and Protection

Margaret Graham

Nursing & Midwifery, Department of Health,
Social Services and Public Safety

Debbie Mehaffy

Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation

Anne Marks

Police Service of Northern Ireland

Pip Jaffa

Parents Advice Centre

Dawn Shaw

NCH National Children's Home

David Mann

Department of Education

Caroline Holloway

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children



A STRATEGY FOR ADDRESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Liz Shaw	Southern Health and Social Services Board
Kevin Shiels	Domestic Violence Unit
Marie Austin (secretariat)	Domestic Violence Unit

SUB-GROUP ON INFORMATION

Catherine Reilly (Chair)	Ulster Community Hospitals Trust
Eugene Mooney (Deputy Chair)	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
Oonagh Cullen	Northern Ireland Women’s Aid Federation
Dr Lynn Thompson Cree	Queen’s University Belfast
Liz McCrystal	Skills for Justice
Edel Robinson	Northern Ireland Office
Maxine McCutcheon	Men’s Advisory Project
James Knox	Rainbow Project
Theresa Cullen/ Mairead McCafferty	Lesbian Line
Hayden Foster	Men to Men
Grace Henry	Help The Aged / Age Concern
Glynnis Henderson	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
Robin Dempsey	Police Service of Northern Ireland
David Mann	Department of Education
Kevin Shiels	Domestic Violence Unit
Marie Austin (secretariat)	Domestic Violence Unit

SUB-GROUP ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THE LAW

Ken Nixon (Chair)	Resident Magistrate
Sharon Harley (Deputy Chair)	Northern Ireland Office
Paul Doran	Probation Board for Northern Ireland



A STRATEGY FOR ADDRESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Eileen McAllister

Robin Dempsey

Jacqui McGarvey

Fiona Greene

Edell Fitzpatrick

Peter O'Brien

Jacqui Durkin

Clare Irvine

Marie Brown

Anne Graham

Alice Beggs (Secretariat)

Probation Board for Northern Ireland

Police Service of Northern Ireland

Southern Health and Social Services Board

Victim Support Northern Ireland

Public Prosecution Service

Law Society

Northern Ireland Court Service

Department of Finance and Personnel, Office of Law Reform

Foyle Women's Aid

Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation

Northern Ireland Court Service

ANNEX 3

Equality Issues

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires Departments and other public authorities in carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- between men and women generally;
- between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- between persons with dependants and persons without.

Under the terms of Section 75, public authorities are required to screen every policy – new or existing – in order to determine whether that policy needs to be subjected to an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA). Equality-screening and EQIAs have to be carried out in accordance with guidance published by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

As part of the EQIA process on the proposals set out in the Consultation Paper “Tackling Violence at Home” (October 2003), that paper included a series of specific questions about possible equality impacts.

What Respondents Said

Most respondents felt that if the proposed strategy was fully implemented and properly resourced it would have a positive impact across the nine equality dimensions set out in Section 75, and would benefit children in particular.

Some respondents suggested that more robust collection and breakdown of domestic violence data would be essential for future equality monitoring purposes. The issue of data collection and monitoring is now part of the strategy to be addressed and implemented by the Regional Steering Group.

It was felt that there needed to be increased awareness among all service providers of the needs of certain groups and that their interests should be represented at multi-agency groups.

Some respondents thought that the strategy would have an adverse equality impact if the prevention, protection and support services were not consistently accessible across Northern Ireland and in terms of all the Section 75 dimensions. Specific groups mentioned that might be adversely affected were: people in same-sex relationships; and people with disabilities.

It was also suggested that when planning implementation, resources should be balanced to address the fact that the vast majority of victims are female.

No respondent presented evidence - qualitative or quantitative - of specific adverse impacts likely to result from the strategy.

Equality Impact Assessment

The Departments have noted the views presented by respondents: the consensus that overall the strategy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity; and also the risks that need to be monitored.

The publication of this strategy and the structures in place to direct and oversee its implementation should ensure that it is fully and consistently implemented across Northern Ireland.



A STRATEGY FOR ADDRESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

In particular, the composition of the Regional Steering Group (see Annex 2) will ensure that the equality interests of specific Section 75 groups will be properly considered and kept on the agenda.

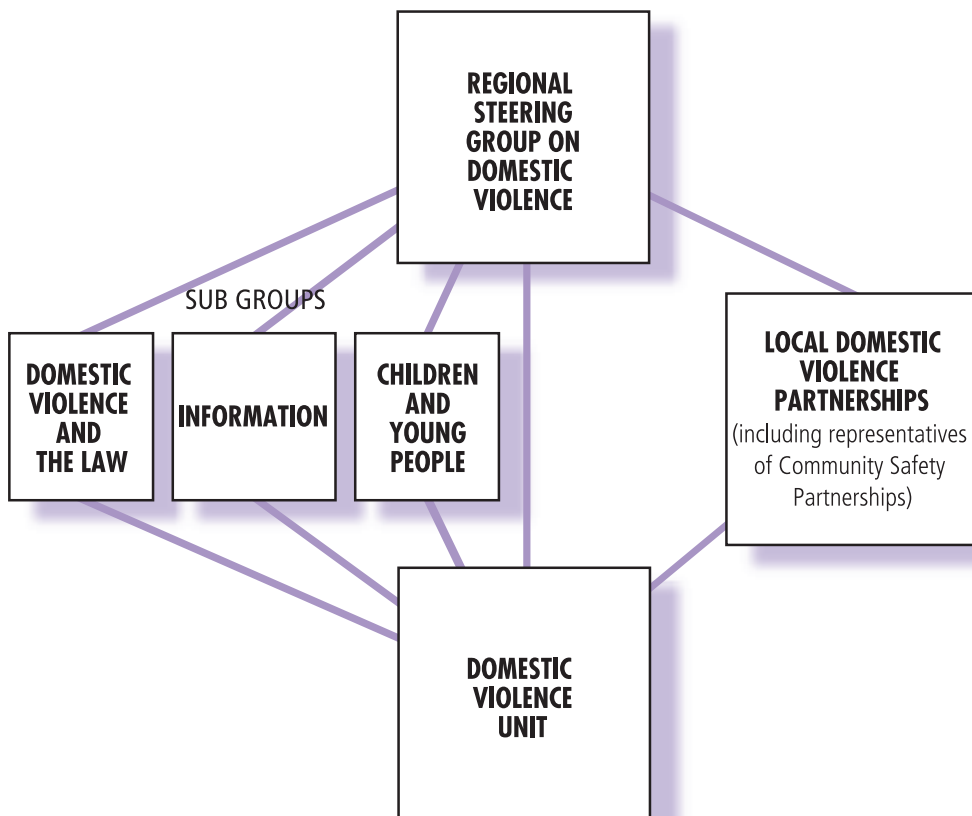
In view of the above the Departments are satisfied with the conclusions reached on the EQIA published in "Tackling Violence at Home" (October 2003), and therefore take the view that the strategy will not cause any adverse impact. As the strategy is implemented, the Regional Steering Group will monitor continuously for possible adverse impacts in terms of any of the nine equality dimensions of Section 75.

ANNEX 4

Structures

Structures are in place to take forward the implementation of the strategy and to build effective co-ordination engaging all the agencies involved.

The diagram and paragraphs below outline these structures:



The following paragraphs provide greater detail on the structures and their roles.



A STRATEGY FOR ADDRESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Regional Steering Group on Domestic Violence

A Regional Steering Group on Domestic Violence comprising representatives of all the relevant statutory and voluntary agencies was set up in December 2004. The members of the Steering Group are set out at Annex 2. The Steering Group normally meets quarterly and is accountable, through the Chair and other Departmental representatives, to Ministers. The Steering Group will be the main driver for implementation of the strategy and for any future change or development of policies on domestic violence. The links to local domestic violence partnerships are through the 4 HSS Board representatives.

Sub-Groups

The Steering Group has 3 sub-groups operating under the headings of:

Children and Young People;

Domestic Violence and the Law; and

Information

The sub-groups are responsible for addressing domestic violence issues relevant to their titles and remits but each sub-group in undertaking its work will also focus on the 3 major strands of the strategy: **Prevention; Protection and Justice; and Support**. The members of the 3 sub-groups are listed at Annex 2.

Regional Co-ordinator and Domestic Violence Unit

A Domestic Violence Unit, comprising a Regional Co-ordinator and a small administrative support team has been set up within the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. The Domestic Violence Unit reports to the Regional Steering Group. The Unit is dedicated to tackling domestic violence and will work closely with all the relevant departments and agencies. It will support the Regional Steering Group and its sub-groups and it will liaise with the local partnerships to ensure consistent implementation of the strategy across Northern Ireland.

Local Domestic Violence Partnerships

Pending the outcome of the Review of Public Administration which is likely to impact on the number of public bodies, existing structures at local level will remain broadly as they are at present. The existing Domestic Violence Fora and representatives of the relevant Community Safety Partnerships in their areas will form new partnerships under the umbrella of the existing local domestic violence fora. This will ensure that all the bodies with an interest in tackling domestic violence at local level are working together on an inter-agency basis and with common objectives, and that there is no duplication of effort.

Local Partnerships will be responsible for the development of local action plans and for implementing the strategy at a local level. Local partnerships will adopt and work to the good practice guidelines and service standards which are being developed.

Ministerial Involvement

At UK Government level there is an Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic Violence which brings together, quarterly, Ministers from all the relevant government departments, to consider policies and initiatives to address domestic violence. Northern Ireland has representation on the Inter-Ministerial Group. On the return of a devolved Assembly the arrangements would have to be reviewed and new local Ministers may wish to establish a local Ministerial Group on Domestic Violence to meet periodically to monitor progress on delivery of the strategy and to maintain focus on Government's commitment to tackling the problem.



ANNEX 5

Performance Indicators

As mentioned on page 37, a range of indicators is needed against which the success of the strategy can be measured. Domestic violence, however, is an issue often involving many complex variables, and so measurement of perceived success must be approached with some degree of caution. For example, there are many reasons why victims do not report the violence to the police or decide not to proceed through the criminal justice system.

Each component of the strategy will need to be operating effectively. Increased awareness of the problem among the general public and confidence in the criminal justice system should lead to increased reporting. The consistent application of police policy on domestic violence should lead to more arrests, to effective support for every victim and to the prosecution of perpetrators where appropriate. An increased confidence in the criminal justice process should also lead to a reduction in the number of cases where victims withdraw their evidence. Overall, increased reporting, more arrests, and a reduction in repeat victimisation should collectively lead, in time, to a real and sustained reduction in domestic violence.

An accurate assessment of the real levels of domestic violence will not be possible until there is progress in changing attitudes, so that all victims of domestic violence feel safe in revealing the abuse they have experienced. While one of the main goals of the strategy is to bring about an overall reduction in domestic violence and abuse, there is a recognition that it will be difficult to measure this accurately, particularly in the early years.

Performance Indicators

The performance indicators outlined below will be developed for use to measure the success of the strategy. It is recognised that these indicators may evolve or change over time. They will seek, wherever possible, to reflect and monitor the impact of domestic violence across the

equality categories set out in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The indicators being developed under the 3 headings of Prevention, Protection and Justice, and Support are set out below:

Prevention

Overall aims of the strategy are:

- To further increase and develop awareness generally about domestic violence and the measures in place to help the victims; and
- To educate children and young people and the wider general public that domestic violence is wrong and is unacceptable and to enable them to make informed choices.

Associated Performance Indicators are:

- **incidence and prevalence rates disaggregated across Section 75 groups where possible** (using statistics from the Domestic Violence Helpline, Women's Aid, and other organisations representing male victims and victims in same-sex relationships; police statistics; and information collected via the NI Crime Survey which will be undertaken annually);
 - **number of maternity units using Routine Enquiry to ask pregnant women about domestic violence** (using information from HSS Trusts);
 - **attitudes of people to domestic violence** (using the NI Crime Survey);
 - **number of schools participating in domestic violence education/training** (using information collected from schools and NI Women's Aid Federation)
 - **number of employers adopting domestic violence workplace policy and guidelines** (using information collected from employers, employers' organisations and trade unions).
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Protection and Justice

Overall aims of the strategy are:

- To hold perpetrators/abusers accountable and provide effective interventions for their behaviour; and
- To improve the provision of services for all victims.

Associated Performance Indicators are:

- **Total number of domestic incidents recorded by Police** (Police Service Indicator)
 - **Clearance rate for crimes with a domestic motivation** (Police Service Indicator)
 - Number of crimes cleared by
 - **Charged/summoned**
 - **Caution**
 - **Complainant declined to prosecute**
 - **No prosecution directed**
 - **Other**
 - **Number of crimes files, with a domestic motivation, passed to the Public Prosecution Service by the PSNI** (Police Service Indicator)
 - **Number of prosecutions directed by the Public Prosecution Service** (Prosecution Service Indicator) Note: it is anticipated that the Public Prosecution Service will not be fully rolled out to all areas of Northern Ireland until December 2006. However it is hoped statistics for areas where the PPS has rolled out will be available for the year 2006/2007.
 - **Number of civil orders made** (Court Service Indicator)
-

- **Number of breaches of Non-Molestation Orders recorded by Police**
(Police Service Indicator)
- **Number of breaches of Non-Molestation Orders charged/summoned by Police**
(Police Service Indicator)

Support

Overall aims of the strategy are:

- To facilitate the development and delivery of a quality and co-ordinated multi-agency response to domestic violence; and
- To improve the provision of services for all victims.

Associated Performance Indicator:

- **Percentage of victims satisfied with support received from different agencies**
(using surveys).
-



ANNEX 6

Glossary

Age Concern supports all people over 50 in the UK, ensuring that they get the most from life. Age Concern provides essential services such as day care and information; campaigns on issues like age discrimination and pensions; and works to influence public opinion and government policy about older people.

British Crime Survey (BCS) is a continuous, personal interview survey of the experience of crime and attitudes to crime of around 40,000 adults living in private households in England and Wales. Separate surveys are conducted in Scotland and Northern Ireland, but on a less regular basis and using much smaller samples.

Child Contact Centres are neutral meeting places where children from separated families can enjoy contact with one or both parents or other family members in a safe and comfortable environment. Families may be referred to child contact centres by the courts, by social services or by voluntary organisations in the family mediation field.

Community Safety Partnerships were established through the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 and have functions relating to the enhancement of community safety within their designated areas. Partnerships are generally drawn up on district council areas (apart from Belfast) and are co-terminus with policing boundaries. The partnerships bring together statutory and voluntary organisations in tackling crime, the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Crown Court - a superior court constituted under the Judicature (Northern Ireland) Act 1978 with exclusive jurisdiction to try offences on indictment.

Equality Commission - the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is an independent public body established under the Northern Ireland Act 1998. It took over the functions previously exercised by the Commission for Racial Equality for Northern Ireland, the Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland, the Fair Employment Commission and the Northern Ireland Disability Council. The Commission's general duties include:

- working towards the elimination of discrimination
- promoting equality of opportunity and encouraging good practice
- promoting affirmative/positive action
- promoting good relations between people of different racial groups
- overseeing the implementation and effectiveness of the statutory duty on public authorities.
- keeping the relevant legislation under review.

Ex-parte order order made in court with only the applicant present.

Floating Support is assistance provided in a person's own home by a Housing Support Worker. It is called floating support because it can be given to people wherever they live. This means that the service is not tied to the property but is provided to the individual and can follow them if they move from one property to another. The support provided should help avert tenancy breakdown and the need for unnecessary moves to institutional accommodation. The support will last for as long as the person requires it but the aim is to help the service user to become independent so that they will no longer need support.

Help the Aged campaigns, researches and develops practical solutions, to ensure that older people: have enough money to live on, not just survive; feel more involved and less isolated or alone; get equality and rights in all areas of their lives; and receive high-quality care, when and where they need it.

Home Office is a Whitehall Department responsible for internal affairs in England and Wales.



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Homicide - killing of a human being by another; the term includes murder and manslaughter.

Lesbian Line provides support, promotes equality and aims to improve the status and dignity of Lesbians & Bisexual Women. Lesbian Line provides a confidential Helpline and Befriending service for Lesbians & Bisexual Women. The organisation also works to raise awareness, influence policy and change legislation through lobbying, highlighting and addressing issues relevant to the Lesbian and Bisexual community.

Men's Advisory Project is a charitable organisation of trained counsellors. It offers a service to men who are victims of domestic violence or abuse in a relationship or experiencing relationship breakdown e.g. counselling sessions on a one-to-one basis or counselling support groups and information on other voluntary or statutory organisations for the purpose of self referral. MAP also offers anger management courses for both men and women.

Men-to-Men (M2M) is a men's self-help group working in the Greater Belfast/North Down area. M2M deals with men in distress caused by a variety of issues - marital breakdown, homelessness, poor mental health, social isolation, poverty and under-achievement. The group's aim is to enable men to deal with their problems through the support of other men with similar experiences.

Ministerial Group on Domestic Violence - Group of key Ministers from across the UK to consider how the Government's strategy should be taken forward.

Multicultural Resource Centre provides a range of services to all minority ethnic groups including a drop-in facility. It also provides information and training to the majority ethnic community and has an extensive reference library.

Northern Ireland Crime Survey is a personal interview survey of the experiences and perceptions of crime of adults living in private households throughout Northern Ireland. Sensitive information such as domestic violence is collected using a computer-assisted self-interviewing technique to ensure total confidentiality.

NIHE - Northern Ireland Housing Executive

NIWAF - Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation, together with its member groups, is the lead voluntary agency addressing domestic violence. Its aim is to eliminate domestic violence and to challenge the attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate it. NIWAF provides a range of training, information, policy development and organisational support services to local Women's Aid Groups. It develops and coordinates delivery of training programmes on domestic violence and related issues to external agencies with a regional remit. NIWAF also manages the 24-Hour Free-phone Domestic Violence Helpline.

Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities is the main umbrella organisation representing the interests of the differing minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland. Alongside adopting a distinct lobbying and campaigning focus, NICEM also offers a range of services including: interpreter training; immigration advice; asylum advice and support; anti-racist training; and capacity building.

PPS - Public Prosecution Service

PSNI - Police Service of Northern Ireland

Rainbow Project aims to address the physical, mental and emotional health of gay and bisexual men living in, working in or visiting Northern Ireland. It is Northern Ireland's only gay and bisexual men's health organisation and houses the only gay male specific counselling and support service available in Northern Ireland.



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Raising The Standards Committee is an Inter-Governmental initiative to help address domestic violence throughout the 4 UK territories, the Republic of Ireland and Guernsey. Officials from the various countries meet quarterly to share information on policy initiatives, to co-ordinate research and develop good practice to mutually raise the standards for victims across a range of services.

Regional Forum on Domestic Violence existed from 1995 to 2004 and brought together statutory and voluntary agencies to work collaboratively in addressing domestic violence and supporting victims and their families. It had 3 sub-groups dealing with:

- Children's Issues
- Domestic Violence and the Law
- Information

It was succeeded by the Regional Steering Group on Domestic Violence in December 2004.

Resident Magistrate - a legally qualified member of the judiciary assigned by the Lord Chancellor to conduct business in one or more petty sessions districts. A petty sessions district is a geographical area, generally coinciding with a local government district council area, where certain types of court business arising within that area are regularly listed for hearing at the local courthouse.

Victim Support is an organisation which helps people cope with crime. Its primary objectives are: to provide support and assistance to individual victims, witnesses, their families and friends; to raise public awareness and recognition of the effects of crime and promote victims' rights.

Women's Aid local groups - The 10 local Women's Aid Groups across Northern Ireland are all members of NIWAF. They deliver a range of specialised support services to women and children who have experienced domestic violence. Their core work is: to provide a network of refuges across Northern Ireland; to provide a comprehensive range of specialist services including one-to-one support, resettlement, aftercare and outreach services; to educate and inform the public, media, courts, social services and other agencies of the impact and effects of domestic violence; to advise and support all relevant agencies in the development of domestic violence policies, protocols and service delivery; to work in partnership with all relevant agencies to ensure effective responses to women and children who have experienced domestic violence; and, to promote community development and action by involving volunteers in the delivery of services.



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