



Belfast Area

Domestic & Sexual Violence
and Abuse Partnership

OPERATIONAL POLICY

REVISED MAY 2016

CONTEXT

"Tackling Violence at Home" was the first Strategy for addressing Domestic Violence and Abuse in N. Ireland (2005-2010), setting out key government priorities for tackling violence and abuse in the home. The Action Plan aimed to ensure an effective multi-agency response under four themes, Prevention, Protection, Support and Other Priorities. At a local level 5 area Domestic Violence Partnerships were established across N. Ireland to respond and work to the priorities identified in the Action Plan.

With the launch of the new *Stopping Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy* (2016), the Partnership has now expanded its remit to include sexual violence and abuse. This current strategy forms the basis of the Belfast Area Partnership's Action Plan. However it is recognised that local issues will be identified and should be highlighted and shared with the Regional Strategy group for consideration and inclusion in future action plans.

MISSION STATEMENT

To continue to develop and maintain local partnerships for shared understanding and work together to tackle Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse in the greater Belfast area.

AIMS

1. To work together effectively to provide an integrated approach to support adults and children experiencing domestic & sexual violence and abuse.
2. To develop effective interventions and appropriate services to support adults and children experiencing domestic & sexual violence and abuse.
3. To support and lobby for initiatives that hold perpetrators accountable and effective interventions to address perpetrators behaviours.
4. To identify and share information, research and best practice in order to influence policy and practice development.
5. To provide domestic & sexual violence and abuse training and education.
6. To provide a strategic fit with the Stopping Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy and other relevant policies and strategies.
7. To ensure members of the Partnership are fully supported by their agencies (time, commitment) to participate in partnership matters.
8. To review and evaluate the effectiveness of joint working.
9. To identify any additional resources required to support the work of Partnership.

VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

1. We believe that everyone has the right to feel safe and that domestic & sexual violence and abuse is unacceptable and should not be tolerated.
2. We value individual agency members and their contribution to eliminating domestic & sexual violence and abuse.
3. As individuals and as a group we are committed to knowing and applying our partnership values, protocols and principles.
4. As individuals and a partnership integrity underpins our working for others and with each other.
5. We respect that there are differences and diversity among individuals and member groups and are mindful of the expectations and constraints of partnership members.
6. As individuals we are clear and explicit about confidentiality boundaries within the Partnership.

DEFINITION

The definition of Domestic Violence set in "*Stopping Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse*" and which all local Domestic & Sexual Violence Partnerships and relevant agencies should use is: *'threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member'*

The definition of Sexual Violence set in *"Stopping Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse"* and which all local Domestic & Sexual Violence Partnerships and relevant agencies should use is *"any behaviour (physical, psychological, verbal, virtual/online) perceived to be of a sexual nature which is controlling, coercive, exploitative, harmful or unwanted that is inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability)"*

Coercive, exploitative and harmful behaviour includes taking advantage of an individual's incapacity to give informed consent.

PARTNERSHIP MEMBERSHIP

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Barnardo's ◆ NICTS ◆ PCSP ◆ Education ◆ Housing Executive ◆ Men's Advisory Project ◆ Nexus NI ◆ NSPCC ◆ Solicitor/Barrister ◆ Statutory Health and Social Services ◆ Trade Unions ◆ Victim Support ◆ Voluntary /Community/Woman's Information Group ◆ Women's Aid | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ PSNI ◆ PBNI <p><i>Other groups/ agencies and individuals may be invited to attend meetings as and when additional knowledge / expertise is required</i></p> |
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Membership Criteria

Agency representatives who provide/deliver services to victims of domestic & sexual violence and abuse meeting the following criteria;

- ◆ Statutory Agency representatives
- ◆ Individuals accountable to a regulatory professional body.
- ◆ Voluntary Agencies who have a service level agreement with a statutory agency and meet the NICVA Governance Standards (Health Check)

Requests by agencies, organisations and individuals wishing to become members of the partnership will be considered by the Chair and vice Chair in the first instance. Further approval may be sought from Strategic Advisory Group

STRUCTURE OF THE PARTNERSHIP (See Diagram page 7)

Strategic Advisory Group

The role of the Strategic Advisory Group is to drive the work of the Partnership and to influence, at a strategic level, policy and practice developments. The group should be aware of emerging trends and issues and ensure these are appropriately included on working group agendas. The group will also have a key role identifying the needs and resources required to sustain the partnership and as resource negotiators.

Membership

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|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Barnardo's ◆ Chairs of each Partnership Working Group ◆ PCSP ◆ Education ◆ Housing Executive ◆ Men's Advisory Project ◆ Nexus NI ◆ PBNI ◆ PSNI | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Statutory Health and Social Services –
Social work, Health Visiting, Maternity, A&E,
Human Resources, Community Development,
Mental Health ◆ Trade Unions ◆ Victim Support ◆ Woman's Aid |
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WORKING GROUPS

There will be four working groups and all agencies represented on the Partnership will be expected to participate in at least one of these either by attendance at meetings or by alternative means of communication

(1) Prevention and Support — will focus on education and awareness raising, and will consider areas of prevention, early intervention and support for victims and children.

For example;

- ◆ Will encourage agencies and organisation to adopt workplace policies
- ◆ Will consider ways of working with schools and the education sector to promote preventative education programmes and awareness for staff, children and young people

(2) Protection and Justice – Will focus on the role of the criminal justice agencies such as Police, PBNI and Courts and how these agencies can work more closely together

For example;

- ◆ To support and lobby for initiatives that hold perpetrators (including non adjudicated perpetrators) accountable and effective interventions to address perpetrators behaviours
- ◆ Will consider ways of removing the barriers and improving access to justice for women/men such as the cost of non molestation orders, and ways to support women/men with no recourse to public funds

(3) Training and Development—Will focus on sharing new initiatives, information and best practice across the Partnership

For example:

- ◆ Planning joint training events and an annual planning day
- ◆ Developing and contributing to appropriate training resources
- ◆ Supporting the development of a website

(4) Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) - Will share information and good practice, highlighting issues across agencies locally and to the Regional MARAC Operational Group

For example:

- ◆ Contribute to the development of policies, guidance and protocols
- ◆ Share best practice across agencies and to the Regional MARAC Operational Group

CHAIRPERSONS

Each working group will nominate a chair person and vice chairperson. The transition of chair/ vice chair should be planned in order to maintain stability.

PARTNERSHIP COORDINATOR

The Coordinator will be responsible for the coordination and development of Partnership activities as outlined in the Stopping Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy and Action Plan and the Partnership Action plan. This includes supporting the work of the Working Groups and the dissemination of information, and current activities between member agencies.

The Coordinator is managed by Belfast Lisburn Women's Aid and reports to the Chair/ Vice Chair of the Partnership and the Strategic Advisory Group.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. The Partnership as a whole forum will meet twice a year – once for an annual planning day and once for an annual partnership event.
2. The Strategic Advisory Group will meet once every three months.
3. The Working Groups will each meet at least once a quarter.
4. Dates of meetings should be agreed in advance for a 12 month period.
5. The Chair of the Partnership will be a designated Health and Social Services Senior Manager. The Chair of the Partnership will also chair the Strategic Advisory Group. A Vice Chair should be nominated.
6. The Chairs of the Working Groups will also sit on the Strategic Advisory Group to ensure all information is shared across all groups. The Chairpersons of the Partnership Working Groups will sit on the Regional Strategic Sub groups, in order to ensure appropriate information flows from the Regional Groups to the local Domestic Violence Partnership Working Groups.
7. Each member agency will be expected to nominate a person to represent their agency at Partnership meetings. This person should have a mandate from their agency to attend and participate on its behalf. If unable to attend, a member will be expected to provide an apology. If appropriate, absent members will be invited to submit written comments for discussion at the Partnership. Following three consecutive non-attendances at the Partnership by a member, the Chair of the group may contact the member to discuss agency representation. Any ongoing non attendance issues will be referred to the Strategic Advisory Group for their consideration.
8. The Partnership will commit to upholding the values and principles of multi-disciplinary and inter-agency working. Members will commit to working in partnership, ensuring a co-ordinated response, promoting joint working, co-operation and mutual support.
9. Members will share relevant information at meetings and contribute to the agenda as appropriate. Members will also inform their own agency of any implications resulting from decisions made at Partnership meetings.
10. Member agencies must ensure that their representatives on the Partnership have a formal mechanism to exchange information and to provide feedback effectively between the Partnership and their own organisation. This will allow for reciprocity of information and ensure the meaningful contribution of each agency to the Partnership.
11. All member agencies are expected to participate in the Working Groups.

TERMS OF REFERENCE (CONT'D)

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS

1. To attend all meetings
2. To actively participate in the Partnership
3. To actively participate in the Working Groups and action any work that is agreed
4. To share new practice initiatives/policy/strategy from their own organisation with members of the Partnership

LINKS WITH OTHER POLICY AND PLANNING INITIATIVES

- ◆ Stopping Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland 2016
- ◆ Tackling Violence at Home Strategy 2005-2013 and Action Plan
- ◆ ACPC Regional Policy and Procedures
- ◆ Children's Services Plan 2008—2011
- ◆ Sexual Violence Strategy 2009
- ◆ Children Order N.I 1995
- ◆ Regional Child Protection Committee and Trust Child Protection Panel
- ◆ Community Safety Strategy 2012-2017 "Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities"
- ◆ Homelessness Strategy 2012-2017
- ◆ Family Support Strategy
- ◆ UNOCINI
- ◆ N.I. Policing Plan 2012 –2015
- ◆ MARAC
- ◆ Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines: Female Genital Mutilation
- ◆ Relevant legislation changes and Court Service initiatives
- ◆ Domestic Violence Risk Assessment Model (Barnardo's)
- ◆ Human Resource Equality and Diversity Policies
- ◆ Investing in Health (DHSSPS)
- ◆ Priorities for Action (DHSSPS)
- ◆ Adult Safeguarding Prevention and Protection in Partnership Policy (2015).
- ◆ Race Equality Strategy 2015-2025
- ◆ A Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland 2006-2016
- ◆ Disability Strategy 2012-2015
- ◆ Safeguarding Panel/Board (when implemented)
- ◆ Sexual Orientation Strategy (when implemented)



BELFAST AREA DOMESTIC & SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND ABUSE PARTNERSHIP

