

# LOCAL DOMESTIC & SEXUAL VIOLENCE PARTNERSHIP NEWSLETTER

*Welcome* to this second edition of the Domestic & Sexual Violence Partnerships' Regional Newsletter which will look at the work undertaken by the local Partnerships over the past year, key areas of work being taken forward by DOJ and other initiatives happening in Northern Ireland in relation to domestic and sexual violence.

## Domestic Abuse & Technology

Modern technology plays an increasing role in day to day life. The ability to communicate and stay in touch has been one of the main benefits of our connected world. For the last six years, as senior practitioner for Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Steven McNeill has been developing an understanding of how modern technology has impacted on young people and their families in the context of child protection. Joining the South Eastern Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership enhanced this learning, providing evidence of the clear links between CSE and domestic abuse. Steven identified a gap in the service provision surrounding professional knowledge of modern smart devices and how they can be used in relation to coercive control, domestic abuse and CSE. Building on his knowledge, Steven has now developed a pilot awareness raising session which looks at aspects of abuse via technology. Over the past two years, Steven has developed the training which now includes image based sexual abuse and stalking via electronic devices. Steven has become a leader in the field, sharing his expertise in sessions with over 500 staff. The half day session addresses:



- Stalking and the law in Northern Ireland - weaknesses in the current legislation and where it should/could be moving to

- Power and control: Demonstrating how old harms are being perpetrated in new ways and how social work needs to become aware of how technology can facilitate abuse
- Device security (including passcodes, passwords and strengthening security) - showing professionals why a weak passcode should be changed and how security should be increased for all people using mobile devices
- Monitoring and tracking: Showing professionals the main smartphone apps used by people and how location tracking and GPS can facilitate stalking. The session also shows, how it can be reviewed within the devices.
- Email forwarding: Showing professionals what this is, and how it can be used within domestically abusive relationships to monitor/control.
- Two factor authentication and reviewing security settings: Demonstrating how device and app makers have now started to address issues surrounding weak or compromised passwords

- Listening and watching via technology: Showing how mainstream devices can be compromised when used in domestically abusive relationships.
- Gaslighting and modern technology: Discussing gaslighting and how modern connected devices can be used to make someone question their sense of reality
- Social networks and domestic abuse: The session discusses sharing of personal information on social media and the impact on leaking information via social media
- Image based sexual abuse via technology: The session goes into detail on emerging themes such as cyberflashing, deepfakes and why the law needs to change to address developing technology

The session also addresses the need for a robust risk assessment in relation to domestic abuse and technology by providing real world examples of coercive control and stalking which have been facilitated via smart phones and connected devices.

**What staff have said about the training**

*“Eye opening and informative”*

*“Steve’s ingenuity and initiative is helping to tackle this pernicious problem”*

*“The knowledge, he so willingly shares, has made a significant contribution in keeping SET children safe and well”*



**Dr. Veronica Holland,  
Head of Victims and  
Witnesses Branch,  
Department of Justice.**

**With almost 32,000 domestic abuse incidents, and over 16,000 domestic abuse crimes, in the last financial year tackling domestic violence and abuse continues to be key priority for Government as well as statutory and voluntary and community sector bodies. Dr. Veronica Holland, discusses some of key areas of work that the Department of Justice is taking forward under the Year 4 cross Departmental domestic and sexual violence action plan**

**What are the key priorities for the Department of Justice in tackling domestic violence and abuse?**

The Department of Justice is bringing forward a range of measures to tackle domestic violence and abuse to ensure that the most vulnerable in our society are protected and supported.

A new domestic abuse offence has been prepared to criminalise patterns of coercive and controlling behaviour; domestic homicide reviews are being progressed; and domestic abuse behavioural change programmes continue to be piloted, offering early intervention to change and break the cycle of abusive behaviour.

In addition, advocacy support services are being scoped and awareness of domestic violence

and abuse is being raised through a multi-media campaign. A domestic violence and abuse disclosure scheme is also enabling people to make enquiries where they are concerned that their partner, or the partner of someone they know, has a history of abusive behaviour. In the schemes first year (2018/19) there were around 330 applications, resulting in 40 disclosures being made.

In all these areas the Department of Justice is working collaboratively with our statutory, as well as our voluntary and community sector, partners.

**What steps are being taken to make domestic abuse a crime?**

Any form of domestic abuse or coercive control is completely unacceptable. A draft Bill has been prepared to deal with controlling and coercive behaviour. In the absence of an Assembly this cannot be brought forward locally. However, we are engaged with the Home Office to see whether a new Northern Ireland domestic abuse offence could be included in a forthcoming Westminster Domestic Abuse Bill.

The draft Northern Ireland provisions would make it an offence for someone to engage in a course of abusive behaviour, that is on at least two occasions, against a partner, former partner, someone they are in an intimate personal relationship with or a family member. The offence could be

committed regardless of whether or not harm has been caused, where a reasonable person considers that the behaviour would be likely to cause harm and harm was intended to be caused (or the person was reckless as to whether or not harm would be caused).

Abusive behaviour would include violent or threatening behaviour as well as behaviour towards the victim, their child or another person that would make the victim dependent on the offender; isolate them from friends or family; control or monitor their day to day activities; restrict their freedom or make them feel frightened, humiliated or intimidated, etc. The abusive behaviour could be carried out with or through a third party and could apply where a child sees, hears or is present during a single incident of domestic abuse.

Provision would also be made for aggravating sentencing, that would enable the court to increase the sentence imposed to the maximum available, where domestic abuse is involved. In the absence of a new domestic abuse offence people should continue to report incidents to the police in order that a full and thorough investigation can be undertaken, where appropriate, using existing powers.



**Will Domestic Homicide Reviews be introduced?**

Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) seek opportunities for learning from the most serious cases of domestic violence, where this results in a homicide. They do not seek to apportion blame, rather, will provide a multi-agency forum to consider what happened and what, if anything, could have been done differently.

DHRs are intended to maintain good practice, improve frontline services where needed by informing change and ultimately learn from these tragic crimes to save lives in the future.

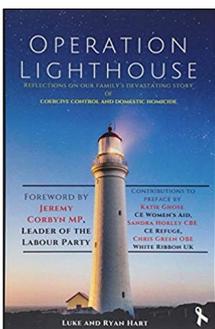
The DHR framework has been revised following consultation and we are currently finalising the specification for a DHR Chair, which we hope to advertise shortly. Work is ongoing to develop and agree the statutory multi-agency guidance around the review

process and consideration will shortly be given to the development of training for both the DHR Chair and panel. It is intended to further refine the DHR model using an historic case, ahead of roll out around spring 2020.

If you have any concerns please contact the confidential Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline on 0808 802 1414, by email at [help@dsahelpline.org](mailto:help@dsahelpline.org) or by webchat <https://dsahelpline.org/urgent-help/>

**“The vision of the seven year Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy is to have a society in which domestic and sexual violence and abuse is not tolerated in any form, effective tailored preventative and responsive services are provided, victims are supported and perpetrators are held to account. Work in these areas is being taking forward under the year four action plan.”**

**Coercive Control Our Story - Luke & Ryan Hart**



On 19 July 2016, Claire and Charlotte Hart were murdered in broad daylight, by the family’s father using a sawn-off shotgun.

Luke and Ryan Hart, the two surviving sons, spoke about their experiences growing up and the circumstances surrounding the murders at two seminars organised by the Belfast and South Eastern Domestic & Sexual Violence Partnerships.

At the events the brothers revealed how, growing up, they thought their father’s abusive behaviour was normal and how other families behaved behind closed doors.

Looking back, they also believe that because the three children were successful at school and didn’t have any behaviour problems no one else recognised their father’s abuse either.

By sharing their story Luke and Ryan were able to highlight patterns of behaviour in coercive control and its deadly consequences and how our ability to be able to recognise and respond to this form of domestic abuse is vital to save lives.

The seminars, which were funded by the Assets Recover Community Scheme and opened by Veronica Holland from the Department of Justice, were attended by over 200 staff and volunteers from the statutory, voluntary and community sectors.



Luke & Ryan Hart with Veronica Holland from DOJ, Jenny Massey from the Belfast D&SVP and Sheila Simons and Patricia McMurray from the SED&SVP

## Northern Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership: Domestic Violence and the Workplace

The Department of Justice and Department of Health launched guidance on developing a workplace policy on domestic and sexual violence in Belfast City Hall in November 2018, (available here: <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/guidance-on-developing-a-workplace-policy.pdf>)

It provided an ideal opportunity for Belfast City Council, who have attained Platinum Workplace Charter Status under the Onus range of Pathways, to outline the extent of work that they have engaged in over the past few years, which goes well beyond developing a workplace policy; the consultation involved in policy development, the targeted training for managers in advance of the policy launch and the ongoing communication and training to let employees know of the support on offer and give managers the reassurance and confidence to provide the right support.

Working with employers has been a focus within the NDSVP Action Plan for some years, and the Guidance is an ideal opportunity not only to begin the process of developing policy and procedure, but also to evaluate existing policies and ask whether they are in fact effective, or whether some tweaks are required.

The Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnerships are ideal supporters in this process.



Speakers at NDSVP Conference with Mid and East Antrim Council PCSP members

To begin with, those stakeholders who attend Partnership meetings are also employers already heavily invested in eradicating domestic abuse. It is highly likely that their organisations will already have policies in place, providing a network to share good practice and experience with other organisations.

Within the NDSVP, most organisations have also worked to attain Workplace Charter Status, through the Onus Pathways for Participation Initiatives (<http://onustraining.co.uk/playing-your-part/>) an incremental process that works alongside employers in the development of the policy, as well as the training and communication required to make the policy work in practice. Onus have been working with employers for the past decade, including PSNI, NHSCT and a range of Councils, creating a network of employers who continue to share ideas and resources to maximise chances of the policies working for the people who need them.

All of the Partnerships have provided ideal opportunities to learn and improve services together, and attendance at the conferences held by the different Partnerships reflects that desire to learn and how we improve.



**NORTHERN**  
Domestic & Sexual Violence  
and Abuse Partnership

How we 'could do better' was the theme of the Northern conference in January this year, where a key speaker was Rachel Williams, an Ambassador for Welsh Women's Aid, who was shot in her workplace by her husband shortly after leaving him. Rachel had the opportunity to tell the professionals in the room how we could do better, learn from her tragic experience and work together in an attempt to prevent another family suffering the way hers has.

Other speakers at the conference were Kerry Malone, on risk assessment with perpetrators of domestic abuse, Deirdre Webb, on responding to domestic abuse within nursing, and Army Welfare, on the unique circumstances and support system available within Ministry of Defence. Lindsay Harris from Onus also spoke at the conference on the range of initiatives available to enable anyone to 'play their part' in recognising and responding to domestic abuse, including the Workplace Charter and Safe Place. A short Safe Place clip, outlining how anyone can play their part, is available here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-47448123>

Anyone who would like additional information on any of the speakers at the conference or any of the information shared, please contact [info@onustraining.co.uk](mailto:info@onustraining.co.uk)

Within the Southern Trust the Child Protection Multi Disciplinary Training Officer held a number of Masterclasses around key topics/areas for discussion – the subject areas being Domestic and Sexual Violence, Understanding Offending Behaviour and Understanding and Managing Complex Trauma

The ‘Recognising and Responding to Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence’ Masterclass was facilitated by Eileen Murphy (Psychologist and CEO of Newry Women’s Aid) and she was supported by Helen Cranney from Newry Women’s Aid.

Eileen provided informative inputs around grooming, manipulation, coercive control and violence. The impact of trauma was also explored as well as safety planning. The day included a powerful testimony from a young survivor of her experiences of domestic abuse which was both insightful and thought provoking for the those attending the event. The day finished with an overview of the police orders which are applicable to victims of domestic and sexual violence. The day was attended by 48 staff from both the statutory and the voluntary agencies and was very positively evaluated with the feedback highlighting both key note speaker and service user input as pivotal to participants’ learning and development



Oonagh Ryan Detective Sgt of the Domestic Abuse and Adult Safeguarding Team welcomes Hazel Comer, Service Manager, Children’s Gateway Service and Patricia Larkin Senior Practitioner, Public Protection team to meet with front line police officers to improve information sharing and to ensure initial safeguarding response in relation to domestic abuse /child abuse .We were also joined by Detective Sgt Neil McInnes who provided information on Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation looking at how we can best support our local children in our community .

**PPANI( Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland ) and MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference )**

Our Public Protection Team held another successful training event with the aim that staff would understand the MARAC process and the application of the Dash Risk Assessment. It also raised awareness of Public Protection Arrangements for Northern Ireland as outlined in the Criminal Justice (N.I.) Order 2008 and its accompanying guidance .

A Detective Sgt from the Domestic Abuse /Adult Safeguarding Team was on hand to answer any questions and spoke about her experience of a Domestic Homicide. Feed Back was very Positive and referenced the learning in Multi Agency Training. This training will be ongoing.



Women’s Aid Armagh Down launched a new website

<https://womensaidarmaghdown.org>

Women's Aid is the lead agency in tackling domestic/sexual violence and abuse and seeks through its work to promote healthy and non-abusive relationships.

The Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership distributes the 6<sup>th</sup> issue of their Newsletter within the local community, sharing relevant information for victim of domestic and sexual violence .

## Working With Young People's Violence in Close Relationships



Violence and abuse by young people in their close relationships, whether peer on peer or within the family, is increasingly recognised by practitioners working with adolescents and families, however, it is also acknowledged that there is a lack of suitable programmes within N. Ireland to address these issues.

In September the SED&SVP hosted Respect to train 16 practitioners in the use of their accredited Young Person's Toolkit. Respect is one of the UK's principal training organisations for frontline work with perpetrators of domestic violence and for young people using violence.

The aim of the training was to provide professionals with the skills and knowledge to work safely and effectively with teenage perpetrators of peer on peer violence and adolescent to parent violence.

The 5 day course was funded by the South Eastern H&SC Trust Health & Development Department and SBNI via the South Eastern H&SC Trust Safeguarding panel.

Course participants came from a wide range of agencies, including Youth Justice Agency, Social Work, Women's Aid, Barnardo's and Fostering Services.

Following the course the participants have been meeting on a regular basis to share how they have been able to put the training into practice in both one-to-one and group settings and provide peer support. Further training using the Non-Violence Resistance approach has been arranged for the group to further develop their knowledge and skills.



### Chair Awarded MBE For Services to the Protection of Women & Children



Speaking about her award Sheila said "Thankfully, society is beginning to talk about domestic violence more. We need to continue to talk about it because it is so difficult for anyone living with domestic violence to tell their story and it is extremely difficult for children. They are scared to speak out because they remain afraid of what might happen to them if they told an outside organisation. Sometimes, their silence is due to them feeling ashamed or even responsible for the abuse they are dealing with"

### Preventing Murder In Slow Motion:

Funding from Ards & North Down PCSP allowed a further master class by Laura Richards on Stalking to be held. Almost 100 people from a wide range of organisations attended the event to learn more about domestic violence, stalking, sexual violence and risk assessment. Laura highlighted the tragic case of Alice Ruggles who was murdered by her ex-boyfriend after he began stalking her. The Domestic Homicide Review report can be accessed at

[https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/media/12553/Alice-Ruggles-DHR-Final-overview/pdf/Alice\\_RUGGLES\\_DHR\\_-\\_Final\\_Overview\\_Report.pdf?m=636885844829430000](https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/media/12553/Alice-Ruggles-DHR-Final-overview/pdf/Alice_RUGGLES_DHR_-_Final_Overview_Report.pdf?m=636885844829430000)



## Men's Leadership In Gender Based Violence

Worldwide there is a growing recognition that men and boys can be key allies in preventing violence against women and girls. Engaging boys and men in gender based violence has been led in the US by Jackson Katz. His programme, Mentors in Violence Prevention, has been widely utilised by numerous US organizations, including sports and the Military. The programme uses the Bystander Approach to highlight the role that peers in schools, groups, teams, workplaces and other social units can play in combating gender violence.



With the help of Vital Voices Global Partnership approximately 300 people, the majority of whom were men, attended 2 Men's Leadership event in gender based violence in both the Belfast and South Eastern Trust areas. The audience heard that it is not just women and girls that male violence affects. Gender violence has a direct relationship to all types of violence perpetrated by boys and men against each other. Boys are often traumatized by violence done by men to their mothers. Equally, there is a link between gender violence and knife crime, gang violence, behavioural issues and mental health problems that men and boys experience. By using practical examples of the Bystander Approach Jackson was able to provide those attending with a range of strategies to use in their everyday lives to intervene in situations of gender violence and abuse.

The Belfast Area Domestic & Sexual Violence Partnership's Protection and Justice working group have been looking at the issue of adult child to parent violence. The Chair of the working Group, Karen McCall talks about the work they are doing and why it's so important.

When we think of domestic violence and abuse, we generally think of intimate partner violence. Rarely do we associate domestic violence as being perpetuated by an adult child towards their parents (or indeed anyone who has played a parenting role). Yet this is happening on a daily basis across Northern Ireland and beyond. For some parents, their child whom they love infinitely has become their abuser. The cause of their emotional upset, physical injury, deep anxiety, significant trauma and fear.

The Protection and Justice Working Group has been looking at this issue for some time now. Across the working group, each member had significant experience of working with someone who was being abused by their adult child. Across the board agencies were doing their best to support these victims but were becoming increasingly concerned that there was so little available to meet their specific needs. The working group spent many a meeting discussing this issue, we held an exploratory workshop with key agencies and met with academics to discuss the research (or lack of) available

After many meetings and some inspiration from Australia, we developed an awareness raising leaflet aimed at highlighting this issue. The leaflet contains information on the forms of violence it can take including physical, emotional, financial, verbal and sexual. It also looks at how parents may be feeling, emphasising they are not to blame and they have a right to feel safe.

Many parents experiencing abuse from their adult child feel alone and isolated. Feeling they deserve the abuse or are responsible for the person the adult child has become. Many feel shame and guilt that they have failed as a parent, they want the abuse to stay secret or are too scared to tell anyone. They often feel as a parent they should protect their child, regardless of their age. Ultimately they do not want to lose the relationship with their adult child – they want the abuse to stop.

When violence occurs in intimate partner relationships the journey to freedom, away from that abusive relationship can be extremely difficult, especially if there are children. However, the potential for making the journey is there.

These victims cannot make that journey. No matter how serious the violence, how far the distance, how long the separation, that perpetrator will always be part of them.

Your child is always your child

The Working Group recently held a successful awareness raising pilot workshop with 50+ professionals from multi-agencies attending. In raising awareness of this subject, we want victims to see themselves as victims. We want these parents to recognise that even if they are blamed for what is happening in their family, even if they blame themselves – this is not true. Adults are responsible for their own behaviours and actions.

We want professionals to recognise this group as specific in terms of their issues and needs. It is important that professionals understand the complex parent child dynamic for these families and the challenges that may present when trying to keep them safe.

As agencies, we need to recognise that we spend 18 years telling parents they must love, nurture, protect and guide their child. Then we tell them they need to take steps to protect themselves from this same child, perhaps by asking the child to leave home, refusing them bail and reporting to the police.

This is very much a starting point, we hope that in time, we will see research, the development of resources and even specialised therapeutic provision for this victim group. For more information on adult child to parent violence please see our website [www.belfastdvp.co.uk](http://www.belfastdvp.co.uk) or contact BDSVP [jenny.massey@belfastwomensaid.org.uk](mailto:jenny.massey@belfastwomensaid.org.uk)



**There is no excuse**  
There are many myths around domestic violence and abuse including the victim deserves it, drugs and alcohol cause it, it only happens in certain cultures. These are all wrong, the reality is domestic violence and abuse can and does happen to anyone.

While there are a variety of reasons why adult children commit violence against their parents, remember violence is a choice and is the responsibility of the person that uses the violence.

**EVERYBODY HAS THE RIGHT TO FEEL SAFE ALL OF THE TIME**

**Remember -**

- The Family Homes and Domestic Violence legislation applies to adult child to parent violence and abuse. It is possible to gain protection using a civil remedy such as a non-violation order.
- Alcohol and substance abuse do not cause adult child to parent violence, they may increase the severity of the abuse.
- Protecting yourself does not make you a bad parent.

**Where to get help**  
For support contact the 24 Hour Domestic & Sexual Violence Helpline. The Helpline is open to all women and men affected by domestic & sexual violence and abuse.

**0808 802 1414**  
24 Hour Helpline

**In an emergency dial 999**  
Other support agencies:-  
Belfast Health & Social Care Trust - Adult Protection Gateway Team  
028 9554 1744  
Belfast & Lissan Women's Aid  
028 9066 4049  
Men's Advisory Project  
028 9024 1329

This leaflet has been kindly funded by:  
**PS** Policing & Community Safety Partnership  
Northern Ireland Policing Board

**Adult child to Parent Violence & Abuse**  
Adult child to parent violence and abuse is a form of domestic violence. It is when the adult child behaves in an abusive and/or violent manner, leaving the parent feeling frightened, threatened, intimidated and controlled.

**Adult Child to Parent Violence is any act of an adult child over 18 that creates fear in and/or is intended to hurt the parent. It can take many forms and includes:**

- Physical - hitting, slapping, punching, pushing, breaking things, throwing things...
- Psychological - intimidating the parent, playing mind games, causing fear...
- Verbal - name calling, put downs, swearing, making threats...
- Emotional - making unrealistic demands on the parents, blaming the parents, lying, manipulating the parents, minimising their behaviour, controlling the running of the household...
- Sexual - isolating parents from other family members or friends...
- Financial - stealing money or belongings, selling possessions without permission, destroying home or belongings, running up debts the parents must cover, demanding parents buy things...
- Sexual - sexual assault and rape, forced to watch pornography...

**How you may be feeling?**

- You may be feeling alone - that this doesn't happen to other parents.
- You may be feeling isolated or distanced from other family members and friends.
- You may be feeling that you want the abuse to stop but the relationship with your adult child.
- You may be feeling as a parent you need to protect your child regardless of their age.
- You may be feeling that you deserve the abuse as a punishment for things that may have happened in the past.
- You may be feeling scared to disclose the abuse or that the abuse should be kept a secret.
- You may be feeling that as a parent, you are responsible for the person your adult child has become and therefore the abuse.
- You may be feeling shame and guilt - that you have failed as a parent.

Do not be discouraged by societal expectations... You may feel pressure to keep your family together or that by seeking legal protection, you are being a bad parent - this is not true. The violence is not your fault. The abuser is the only one responsible for his/her behaviour. We all deserve the right to feel safe all of the time.

**You are not alone**  
While it has been around for a long time adult child to parent violence is a relatively new term. It is recognised as domestic violence and abuse under the Government's Stopping Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy. You may not have heard it talked about or be able to find much information on it. This does not mean that it does not happen or that there is no support for you.

**You are not to blame**  
Violence and abuse are chosen intentional behaviour and are the responsibility of the abuser only. The abuser may blame you for what's happening, saying their behaviour is a result of how you raised them. You may believe it is your fault. This is not true - people are responsible for their own behaviour and actions.

**Violence is about power and control**  
Arguing within families is normal and is usually resolved when everyone is equal in the relationship. Violence and abuse is different and is about the abuser having control over the victim, creating an imbalance of power through fear and intimidation.

**Everyone has the right to feel safe all of the time. Protecting yourself does not make you a bad parent.**

## The Cloak of Silence; Domestic and Sexual Violence in Rural and Remote Areas

At the annual development day discussions, the Western Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership [WDSVP] identified concerns that, given the geography of the Partnership area, there is a need to progress increased understanding and proactive responses to the rural context of domestic and sexual violence. Activities were undertaken for discussion and desk research and a briefing paper was written summarising the issues and recommendations for further action. This article provides a brief synopsis of the paper. For a copy of the full paper and the desk research contact Helen from the WDSVP Support Team. (1)

Desk research outlined in a separate document also available stated that women in regional, rural and remote areas are more likely than women in urban areas to experience domestic and family violence. It found that they face specific issues related to their geographical location and the cultural and social characteristics of living in small communities

Jo Little in her work on “understanding domestic violence in rural spaces” refers to a required understanding that ‘violence sits in places’. She suggests that it is clear that there is not one common understanding of experience of rurality in the same way that we would not have an expectation of the same “lived reality” of domestic and sexual violence in urban settings.

It is recognised that similar barriers for disclosure and help seeking exist for most victim/survivors of domestic and sexual violence regardless of their setting whether urban or rural i.e. fear, cultural pressures, stigma, lack of recognition of what is being experienced as abusive, financial concerns and so on. However, Jo Little in her

paper refers to the ‘cloak of silence’ that prevents the identification of rural domestic violence as not being adequately developed. There is a common view in many rural communities that “family problems” such as domestic and family violence are not talked about, which serves to silence women's experience of domestic and family violence and deter them from disclosing violence and abuse. When they do seek help from family, neighbours or friends in the local area they may know nothing about the context and impact of domestic violence and abuse and pathways to support services.

Research on the impact on friendships and social integration for children and young people found that the geographical isolation of rural life (particularly if a child has been moved from a remote rural area into an urban-town environment), can be particularly disengaging.<sup>(2)</sup> Similarly, the misperceptions of other social partners outside rural areas that the context and impact of violence and abuse is not “as bad” as in urban areas and that has consequences for planning, and practitioners as well as victims and perpetrators..

Centralisation of services has a significant impact on people living in rural and remote areas including longer waiting lists, lack of social housing available especially in rural and remote areas. If emergency services are required, it can take much longer and a great number of hours to reach locations in rural remote areas. Accessibility and availability challenges exist in terms of transport, communication services such as broadband and mobile signals and banking services in many areas. While this function can be accessed through a network of post offices these are often run by

local community residents and anonymity in regard to financial and other social circumstances can inhibit victims experiencing financial control or with limited access to funds. Women, who do seek help, find difficulty in accessing services due to geographical isolation, lack of transportation options and not having access to their own income.

Other specific contextual factors identified included; The tension and dilemmas that arise with the need for the perpetrator to be in close proximity to tend to the land or /or animals; The potential impact of the removal of children and young people from their rural heritage/ land/ animals/ routine/ involvement with the perpetrator in farming activities.; *Scream as much as you want no-one will hear you* is a phrase often used by perpetrators particularly in remote, rural living environments. It's a reality; the presence of legally held firearms. The presence of the Border and “border hopping” by perpetrators and victims particularly within the context of whatever changes happens through Brexit.

International research sources stated that fear of stigma, shame, community gossip, and a lack of perpetrator accountability deter women from seeking help. The discussions in the Partnership resulted in similar findings. Practitioners spoke about a culture which says “we deal with this ourselves”; A perception that violence perpetrated in intimate relationships “doesn't happen here” and the consequences of that myth: While tight knit communities and collaborative networks exist where support can be accessed when needed, that can go hand in hand with lack of anonymity and fears about confidentiality; The interconnectedness of families and friends can mean the victim is not just

<sup>1</sup>helen@cmworks.co.uk

<sup>2</sup> Children and Domestic Violence in Rural Communities The Countryside Agency © Save the Children 2003

<sup>3</sup> 17.18.249 Guide to Rural Needs Act NI final v2 [para 2.2.]

in a relationship with one person but with all those connected to them, including sometimes their own relatives and relations.

Desk research showed a high likelihood that police, health professionals and domestic and family violence workers know both the victim and perpetrator and this may inhibit women's willingness to use local services. Many rural communities are centralised around religious traditions, community events etc. Victim/survivors may believe that bringing the abuse and violence they have experienced out "in the open" will result in others seeing them as "different" affecting their ability to engage in their church group activities.

The desk research undertaken found very little has been done in the UK or Ireland currently or in the past where services for victims of violence in rural and remote areas has been developing within a strategic policy framework harnessed with service delivery and practitioner expertise and experience. The initial desk research scoping found little or no research on the context within Northern Ireland and specifically the Western Trust area which has the highest rural population of any Trust area, particularly in the Fermanagh and Omagh area.

At a regional level the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs [DAERA] is responsible for the implementation of The Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. The Guide to the Act recognises that most strategies and policies developed and implemented across government in NI have a rural dimension with a different impact in rural areas than urban areas. Crucially it states that;

*"It is recognised that as a result of rural circumstances people in rural areas may have different needs and therefore a policy or public service that works well in urban areas may not be as effective in rural areas."*(3)

Clear guidance on the implications for domestic and sexual violence policy and practice interventions needs to be developed to meet the requirements of the Act and to be informed by those most affected, whether service users or providers. The Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 and the requirements for Rural Needs Impact Assessment has significance to inform and influence the strategic imperative and planning of all Government Departments and listed authorities in the response to domestic and sexual violence in Northern Ireland.

The paper conclusions are; There is anecdotal evidence and practitioner

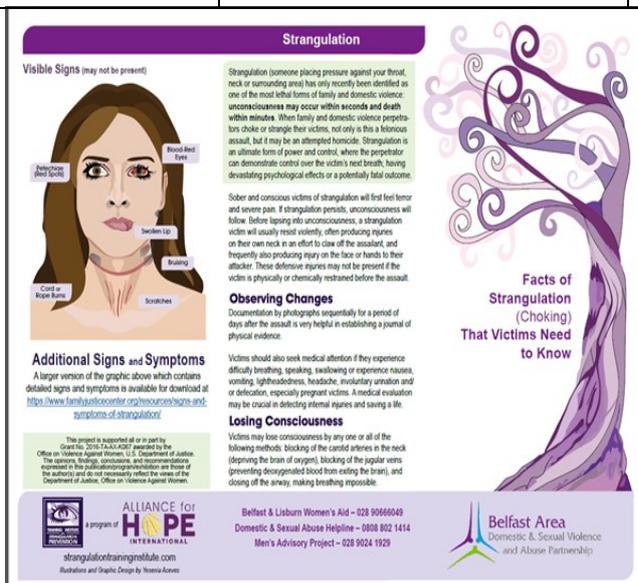
experience of the specific context and impact of domestic and sexual violence in rural areas in NI. There is evidence from desk research in other locations as to the implications for adult and child victims but none which is NI specific. Additional issues such as the presence of the Border and "border hopping" by perpetrators and victims needs also to be considered, particularly within the context of whatever changes happens through Brexit.

While the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 and the requirements for Rural Needs Impact Assessment are positive in terms of monitoring the response of the listed authorities to the social and economic needs of rural people, there is, as yet little or no understanding or evidence of the ways in which the Act is being used to tackle domestic and sexual violence.

Actions that follow need to be discussed and shared with all those in NI seeking to ensure that *"domestic and sexual violence is not tolerated in any form, effective tailored preventative and responsive services are provided, all victims are supported, and perpetrators are held to account."*

## Did You Know???? STRANGULATION

Members from across the local Partnerships attended the recent From Hurt to Hope – Foyle Family Justice Centre Conference. The conference featured expert input from a range of agencies including an American Organisation – Alliance for Hope. Their CEO ran an informative and thought provoking workshop on strangulation within intimate partner relationships, highlighting it as a high risk factor. It is estimated that you are 7 times more likely to be killed if strangulation has been perpetrated. The workshop also highlighted the difficulty in securing convictions for strangulation particularly in cases where there are no visible injuries. It stressed the importance of recognising the signs and symptoms consistent with strangulation. As part of the workshop Alliance for Hope customised an information leaflet for use by the local Partnerships. For more information on the work of Alliance for Hope <https://www.allianceforhope.com/> and <https://www.strangulationtraininginstitute.com/>



**Strangulation**

Visible Signs (may not be present)

Strangulation (someone placing pressure against your throat, neck or surrounding area) has only recently been identified as one of the most lethal forms of family and domestic violence. Unconsciousness may occur within seconds and death within minutes. When family and domestic violence perpetrators choke or strangle their victims, not only is this a heinous assault, but it may be an attempted homicide. Strangulation is an ultimate form of power and control, where the perpetrator can demonstrate control over the victim's next breath, having devastating psychological effects or a potentially fatal outcome.

Sober and conscious victims of strangulation will first feel tender and severe pain. If strangulation persists, unconsciousness will follow. Before lapsing into unconsciousness, a strangulation victim will usually resist violently, often producing injuries on their own neck in an effort to claw off the assailant, and frequently also producing rips on the face or hands to their attacker. These defensive injuries may not be present if the victim is physically or chemically restrained before the assault.

**Observing Changes**  
Documentation by photographs sequentially for a period of days after the assault is very helpful in establishing a journal of physical evidence.

**Losing Consciousness**  
Victims may lose consciousness by any one or all of the following methods: blocking off the carotid arteries in the neck (depriving the brain of oxygen), blocking the jugular veins (preventing deoxygenated blood from exiting the brain), and closing off the airway, making breathing impossible.

**Additional Signs and Symptoms**  
A larger version of this graphic above which contains detailed signs and symptoms is available for download at <https://www.familyjusticecentre.org/northernireland/signs-and-symptoms-of-strangulation/>

This project is supported all or in part by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The contents, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

**ALLIANCE for HOPE INTERNATIONAL**  
A program of  
strangulationtraininginstitute.com  
Illustrations and Graphic Design by Norma Alvarez

Belfast & Lisburn Women's Aid – 028 9066049  
Domestic & Sexual Abuse Helpline – 0800 802 1414  
Men's Advisory Project – 028 9024 1929

**Belfast Area Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse Partnership**

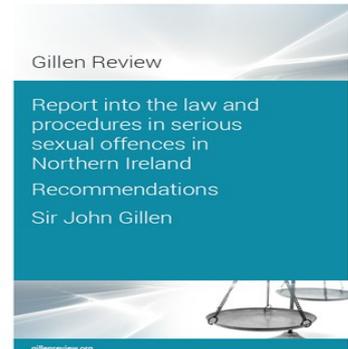
**Facts of Strangulation (Choking) That Victims Need to Know**

## Gillen Review

The report from the review of the arrangements to deliver justice in serious sexual offence cases has now been published.

The review, which was led by Right Honourable Sir John Gillen, was established to consider law, procedure and practice covering the development and progression of cases of alleged serious sexual offences, taking account of experience from recent cases in Northern Ireland and developments in other jurisdictions. The purpose of the Review was to determine whether current arrangements deliver the best outcomes for victims, defendants and justice, and to make recommendations for improvements.

The review panel has made the following key recommendations:



“The question is not if we can afford to have these reforms. The question is can we not afford to have these reforms”

“I have to concede that the criminal justice system plays a part in that it is too long, too daunting and too humiliating”

Sir John Gillen  
speaking on BBC  
Radio Ulster

- Public access to trials involving serious sexual offences to be confined to close family members of complainant and the defendant.
- Cross-examination of complainants to be pre-recorded and away from court - initially for vulnerable people but eventually extended to all complainants in serious sexual offences;
- Publicly funded independent legal representation should be offered to complainants from the outset, up to but not including the trial;
- Measures to combat rape myths and stereotypes, like suggestions that victims provoke rape by the way they dress or act;
- New legislation to manage dangers created by social media;
- More robust attitude by judges to prevent improper cross-examination about previous sexual history;
- Steps to combat excessive delay in the judicial system;
- Restructuring of the disclosure process;
- Amend existing legislation ensuring juries do not bring sexual stereotypes into play;
- No changes in the current law concerning the identity of the accused. They will be anonymous until they are charged, but from that point they will be identified;
- Research projects should be commissioned on the prevalence, extent, nature and experiences of serious sexual offences;
- Change needed to address the potential traumatisation of children and vulnerable adults during the judicial process;
- Higher priority should be given to training people to be aware of the trauma suffered by victims, rape mythology, jury misconceptions and jury guidance;
- All serious sexual offences should continue to be tried in the Crown Court with a jury, without the need for a gender quota or a not proven verdict. However, the pool of eligible jurors needs to be widened;
- Alternative mechanisms, including an entirely victim-led concept of restorative practice, should be considered both inside the judicial system and parallel to it;
- The appropriate statutory agencies should deliver an impact assessment into the Gillen Review that should include the cost of implementing the recommendations.

All the recommendations and the full report can be accessed at:

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/gillen-report-recommendations.pdf>

## Domestic & Sexual Abuse Helpline



A new 3 year contract has been awarded to NEXUS NI to provide and manage a 24 hour helpline service from 1st April 2019.

The helpline will remain completely free and confidential.

The helpline was previously run by Women's Aid Federation NI (WAFNI) and the Local Domestic & Sexual Violence Partnerships would like to thank WAFNI and pay tribute to the staff and volunteers who have provided a vital and high quality service for victims of domestic and sexual abuse

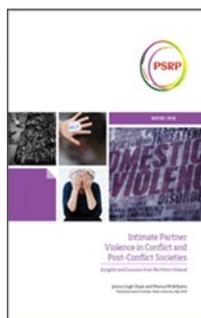
## Intimate Partner in Conflict and Post-Conflict Societies

Research carried out by Monica McWilliams and Jessica Doyle was the first study of its kind comparing findings on domestic violence during conflict to what happens afterwards.

With support from Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland, approximately 120 women victim/survivors of domestic violence were interviewed; 56 women in 1992 and 63 in 2016.

The key findings from the study show that:

- The threat of firearms that previously existed in domestic violence situations has been greatly reduced as a result of the decommissioning of weapons and the demobilisation of paramilitary groups.
- Perpetrators of domestic violence still draw on paramilitary connections to threaten their partner in 2016 but this has less impact than it did in the 1992 study.
- Paramilitary style attacks are much less likely to be used to punish perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence in 2016 compared to 1992.
- Post conflict, police officers have become more responsive to domestic violence.



- A strong link continues to exist between domestic violence and poor mental health, with one in four women in the 2016 study reporting that they had attempted to take their own life and 76% reporting suicidal thoughts.

- Sexual abuse in domestic violence relationships is more prevalent than official statistics suggest. Almost half of those interviewed in 2016 reported that they had been raped or sexually assaulted by their husband/partner.

- Religious attitudes still exert a strong influence on decision-making processes and help seeking for victims/survivors of domestic violence.

- Levels of dissatisfaction with primary health providers remains high. Two-thirds of those who had visited GP's were not happy with their response, reporting that GP's lacked training and knowledge in this area, were over reliant on prescribing anti-depressants for issues arising from domestic violence and/or did not have time to talk in busy surgeries.

- Dissatisfaction with Social Services was high. Mothers were left feeling a sense of failure in relation to their children whilst contact between children and their abusive fathers was pressed.

The full report can be accessed at [http://blogs.sps.ed.ac.uk/politicalsettlements/files/2018/07/2018\\_PSRP-Violence-Report-NI.pdf](http://blogs.sps.ed.ac.uk/politicalsettlements/files/2018/07/2018_PSRP-Violence-Report-NI.pdf)

# THANK YOU!

The Domestic & Sexual Violence Partnerships would like to say a big thank you to all our members for all their attendances, contributions and support over the past year.

## WE'RE ON THE WEB

For more information on your local Domestic & Sexual Violence Partnerships please visit:

Belfast Area: <http://www.belfastdvp.co.uk/>

Northern Area: [www.northerndsvp.com](http://www.northerndsvp.com)

South Eastern Area: [www.setrust.hscni.net/services/2685.htm](http://www.setrust.hscni.net/services/2685.htm)

Southern Area: <http://bit.ly/SHSCTDomesticAbuse>

Western Area: [www.westerntrust.hscni.net/services/2112.htm](http://www.westerntrust.hscni.net/services/2112.htm)

# Make Yourself Heard

In danger, need the police, but can't speak?

- 1 Dial 999
- 2 Listen to the questions from the 999 operator
- 3 Respond by coughing or tapping the handset if you can
- 4 If prompted, press **55**  
This lets the 999 call operator know it's a genuine emergency and you'll be put through to the police.

See our guide for more information.



#MakeYourselfHeard  
#SilentSolution



[www.policeconduct.gov.uk](http://www.policeconduct.gov.uk)

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