



Police Service
of Northern Ireland

Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls

Action Plan - One Year On



**we care
we listen
we act**

Definition:

“The term **“violence against women and girls”** refers to acts of violence or abuse that we know disproportionately affect women and girls. Crimes and behaviour covered by this term include rape and other sexual offences, domestic abuse, stalking, ‘honour’ based abuse (including female genital mutilation, forced marriage, and ‘honour’ killings), as well as many others, including offences committed online”

UK Home Office, 2021

01	Foreword	04
02	How We Developed This Action Plan	06
03	Our Action Plan	08
04	Action Plan Themes	11
05	Police Service of Northern Ireland Violence Against Women and Girls Action Plan	13
	Theme 1 : Build Trust and Confidence	14
	Theme 2 : Relentless Perpetrator Pursuit	20
	Theme 3 : Safer Spaces	27
06	Supporting Our partners	35
07	Governance and Accountability	38
08	Outcome 1 & 2	39

01 Foreword

A significant majority of violent offences committed against women and girls in Northern Ireland are perpetrated by men. Between 2017 and 2021, 34 women and girls across Northern Ireland were killed by men. Many more have faced other forms of male violence, abuse and intimidation, both within their own homes and the wider community.

Whilst violence, abuse and intimidation against everyone and anyone in our society is completely unacceptable, the available evidence and lived experience of women and girls tells us that they are disproportionately the victims at the hands of men.

It is also important to recognise that many women and girls from marginalised communities and people from LGBTQIA+ communities have and continue to face specific, unique risks to their safety and additional barriers to getting the support and care they need to report the harm they experience.

Furthermore, the tragic murder of Sarah Everard in England in 2021 by a male police officer and other instances of unacceptable police misconduct have understandably damaged the trust and confidence of women and girls in policing.

We recognise that more must be done to keep women and girls from all communities and backgrounds safe, and that police officers have unique powers, including the powers of arrest.

It is for these reasons that whilst recognising much has already been done to prevent violence against women and girls, more can be done and we have therefore created our first formal Violence Against Women and Girls Action Plan.

In consultation with stakeholders, we recognise it will take time to fully address violence against women and girls. Therefore our action plan will

cover an initial life span of seven years with the aim of progressing the actions listed in this document in the first two years. This will ensure that our work is aligned to the Northern Ireland Executive Office's Ending Violence against Women and Girls Strategy and the Departments of Justice and Health's Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy.

As your Police Service, we fully recognise that we cannot fix this societal issue in isolation but we know that policing has a vital role to play. That is why, in addition to outlining the specific actions the Police Service intends to take, we have also set out how we intend to support the work undertaken by partners across the public sector and wider society.

We also understand that people look to the Police to demonstrate leadership in their own behaviour and at times we have fallen short of public expectation. We are steadfastly committed to rebuilding that trust and confidence, and this starts with our own behaviours and attitudes.

An extensive body of work is already underway internally, including the publication of a Service-wide Statement of Intent to challenge inappropriate behaviour, reaffirm our expectations for the highest standards of professional conduct and ensuring allegations against officers and staff are dealt with effectively.

The voices of women and girls have been heard loudly and are very much reflected in this action plan. We will continue to listen intently to concerns and agree wholeheartedly that they should not feel like they have to shoulder the responsibility of keeping themselves safe.

We want to extend my sincere thanks to our partners across the women and girls sector, who have been a critical friend and offered support, guidance and constructive challenge thus far.

We can never reverse the hurt and harm that has been inflicted on so many women and girls, but we can work together to really listen and make our society a better, safer and more respectful place for them going forward.

This action plan is only the beginning. We know that women and girls want to see delivery through a visible, accessible and responsive Police Service that **cares, listens and acts.**

02 How We Developed This Action Plan

In September 2021, the Police Service of Northern Ireland held an initial virtual exploratory meeting with a wide range of partners with the lived experience, knowledge and expertise on issues relevant to women and girls. The outcomes of this discussion framed the initial parameters and themes of this action plan and a project team was established consisting of senior police officers and staff to oversee its subsequent development.

From the outset the senior leadership of the Police Service was clear that, whilst there was a need to develop this action plan at pace, collaboration and co-design must be central to our approach.

In addition to a comprehensive literature review of the local, national and international evidence base in relation to violence against women and girls, we undertook a detailed programme of engagement. This ensured that organisations that work with women and girls - and women and girls themselves, could directly feed into the development process.

Those from LGBTQIA+ communities, ethnic minority backgrounds, students and younger girls were consulted with to ensure specific challenges and barriers were identified and actioned.

Feedback from our partners included concerns around immigration status which has been addressed by a review of our guidance to police on supporting all victims and witnesses through the criminal justice process. Feedback was also received in terms of accessibility through availability of the action plan in a number of languages prevalent within migrant communities. This has also been factored into the development of the plan.

This engagement programme, which took place from October 2021 to February 2022, included a series of detailed one-to-one meetings with partners to discuss the core aspects of the action plan, a learning visit from the Chief Constable and other senior police officers to service providers and a series of online consultation events to secure detailed feedback on the proposed actions.



At all stages of this engagement, the Police Service of Northern Ireland has sought to offer as many opportunities as possible for consultation whilst acknowledging the need to develop this action plan at pace. We have also recognised that policing is only part of a solution that requires deep and wide-ranging societal change. As such, we have endeavoured to offer the opportunity for open, frank and honest discussion on the contribution that policing can make to this collective challenge.

Whilst consultation and engagement has been central to the development of this action plan, so too will it be crucial to its ongoing implementation.

As already stated, we also note the commitment from the Northern Ireland Executive to publish and deliver its own government-wide “Equally Safe” strategy and the current consultation process that is already underway.

The Police Service will play a full role in supporting the development of this strategy with our own plans capable of adaption and evolution to ensure a joined-up approach.

03 Our Action Plan (Years One & Two)

In developing this action plan there are two strategic outcomes we are seeking to achieve, namely;

Outcome 1:

Contribute to having a society in which violence and abuse against women and girls in any form, anywhere, is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

Outcome 2:

Build trust and confidence in women and girls in policing.

In order to deliver these strategic outcomes our action plan focuses upon three priority themes, namely;

Theme 1:

Build trust and confidence

Theme 2:

Relentless perpetrator pursuit and supporting victims

Theme 3:

Safer spaces



04 Action Plan Themes

In terms of our priority themes within our action plan, we have intentionally placed trust and confidence in police first.

We know that confidence in policing to tackle violence against women and girls both locally and nationally, has rightly been questioned as a result of recent tragic high profile murders. That is why in the first two years of this seven year action plan we will revisit training for our officers and staff. This will ensure the highest standards are upheld in how they treat the public they serve and each other and enable them to quickly recognise and respond to violence against women and girls offences.

We are acutely aware, based on the expert input of partners, that women and girls from some communities face additional and specific threats to their safety. This includes, but is not limited to honour-based abuse, female genital mutilation, forced marriage and modern slavery.

We also know that women and girls from marginalised communities who experience violence and abuse face additional barriers to reporting and participating in the criminal justice process.

It is further vital that the needs of people from the LGBTQIA+ community are reflected within this action plan to account for the additional vulnerability they can face.

We also cannot lose sight of the fact that this action plan has to protect younger women and girls who often face difficulties in having their voices heard and for whom we have heard the criminal justice process can be daunting. As such, we will work with partners to ensure we embed the children's rights approach to our implementation.

Our specific actions are also heavily informed by the feedback we have received and available evidence in relation to contemporary concerns, such as "spiking", for which we know women and girls are predominantly the victims. By ensuring our action plan can evolve, we are confident other issues which emerge in the future can be effectively incorporated.

There are, however, matters that have been raised with us where we have not been able to make the progress we would have liked at this stage.

The actions we will take within each priority theme will be specific, measurable and aligned to our strategic commitments in other key areas of work. These include;

- The Northern Ireland Policing Plan
- The Northern Ireland Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy
- "Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) report", and "Police Response to Violence Against Women and Girls - Final Inspection Report"
- The Gillen Review
- The National Police Chiefs Council Violence Against Women and Girls Framework for Delivery
- The Police Service of Northern Ireland's People Strategy
- The Police Service of Northern Ireland's Children and Young People Strategy.

For example, we know that victims of violence against women and girls with insecure immigration status do not feel confident to report to police. This matter is reserved to the UK Government and is currently the subject of legal challenge. However, we are determined to take whatever action we can now. This includes issuing and embedding into our training, operational guidance which clearly states that our practice is to not routinely check immigration status to ensure our full focus is on protecting the needs of victims or witnesses. We

will monitor this issue through national policing bodies and amend this action plan as required when a satisfactory resolution is found.

In addition, we recognise the strong views of the women and girls sector that misogyny needs to be considered in the context of hate crime legislation and recording in order to build a more accurate picture of the prevalence and trends in violence against women and girls. Whilst it is not for the Police Service to make decisions in relation to law-making, we are aware of ongoing work in relation to the revision of hate crime legislation in Northern Ireland and we will ensure policing is ready to support and implement any forthcoming changes.



05

Police Service of Northern Ireland Violence Against Women and Girls Action Plan

Theme 1:

Build Trust and Confidence

To address changes in society in respect of attitudes and behaviours relating to violence against women and girls, we acknowledge that the Police Service of Northern Ireland must first look at our own attitudes and behaviours. We understand that the attitudes and behaviours of our officers and staff must be of the highest standards, particularly in respect of this issue. We will ensure that the public have confidence that their Police Service will effectively deal with wrongdoing at all levels. It is also key that we educate our staff to understand the key issues and the long term impact of unacceptable attitudes and behaviours when tackling violence against women and girls crimes.



Objective 1

We will ensure that where standards fall below those that we expect, in terms of how officers and staff treat each other and the public, we will deal with conduct which is unacceptable.

	Action	Measure	First Year Updates
1	Examine vetting processes to ensure that accountable decision making incorporates suitable safeguarding for in-service vetting failures and service exit processes	Vetting processes reviewed at entry and in service as required and updated as applicable	<p>1.1 Professional Standards have reviewed the vetting decision making processes at all stages and have put numerous safeguarding and accountability measures in place.</p> <p>Action is progressing with significant progress achieved to date</p> <p>1.2 As above.</p> <p>Action is progressing with significant progress achieved to date</p>
2	Conduct a review of previous cases of sexual impropriety and misconduct alleged against the Police Service of Northern Ireland personnel to ensure appropriate investigative actions and safeguarding are addressed	Case reviews will be conducted and appropriate actions taken to address criminal, misconduct or safeguarding concerns raised throughout	<p>A total of 158 investigations involving 138 officers have been identified for review. To date the team have made 155 recommendations which are being progressed through Public Protection, Professional Standards and Service Vetting Unit.</p> <p>Action remains ongoing with significant progress made to date</p>

Objective 1 *continued*

	Action	Measure	First Year Updates
3	Review our confidential signposting and support mechanisms for reporting concerns in the workplace	<p>3.1 Review conducted into existing confidential support mechanisms to ensure fitness for purpose. This will focus on all crime and incident types rather than specific training for domestic and sexual crimes</p> <p>3.2 To raise awareness of internal procedures for those who wish to report wrongdoing in the workplace</p>	<p>3.1 Professional Standards now has a Prevention First Team who focus primarily on advertising standards and common misconduct pitfalls, as well as encouraging confidential reporting and signposting through the implementation of a Prevention First Policy.</p> <p>Action complete</p> <p>3.2 Professional Standards has developed a new Communication and Engagement Strategy, with a particular focus on abuse of position for a sexual purpose, maintaining professional boundaries and improper conduct related to gender.</p> <p>Action complete</p>
4	Publish a Statement of Intent in respect of conduct and standards expected by police employees of all ranks and grades	Statement of Intent of conduct and standards to be communicated to all police employees	<p>This has been completed and distributed to all employees within the organisation in early 2022. This action is fully complete.</p> <p>Action complete</p>

Objective 2

We will design and implement learning and development programmes for our officers and staff, to ensure they have the confidence and knowledge to be able to identify crimes and incidents where gender is an aggravating factor and subsequently build strong prosecution cases to bring offenders to justice.

	Action	Measure	First Year Updates
1	Deliver to all officers and staff in front line policing roles specialist trauma informed domestic abuse training developed by the Police Service of Northern Ireland in conjunction with internal and external stakeholders	Delivery of specialist trauma informed domestic abuse training to all officers and staff in front line policing roles	<p>Trauma informed victim forward training has been developed to support investigations into domestic abuse, stalking and non-fatal strangulation with thousands of officers and staff upskilled as a result.</p> <p>Action complete</p>
2	Deliver to all officers and staff in front line policing roles specialist trauma informed sexual offences training developed in conjunction with external and internal stakeholders	Delivery of specialist trauma informed training to support the introduction of new legislative provisions including new offences of “up skirting” and “down blousing”	<p>Rape myths training has been co-designed with NEXUS. This has been delivered in person to 150 people to date, with scheduled sessions across the rest of the year. New modules of training are also being developed for upcoming offences of ‘up skirting’ and ‘down blousing’.</p> <p>Action ongoing with significant progress made</p>
3	Deliver to all officers and staff in front line policing roles specialist training on online and physical stalking and harassment in line with planned legislative changes	Delivery of specialist stalking training to all officers and staff	<p>A bespoke training module has been rolled out to support the new legislation and this has been operationalised, with the successful identification of almost 200 stalking cases to date. A further internal communication plan is being developed to support Stalking Protection Orders.</p> <p>Action complete</p>

Objective 2 *continued*

	Action	Measure	First Year Updates
4	Review student officer training to ensure that it is reflective of legislative requirements, in relation to domestic abuse, sexual offences and violence against women and girls. This will include a review in respect of responses to reports of female genital mutilation, sexual abuse and violence, forced marriage and honour-based abuse	<p>4.1 The Police College will work with internal and external stakeholders to ensure material updated in line with legislative and policy changes. These will include Women's Aid, Women's Resource and Development Agency, The Rainbow Project</p> <p>4.2 Training is regularly reviewed and updated as required as part of ongoing Continuous Professional Development for the organisation</p> <p>4.3 Undertake rape myth training across the Police Service of Northern Ireland to remove prejudicial, stereotyped and false beliefs about sexual offences, victims and perpetrators of sexual abuse and violence crimes</p>	<p>Rape myths training has been co-designed with NEXUS. This training has been delivered to 150 people in person to date and there are scheduled sessions across the rest of the year.</p> <p>Action ongoing with significant progress made</p>
5	Develop and design a bespoke learning and development programme for all officers and staff to recognise behaviours linked to violence against women and girls, from all backgrounds. This will cut across all crime and incident types	<p>5.1 Specific violence against women and girls learning and development programme delivered to all officers and staff which will focus on backgrounds, relationships and the different offending behaviours and triggers for violence against women and girls</p> <p>5.2 Evaluation following this training will take place by way of a survey as to how violence against women and girls issues had been addressed through this training, and if required used to develop any further continuous professional development</p>	<p>This has been undertaken through a number of routes to date;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen learn lead sessions with White ribbon with an online support package being developed to support further advocates. • Through rape myths training there is a focus on bystander intervention and how to tackle inappropriate behaviours. <p>Action is progressing</p>

Objective 3

We will review our Dignity at Work suite of policies taking account of violence against women and girls. This will include the introduction of a specific domestic abuse in the workplace policy. This is based on the assertion that domestic abuse is under-reported within policing against the general population and the percentage of incidents reported by those employed by the Police Service. Public Protection Branch with specially trained detectives will lead on investigations whereby a police employee is either the victim or the perpetrator. This will provide consistency of approach and clarity to supervisors supporting the wellbeing and safeguarding where allegations of domestic abuse have been made.

	Action	Measure	First Year Updates
1	Review our Dignity at Work suite of policies to address the causal factors that give rise to bullying, harassment and grievances	Refreshed Dignity at Work policies will be complete, and related communications plan launched to support awareness raising	<p>Dignity at work policies have been reviewed.</p> <p>Action complete</p>
2	Publish a new specific domestic abuse in the workplace policy outlining roles and responsibilities of how to both report and investigate domestic abuse where either the victim or suspect is a Police Service employee	<p>2.1 Domestic abuse in the workplace policy introduced across the service</p> <p>2.2 Domestic Abuse Champions identified to support the implementation of the new policy</p>	<p>This is still providing challenge across the UK and not something that there is a cohesive national view on, therefore work remains ongoing as to how this data would be effectively captured. However, it has been reviewed to ensure that this remains part of business as usual for relentless/wanted persons.</p> <p>Action is progressing</p>

Theme 2:

Relentless Perpetrator Pursuit

We understand that the criminal justice system needs to respond promptly and with a particular focus on violence against women and girls. We will therefore, in collaboration with our partners within the criminal justice system, seek to reduce repeat victim and offending rates for violence against women and girls offences, better understand the reasons for victim attrition and seek to increase positive justice outcomes.



Objective 1

We will ensure that the investigation of violence against women and girls offending is of the highest standard through enhanced supervision and investigative standards and we will seek to increase prosecution and outcome rates.

	Action	Measure	First Year Updates
1	Develop a seven year strategy, in consultation with the Public Prosecution Service in relation to serious sexual offences	<p>1.1 Serious sexual offence strategy developed alongside the Public Prosecution Service</p> <p>1.2 Launch the revised Service Level Agreement with Public Prosecution Service to highlight the agreed investigative standards and improve the quality of domestic abuse files</p>	<p>1.1 Strategy in under development on investigating and prosecuting serious sexual offences has been developed and is with PPS for further consultation prior to launch considerations.</p> <p>Action is progressing</p> <p>1.2 A Service Level Agreement on investigating and prosecuting domestic abuse offences has been co-designed by police and PPS, in its final stages of review. The structures in place to monitor the response to domestic abuse investigations has been developed and regular quality assurance samples are undertaken between police and PPS policy leads.</p> <p>Action is progressing</p>
2	Develop a process for improved and standardised investigation of violence against women and girls offending behaviour	Quarterly analysis of use of criminal justice outcomes completed to include arrests, charges, file submission timeliness, victim attrition rates and use of body worn video, including quality of recordings, and evidential difficulties that have been present in the investigations	<p>Baseline for recording VAWG offences is now being captured on VAWG Pulse (operational recording platform) pages. A number of PULSE workshops have been delivered to allow more confidence in being able to access operational data within the VAWG pages.</p> <p>Action is progressing</p>

Objective 2

We will prioritise actions associated with those persons who are wanted for arrest or interview in connection with violence against women and girls offending.

Action	Measure	First Year Updates
1 Adapt the Police Service of Northern Ireland Wanted Persons Risk Assessment Matrix (WPRAM) to ensure those persons wanted for violence against women and girls offences are a prioritisation category	Risk assessment matrix adapted to include violence against women and girls categories within the Police Service of Northern Ireland	Wanted people processes are embedded and reviewed based on threat risk harm. Action complete

Objective 3

We will determine how to classify and record misogyny and/or gender based crime.

Action	Measure	First Year Updates
1 Scope out the options and practicalities of how the Police Service of Northern Ireland record incidents that occur as a result of misogynistic attitudes, with a view to proposing subsequent interventions including potentially enhanced sentencing	Scoping exercise will be undertaken and review completed	This is still providing challenge across the UK and not something that there is a cohesive national view on, therefore work remains ongoing as to how this data would be effectively captured. However, it has been reviewed to ensure that this remains part of business as usual for relentless/wanted persons. Action is progressing

Objective 4

We will ensure the effective and ethical crime recording of all offences, including violence against women and girls offences.

Action	Measure	First Year Updates
1 Service Crime Registrar to conduct annual audits to ensure accurate crime recording	Results from annual audits to meet key performance indicators	An internal crime audit was undertaken to focus on sexual offences in late 2022. A number of actions were raised and completed in respect of guidance to be re-issued on how to record the different number of sexual offences and perpetrators. A further audit will take place this year. Action complete
2 Service Crime Registrar to provide clear advice and training to crime recorders across the organisation to promote consistent application of Home Office Counting Rules	Internal guidance and training to be published to support practical and operational application	This has been undertaken by the Service Crime Registrar and remains ongoing in respect of compliance, where an issue is identified, guidance is re-shared and interactions with relevant teams follow. This is embedded into the business as usual model. Action complete

Objective 5

We will seek to identify those who are repeat victims of offences that disproportionately affect women and girls.

	Action	Measure	First Year Updates
1	Revise our current repeat victim process to ensure it identifies those repeat victims of violence against women and girls offences	Review the repeat victim strategy	The VAWG operational pages now provide relevant up to date data on repeat victims, perpetrators and locations alongside the crime and incident breakdown. There have been a number of awareness raising sessions with analysts and departmental/district personnel to promote an understanding of what these pages can provide and how to interrogate the same. Action is progressing but data set can now be captured
2	Develop a problem solving toolkit for officers and staff involved in supporting those who are repeat victims of violence against women and girls offences	Toolkit developed to include criminal justice outcomes, protective, and supportive measures available for victims of violence against women and girls offences	An internal app has been developed and launched, with usage monitored. This will be updated following new offences/orders being launched throughout 2023. Action is progressing but data set can be captured
3	Baseline the number of repeat violence against women and girls victims in year one	Year one to be identified as the baseline for victims of violence against women and girls offences within the rolling 365 days	There is now the opportunity to capture the baseline of VAWG offences and compare against the relevant reporting periods. This has over 12 month's data available for interrogation. Action complete
4	Baseline overall violence against women and girls offences in year one	Year one to be identified as the baseline for victims of violence against women and girls offences within the rolling 365 days	As above. Action complete

Objective 6

We will operationalise the introduction of Protective Orders in order to enhance available protection measures associated with violence against women and girls offences.

	Action	Measure	First Year Updates
1	We will operationalise the introduction of Stalking Protection Orders in Northern Ireland, and monitor the usage of Interim and Full Stalking Protection orders to protect those who are at risk of online or offline stalking behaviours	Stalking Protection Orders will be introduced within Northern Ireland and relevant training and awareness will be undertaken to support officers and staff	There is ongoing development of an internal awareness module to support officers and supervisors making applications for Stalking Protection Orders. Action has seen significant progress with Orders set to go live in the coming months
2	We will operationalise the introduction of Domestic Abuse Protection Orders / Notices in Northern Ireland, following the introduction of the Domestic Abuse & Civil Proceedings Act (NI) 2021	Domestic Abuse Protection Orders and Notices will be introduced within Northern Ireland and relevant training and awareness will be undertaken to support officers and staff	There remains engagement with the Department of Justice in respect of the operationalisation of DAPO/ Ns - a dip sample has been undertaken to highlight the potential demand. This will be a considerable financial and resource cost to the organisation and a business case is currently being developed to identify the best delivery model for supporting this legislation. Action remains ongoing

Objective 7

We will, as part of our homicide reduction strategy, use the Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) process to better understand, learn from trends identified and take all steps possible to prevent the murder of women and girls in domestic settings in the future.

Action	Measure	First Year Updates
1 Police will embed the effective use of the Domestic Homicide Review process across Northern Ireland to inform our prevention first approach to tackling domestic abuse in all its forms through effective internal learning reviews	All learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews will be embedded in our prevention strategy for domestic abuse	An interim update report has been provided to the Department of Justice to highlight progress to date. It is expected that there will be two more DHRs published in 2023. Funding has also been secured for a seven year Domestic & Sexual Abuse strategy. Action complete

Theme 3:

Safer Spaces

The peaceful enjoyment of our public spaces and being safe online are basic expectations. We will work with partners to ensure this is a reality for women and girls in Northern Ireland in all spaces and at all times. We believe it is unacceptable for women and girls to feel unsafe in any space within our society and we are committed to working with partners to address the fear that women and girls experience as part of daily life. We will work to reduce the opportunity for offending and make our spaces safer.



Objective 1

We will seek to improve safety in public spaces for women and girls by developing an enhanced process to identify the locations and times where crime disproportionately affects them.

	Action	Measure	First Year Updates
1	Develop a process that directs officers to the identified violence against women and girls locations at key times	Process designed and implemented across the organisation	An operational policing Geoportal and briefing app has been developed to help identify specific locations of concern in respect of a range of crime types including VAWG. This ensures officers have quick and easy information to aid the deployment of resources. Action complete
2	Baseline the overall violence against women and girls offences in year one	Baseline established	There is now the opportunity to capture the baseline of VAWG offences and compare against the relevant reporting periods. This has over 12 month's of data available for interrogation. Action complete

Objective 2

We will seek to raise awareness of and subsequently reduce the incidents of spiking across Northern Ireland.

	Action	Measure	First Year Updates
1	Develop internal Police Service of Northern Ireland guidance on how to investigate spiking offences	Internal guidance completed and issued. To be reviewed and refreshed on an ongoing basis	Specific guidance and supporting awareness material has been developed, enabling a focused and consistent approach to responding to reported spiking incidents. While occasional incidents are reported, the initial increase which prompted this action point have reduced. Action complete
2	Policing districts to ensure spiking is a key focus within their night-time economy working groups	Night time economy working groups established with spiking as a key focus. Working groups to be dip sampled to ensure compliance and quality around drink spiking issues	As above. Action complete
3	Develop a media campaign to raise awareness of spiking and deter perpetrator behaviour	Media campaign developed and launched	Spiking awareness has been included to date in the Operation Seasons Greetings campaign which ran from 17 November 2022 - 2 Jan 2023. It was also included the initial launch of the Ask for Angela Campaign and student safety material. Action complete
4	Baseline the number of reports of spiking offences in year one	Baseline established	It remains a challenge for the police to routinely provide verified statistics on 'spiking' as there is no specific offence of 'spiking' by law in Northern Ireland. There are other associated offences (administering a poison with intent to injure), but these don't solely relate to 'spiking'. Action complete

Objective 3

We will work with partners to design safer public spaces for the future.

	Action	Measure	First Year Updates
1	Use the “Secured by Design Gold Standard” model where the Police Service of Northern Ireland is involved in any design process	Crime prevention officers within the Police Service of Northern Ireland consider violence against women and girls as a key consideration as part of their role in the Secured by Design process (to be measured by qualitative dip sample)	The Design Out Crime team provide design solutions and assessment on security to minimise crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour. Since 1 September 2022 - August 2023, the team have provided VAWG specific support to over 130 projects, developments and events. Action is ongoing with significant progress to date
2	Continue to promote the number of ONUS Safe Places in Northern Ireland and will review how the existing Safe Places are working to keep women and girls safe	Continued promotion of ONUS safe spaces and review completed, including awareness events hosted by the Police Service of Northern Ireland officers or staff members	ONUS Safe Places schemes has been reinvigorated with information provided to all Districts, promoting and encouraging the support of the scheme. Phase 2 will be a series of training courses for police and partners to equip persons to be able to fulfil the role of ‘Advocate.’ Action is ready for discharge
3	Develop a standardised process to ensure safety of women and girls is embedded where policing has a role within event planning	Safety of women and girls is a standing agenda item on all event planning agendas (dip sample to assess quality of considerations)	The Police College have reviewed best practice and developed bespoke specific guidance and supporting material for all Public Order, Public Safety Commanders to ensure VAWG is a central element in the planning stage of events. Action complete
4	Awareness around violence against women and girls will be embedded as part of the police Public Order and Public Safety Training	Violence against women and girls awareness is embedded in Public Order and Public Safety training	Planning is being progressed to deliver specific training in respect of events and public safety as part of training delivered within year two of the plan. This has been raised at a National level to ensure consistency of approach across the UK. Action ongoing with significant progress

Objective 4

We will work with a range of stakeholders to develop and promote media campaigns for policing that challenge offender behaviour in all spaces for violence against women and girls offences.

	Action	Measure	First Year Updates
1	Work in partnership to develop campaigns relevant to challenging attitudes and behaviours relating to offences against women and girls	Campaigns delivered in conjunction with corporate communications	A number of specific campaigns have been conducted during year one of this action plan specific to the Safer places theme. These have included Ask for Angela, 2022/23 Seasons Greetings Campaign and Summer Safety Campaign including Belsonic and other key events. Action complete

Objective 5

We will develop a bespoke violence against women and girls engagement programme in each policing district, overseen by a specific local policing lead.

	Action	Measure	First Year Updates
1	Development of local stakeholder maps as part of local engagement pillars	<p>1.1 Local stakeholders have a local dedicated point of contact</p> <p>1.2 Each District will have produced and delivered a local engagement plan to support the aims of this action plan, including a local stakeholder map and activity plan</p>	<p>During year one District Profiles have been developed for each District to include specific information in respect of VAWG. Districts will use these moving forward into year two to identify gaps and initiate local work to address such.</p> <p>Action ongoing with significant progress</p>
2	Identify cohort of points of contact within the Police Service of Northern Ireland who will support local action and engagement plans	Violence against women and girls points of contact appointed and contact details shared with local stakeholders	<p>As above.</p> <p>Action complete</p>
3	Develop of local activity plans to deliver the aims of this action plan, including a local programme of events participation to disseminate key crime prevention messages through presentations and stand	Activity plans developed by each District / Team	<p>All Districts have been mandated to work with their local Police and Community Safety Partnerships to deliver at least one bespoke VAWG event during 2023/24 financial year.</p> <p>Action is being progressed with some interventions already complete</p>

Objective 6

We will develop a multi-disciplinary Independent Advisory Group (IAG) to build trust and confidence by ensuring the voices of women and girls are heard and actively shape the implementation of this action plan.

	Action	Measure	First Year Updates
1	Establish a Northern Ireland based IAG, to meet quarterly or on an ad hoc basis when required	Key independent accountability measures IAG established to oversee delivery	<p>IAG has met on four occasions since the launch of the VAWG action plan and will meet again within the first quarter of year two. Terms of reference have been issued and agreed by all- where required there is the opportunity of bringing in critical friends as issues develop.</p> <p>Action complete</p>

Objective 7

We will form a strategic partnership with key stakeholders working with them to change attitudes and behaviours to never commit, condone or stay silent about violence against women and girls.

	Action	Measure	First Year Updates
1	The Police Service of Northern Ireland will work with stakeholders to increase knowledge and skills of police employees to address violence against women and girls	Programmes and initiatives established with respective stakeholders	<p>Police have worked with the Executive Office to develop a central group to coordinate related work and initiatives. This group is now active and chaired by Hospitality Ulster. A list of key women's sector partners have also been identified as part of wider stakeholder mapping work.</p> <p>Action complete</p>

Objective 8

We will establish a programme of listening initiatives to ensure that our practice is trauma-informed by creating ongoing opportunities for police officers and staff to hear directly from women and girls about their lived experience.

	Action	Measure	First Year Updates
1	Deliver a programme of visits for senior officers to service providers to hear directly about the experiences of victims through the lifetime of the action plan	Programme of visits delivered to a variety of key stakeholders	<p>Police Service have already undertaken direct engagement with students in Northern Ireland, alongside other relevant partners including the University and colleague institutions, local councils and hospitality industry, to listen to their experiences first-hand.</p> <p>Action has seen progress in attendance at events</p>

06 Supporting Our Partners

Whilst we have set out above what actions the Police Service will specifically take as part of this collective effort, it is important to outline how we intend to support other partners in wider initiatives for which there is a policing component.



Theme 1 Build Trust and Confidence

1. Police will work collaboratively with key partners and stakeholders to ensure that we utilise their experiences of policing to inform our training, policy development and operational practices.

This will be done by participating in appropriate consultations across key Stakeholder groups to identify occasions where women and girls have experiences that would assist in developing further internal policies and training to meet the high standards expected of officers and staff members.

Theme 2 Relentless Perpetrator Pursuit

1. Police will work collaboratively, harnessing their knowledge, experience and expertise to ensure core policing outcomes are reflected in the Executive's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.

This will be done by participating in appropriate Northern Ireland Executive consultation mechanisms to provide the Police Service of Northern Ireland policy input. This will include calls for views on new legislative provisions and / or policies that will impact on violence against women and girls matters.

Develop relevant briefing papers and submissions to support Northern Ireland Executive's Strategy development. This will include the Police Service of Northern Ireland being represented at a senior level for relevant stakeholder engagements and working groups.

2. Police will support the Department of Justice to review the Domestic Violence and Abuse Disclosure Scheme with a view to increasing applications.

Following the academic research undertaken by the Department of Justice police will provide supporting material to increase awareness of the scheme and consistency of application across decision makers in this process.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland will provide assistance and support to Department of Justice to change the threshold for disclosure to better safeguard potential victims of domestic abuse by extending the scheme.

3. Police will support the development of a specific repeat perpetrator strategy for Domestic abuse in Northern Ireland.

Police will review repeat Domestic Abuse strategies in other jurisdictions to better inform the best model for Northern Ireland supported by, and providing support to partners recognising that policing plays only one part in addressing perpetrator behaviours. This would see a Domestic Abuse repeat perpetrator strategy for Northern Ireland developed with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for each partner.

4. Police will support partners to improve service to victims by integrating support for women and girls subjected to violence, within the proposed Needs Assessment Service for Northern Ireland.

To continue scoping work for the establishment of a Needs Assessment Service provided by Victim Support Northern Ireland (VSNI) within the Victim and Witness Care Unit (VWCU). It seeks the approval of the Criminal Justice Board for recommendations in respect of the preferred

model, in line with Strategic Recommendation 4 of the July 2020 CJNI Inspection Report into the Care & Treatment of Victims and Witnesses.

5. We will work to support the implementation of dedicated Domestic Abuse Courts in Northern Ireland to better support victims of domestic abuse and reduce attrition rates.

Police will work collaboratively with Criminal Justice partners to introduce a pilot Domestic Abuse Court which will focus on providing a more effective and efficient journey through the Criminal Justice process and courts to reduce victim attrition and the time between report and court outcomes. An initial pilot court will be operational within Belfast Laganside and will focus on violent offences within a domestic setting and the new Domestic abuse offence.

6. Police will continue to work with partners to improve the support provided to women and girls who are the victims of crime through access to advocacy services.

Police will support the implementation of a province wide advocacy support scheme to support victims of domestic and sexual abuse. This will include support to victims of sexual offences in a domestic and non domestic setting. Police will support statutory partners to provide effective and efficient referrals to those who deliver advocacy to victims of domestic and sexual abuse.

7. Police will support partners to undertake an extensive mapping exercise to ensure the Police Service at local, regional and national levels is connected with advocacy groups and service providers working with women and girls across Northern Ireland.

Police will support the provision of Strategy Stakeholder map relevant to Police Service of Northern Ireland leads including District Command and Area Engagement Leads. This will increase knowledge and awareness for officers and staff.

Police will identify key points of contact in national, regional and local stakeholder groups.

Theme 3 Safer Spaces

1. Police will support partners specifically within the night-time economy to raise awareness of violence against women and girls to stop offences from occurring.

This will be delivered by assisting partners to review and identify best practice solutions (such as the "Safer Streets" initiative) based on existing United Kingdom operations that can be adapted for Northern Ireland economy.

Police will establish local working groups between the Police Service of Northern Ireland and night time economy partners to review initiatives and identify opportunities to reduce offending including the introduction of code word schemes "Ask for Angela".

2. Police will support the Education Authority and other education partners to deliver training in schools, communicating actions taken in reporting offending behaviours which are occurring within the education setting. In doing so, we will ensure the voices of girls and young women fundamentally shape this work.

Police will support partners to develop a training package for delivery for pupils and teaching staff in schools.

07 Governance and Accountability

The Police Service of Northern Ireland Violence Against Women and Girls Co-ordination Group will meet frequently to drive progress against the objectives and actions in this plan. The group will have representation from varying ranks, grades and roles across our organisation and will include staff associations.

Progress will be reported to and overseen by the Service Performance Board to ensure achievement of the outcomes of this action plan. Updates will be provided on progress of the action plan to the Northern Ireland Policing Board at intervals agreed with them.

We will regularly review our action plan and incorporate new actions as required.

It is critical for public confidence that the Police Service is held to account for our commitment to tackling male violence against women and girls and with this in mind we will develop a performance framework to monitor progress against the action plan.

We will develop the framework to ensure that we have an understanding of:

- Our current benchmark and outcomes within year one, year two and beyond
- What measures will best allow us and others to monitor progress
- What data is already collected elsewhere
- What success looks like.



08 Outcomes

To deliver our two strategic outcomes there are a number of indicators we will monitor.

Outcome 1

To have a society in which violence, abuse and intimidation against women and girls, in any form, and anywhere, is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

Indicator

Fewer repeat victims of violence against women and girls offences
(Policing Plan 1.1)

Fewer repeat perpetrators of violence against women and girls offences
(Policing Plan 1.2)

Fewer repeat locations of violence against women and girls offences
(Policing Plan 1.3)

Reduction in VAWG offences of violence against women and girls offences
(not to be measured in Y1 or Y2)
(Policing Plan 1.4)



Outcome 2

Build trust and confidence in women and girls in policing.

Indicator

Increasing reporting of incidents of violence against women and girls offences
(measure to be used in Y1 and Y2)
(Policing Plan 1.4)

Improved criminal justice outcomes for violence against women and girls offences
(Policing Plan 2.4)

Level of confidence in policing from women and girls
(Policing Plan 2.1)

Level of satisfaction with the service women and girls receive *(Policing Plan 2.2)*

Find out more:
psni.police.uk/VAWG



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