

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS

Print Version

**Public Consultation Paper
Ending Violence Against
Women and Girls
Strategic Framework &
Foundational Action Plan**



The

Executive Office

www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

Introduction

1. This consultation seeks views on the new draft Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) and Foundational Action Plan, being led by the Executive Office (TEO).
2. The seven-year (2023-2030) Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls has been co-designed with over 50 partners from across government, community and voluntary sectors and organisations, as well as wider society. Importantly, these partners also include those with lived experience.
3. It sets the agenda for all of government and society here to end violence against women and girls. It is ambitious, long term, and wide reaching. It is a living document and will be adapted along the journey responding to emerging needs.

Consultation

4. The consultation will run for 13 weeks from 04 July 2023 to 03 October 2023.
5. While we want to hear from as many people as possible on as many of the changes as possible, please feel free to comment on as few or as many of them as you see fit.
6. The proposals for the Strategic Framework and Foundational Action Plan are subject to the views of the Executive who will be responsible for final approval.

Alternative Formats

7. An electronic copy of our consultation documents, including an Easy Read version, can be accessed on our main [consultation page](#) (external link opens to a new window / tab).
8. Young people **under the age of 16** are encouraged to use the Easy Read Version and consider completing this under the supervision of an adult.
9. Copies in other languages and formats (including Braille, large print etc.), can be made available on request. If you require the document in an alternative format, or language other than English, please contact us at EVAWG.HaveYourSay@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk, or at the address below.

Responding to the consultation

10. The best way to respond to this consultation is online, through our survey which can be accessed here:
<https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/>
(external link opens to a new window / tab)
11. A copy of the survey is also included in this document at page 10.
12. Completed hard copy surveys and other written responses can be sent by: E-mail to:
EVAWG.HaveYourSay@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk
Or, by post to: Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Directorate A5.18, The Executive Office
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast BT4 3SR
13. Responses to this consultation are invited for 13 weeks after the consultation launch, and written responses will be accepted up to 03 October 2023.
14. We look forward to hearing from you. If you want to contact the team about the approach being taken, or if you or a group you are involved with would like to participate in an engagement event, please use the email address provided.



Privacy, Confidentiality and Access to Consultation Responses

15. Following this consultation, the Department may publish all responses (subject to our Moderation Policy), except for those where the respondent indicates that they are an individual acting in a private capacity (e.g. a member of the public).
16. Where it is appropriate or necessary, we will remove email addresses, telephone numbers, and any other personal identifiers from these responses.
17. The Executive Office (TEO) is committed to protecting your privacy. For more information about what we do with your personal data please see our consultation privacy notice. That privacy notice explains how TEO uses the information supplied by you as part of a consultation, what we do with it, the ways in which we will safeguard it, and what your data protection rights are.

18. Your response, and all other responses to this consultation, may be disclosed on request in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR); however, all disclosures will be in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and UK GDPR.
19. If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential, so that this may be considered if the Department should receive a request for the information under the FOIA or EIR.

Purpose

20. This seven-year (2023-2030) Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG), builds on the evidence received, and the key issues identified through the Call for Views consultation process, which took place in 2022. It sets the agenda for all of government and society to end violence against women and girls. It is ambitious, long term, and wide reaching. As a living document, it will be adapted along the journey according to emerging needs.
21. The **problem statement** that this Strategic Framework is addressing was agreed by our co-design group as,

"Societal culture and systemic attitudes and beliefs enable violence against women and girls".
22. Wellbeing for all is at the heart of what Government aims to deliver in this jurisdiction. The ability to form and enjoy healthy relationships is central to individual wellbeing, and vital to building communities and a society where everyone can thrive. This is something that we want for all our children, and for every individual and community here.
23. Violence against women and girls, in all its forms, is a critical obstacle to achieving this goal of wellbeing for all. It is damaging to women, girls, men and boys. Stopping violence against women and girls by changing the attitudes, behaviours, and social norms that accept and enable it, can create a future that is not only better and safer for women and girls, but more just, equal, and respectful for everyone.

Overview of the Strategic Framework

24. The co-design process to develop the Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls began in October 2022. It saw a group of over 50 partners come together from across government, different sectors, and wider society, including intersectional representation and, importantly, those with lived experience, to create a Strategic Framework that has been ***designed with***, not for, our communities and society.

Vision

25. The Vision of the Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls is

A changed society where women and girls are free from all forms of gender-based violence, abuse and harm including the attitudes, systems and structural inequalities that cause them.

Aim

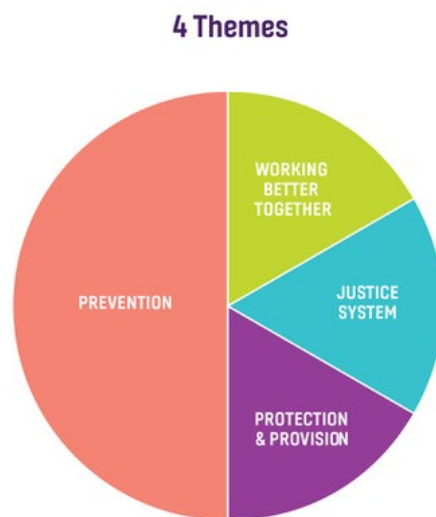
26. The Aim of the Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls is:

To work together as partners across every sector of society to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls with a focus on root causes.

Four Themes

27. In developing this Strategic Framework our co-design group identified 4 broad themes and 6 big changes or 'outcomes' required to end violence against women and girls. The outcomes are grouped under the four themes:

1. **Prevention;**
2. **Protection & Provision;**
3. **Justice System;** and
4. **Working Better Together**



For illustration purposes only

Prevention

28. The emphasis of this Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls is on the theme of **prevention**. Effective prevention can both stop violence from occurring in the first place, such as education and campaigns; as well as interrupt the cycle of violence, like making public transport safer.

29. Our main focus will be on those outcomes associated with prevention:

- Changing attitudes, behaviours, and social norms
- Building knowledge and skills of individuals to form healthy relationships
- Ensuring that women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere.

Outcomes

30. The 6 big changes required to end violence against women and girls identified by our Co-design group were grouped into six outcomes, with priority areas identified under each outcome:

- **Outcome 1: Changed Attitudes, Behaviours, and Social Norms.** Everyone in society understands what violence against women and girls is, including its root causes, and plays an active role in preventing it.
- **Outcome 2: Healthy, Respectful Relationships.** Everyone in society is equipped and empowered to enjoy healthy, respectful relationships.
- **Outcome 3: Women and Girls are Safe and Feel Safe Everywhere.** Organisations and institutions across government and society embed the prevention of violence against women and girls in all that they do so that women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere.
- **Outcome 4: Quality Frontline Services, Protection, and Provision for Victims and Survivors of Violence Against Women and Girls.** Provision of high quality services for women and girls who are victims and survivors of violence against women and girls.
- **Outcome 5: A Justice System which has the Confidence of Victims, Survivors and the Public in its Ability to Address Violence Against Women and Girls.** In the context of violence against women and girls, a justice system that considers and addresses the needs of people who come into contact with it, holds perpetrators to account, while challenging and supporting them to change, gives victims and survivors a voice and a place in the process, and has the confidence of the public.
- **Outcome 6: All of Government and Society Working Better Together to End Violence Against Women and Girls**
A whole system approach with collaboration and cooperation by default across government departments and with, within, and between the community, voluntary, and other sectors.

31. Each of these Outcomes, and the priorities for delivering them are explained in more detail in our Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls.

Overview of the Foundational Action Plan

32. This Action Plan is a foundational one which establishes our work for the remainder of 2023/24. This approach allows us to make progress in the challenging financial climate this year, and to align our planning cycle with the financial year from March 2024. As we go forward, further conversations will be needed to allow us to advise the Executive on decisions to be taken on budgets and priorities.
33. The Action Plan consists of a series of key actions that were developed to lay the foundations of the work to bring about meaningful change and effective delivery as we move forward, and which the Strategic Framework can build upon in subsequent years.

Impact assessments

34. The Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA), completed in relation to our Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls and Foundational Action Plan, is the first stage in the ongoing monitoring of the inequalities that may be experienced by section 75 groups in respect of ending violence against women and girls. It will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

What Happens Next

35. A number of public engagement events will be held during the consultation period. Information on these events will be published on the Executive Office website and will be distributed through a newsletter.
36. Following the close of the consultation on 03 October 2023 the responses will be analysed and considered by the EVAWG Directorate.
37. Proposals for the Strategic Framework and Foundational Action Plan are subject to the views of the Executive who will be responsible for final approval.

Moderation Policy

38. In connection with any responses to the consultation and any which may be published we operate a moderation policy to ensure that responses are appropriate and not harmful to others. Moderation is performed in accordance with the terms set out below.
39. Responses that include any of the following may be deleted:
- threats or incitements to violence;
 - use of obscenity;
 - duplicative or substantially duplicative postings by the same person or entity;
 - postings seeking employment or containing advertisements for a commercial product or service;
 - information posted in violation of law, including libel, condoning or encouraging illegal activity, revealing classified information, or infringing on a copyright or trademark.
40. We value your time and input, and our aim is to accept as many responses as possible, while ensuring that a focused, constructive consultation takes place. To address additional matters as may be warranted, this moderation policy is subject to change.

Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls – Consultation Questionnaire

Overview

In total there are **21** questions in this consultation.

It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

If you or someone you know has been affected by any form of violence referred to in this document, you can seek help from the following:

You can contact the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline at any time, free of charge:

0808 802 1414

help@dsahelpline.org

If you are in danger right now

If you are in danger right now you should call 999. If it is difficult for you to talk when you call 999, you can **press 55** on the phone to let the police know that it is an emergency.

- [Women's Aid Federation NI](#)
- [NSPCC](#)
- [The Rainbow Project](#)
- [PSNI](#)
- [Victim Support NI](#)

HERE NI really should be on this list as the only organisation that specifically works with LGBTQIA+ women

About You - An Organisation

All the questions on this page are required.

8. Please provide the name of the organisation you are answering on behalf of.

(Required)

HERE NI and The Rainbow Project

9. Which of the following best describes the sector you operate in? This will assist us in monitoring the range of respondents the consultation has reached.

(Required)

Please select only one option

☐ Charity / Community / Voluntary sector

This is the end of this section for those answering on behalf of an organisation. Please proceed to the **Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls section** and **question 10**.

Strategic Framework

The Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls is the blueprint for society wide change to tackle this systemic problem.

10. Do you agree or disagree with our vision?

"A changed society where women and girls are free from all forms of gender-based violence, abuse and harm including the attitudes, systems and structural inequalities that cause them"

Please select only one option

☐ Strongly Agree

Please add any comments you wish to make regarding our draft vision in the box below.

What is Gender-based violence?

Violence against women and girls is a subset of gender-based

People sometimes think of violence as physical assault only, however violence against women and girls takes many forms.

The Rainbow Project and HERe NI strongly agree with the vision laid out in the strategic framework and support its full implementation. We support the call for a changed society and have been working for many years within our organisations to represent the voices of the LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex or Asexual+) community across Northern Ireland.

HERe NI (previously LASI), established informally in 2000 and formally constituted as a Company Limited by Guarantee in 2004, is a regional organisation that works across all areas of Northern Ireland (NI) and the boarder counties. We advocate for and support LGBTQIA+ women and their families and improve the lives of LGBTQIA+ women across NI. HERe NI is the only women focused organisation within the NI LGBTQIA+ sector.

The Rainbow Project was founded in 1994 in response to the HIV and Aids epidemic. Since then, the organisation has developed into a leading LGBTQIA+ organisation working across NI. We provide support services to mitigate the impacts of inequality and work to deliver full social and legal equality for LGBTQIA+ people. We can signpost people into services for those immediate and long-term solutions. Through our work with victims/survivors, we can identify patterns of abuse and can see the needs of our community.

Both organisations are extremely concerned about the level of violence against women and girls found in the recent report *Every Voice Matters!* (2022) which concluded ‘**Every Woman**’ is affected by some form of violence in their lifetime.

The vision laid out in the strategy is clear and ambitious, however we have serious concerns about the fact that there are currently no measurable objectives or funding attached to the strategy which will significantly limit its effect. Both are required to support the implementation of this framework. Moreover, both organisations need support from our key stakeholders in the Department of Health and Justice to support the implementation of this vision.

HERe NI and the Rainbow Project welcome the inclusion of the phrase ‘structural inequalities’ within the statement and recognise that addressing structural inequalities is key to understanding the root causes of violence. To understand how LGBTQIA+ women and girls experience violence and to deliver this vision for all women will require an intersectional understanding of how violence affects women and girls in different ways, with support for the expertise held in organisations like HERe NI and the Rainbow Project.

The Rainbow Project, HERe NI and Cara Friend have been working together on a Heritage Project to address some of these systemic structural inequalities through historic inquiry. Support to implement this Heritage Project will be critical to changing attitudes, behaviours and social norms to achieve the ‘a changed society’ detailed in the vision.

HERe NI and the Rainbow Project recommend that to achieve this vision the following recommendations should be implemented:

1. Appoint a Domestic Abuse Commissioner to scrutinise the implementation of Domestic Abuse legislation, as well as a conduit for those disproportionately impacted by domestic abuse to raise their particular needs with Government.
2. Ensure collation of data on sexual orientation and gender identity when recording domestic abuse incidents.
3. Appoint LGBTQIA+ specialist Independent Domestic Violence Advocates.
4. Ensure appropriate training for Police, Judiciary and specialist support services around sexual orientation awareness and gender identity.
5. Support a public awareness campaign to highlight domestic abuse occurs in same sex relationships. This will encourage victims within same sex relationships to seek support.
6. Provide specialist support services which are adequately resourced within the LGBTQIA+ sector.

Violence against women and girls includes:

- *physical, sexual, psychological and emotional violence occurring in the family (including children and young people), in the general community, or in institutions including coercive control and stalking*
- *sexual harassment, bullying, and intimidation in any public or private space*
- *workplace sexual harassment ranging from sexual jokes or comments to unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favours and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.*
- *commercial and non-commercial sexual exploitation of women and girls, trafficking, child sexual abuse, so called honour based violence, including female genital mutilation, forced and child marriages, and so called honour crimes*
- *harmful sexual behaviour which is sexual behaviours expressed by children and young people that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards self, or abusive to others*
- *online abuse including cyberstalking, sexual harassment, grooming for exploitation or abuse, image-based sexual abuse*
- *financial abuse such as controlling a woman's or girl's access to their money, taking loans or credit cards in their name or using their money without their consent*
- *everyday harm which includes everyday misogyny, sexist jokes and language, and discrimination.*

11. Do you agree or disagree that Outcome 1 below, will enable us to achieve this draft vision?

Outcome 1 - Changed Attitudes, Behaviours and Social Norms.

Everyone in society understands what violence against women and girls is, including its root causes, and play an active role in preventing it.

Please select only one option

☐ Strongly Agree

Please add any comments you wish to make regarding Outcome 1 in the box below.

Throughout the work that both organisations carry out, we are aware that many women and girls do not feel valued, safe and free in NI. HERe NI and The Rainbow Project understand that the focus needs to be placed on early-intervention to prevent perpetrators from committing acts of violence rather than on women to change their day to day lives to protect themselves. We also encourage the development of any campaigns that ask people to ‘call out’ the violence of perpetrators, such as the Lord Mayor of London’s ‘have a word’ campaign to call out misogyny. Such campaigns work to improve understanding and spread awareness among the general public.

The recent *Every Voice Matters!* report (2022) found that for those reporting their own experiences of violence, most commonly the perpetrators of violence were men (61%), albeit a sizable minority of participating women reported experiencing violence from both men and women (33%) or only from women (6%). The Rainbow Project carried out a ‘State of the Community’ survey in 2021. The report highlighted the prevalence of violence and abuse within the LGBTQIA+ community. This research received a response from over 1130 self-selecting respondents, covering a wide range of issues with over 130 questions on their lived experiences in NI in regards to being an LGBTQIA+ person addressing issue such as housing, healthcare, experiences of hate crime and domestic and sexual violence. The survey found that:

- 68% are changing or alternating their behavior with nearly 25% being fearful that they avoid leaving house on their own.
- 48% of female respondents have experiences of violence, abuse, intimidation or coercion.
- 68% of incidents were never reported to the PSNI and less than 4% to other services.
- 61% have experienced controlling behaviour by a partner or someone at home.
- 46% experienced violent behaviour from a partner or someone at home.
- 54% have experienced emotional abuse.
- 36% have felt pressured to have sex or to perform sex act.
- 24.5% have experienced online harassment through social media or through an app.

It should be recognised, that figures may well be much higher than the above survey suggests as this is only based on a group of people who had the confidence to reply to the survey.

LGBTQIA+ abuse often takes its form in ‘outing’. This includes intimidation and threats of disclosure

of sexual orientation, gender identity or HIV Status to family, friends, work colleagues, community and others. One of the common experiences of abuse for LGBTQIA+ people is alienation from friends and family orchestrated by the perpetrator. Many LGBTQIA+ people also experience alienation from unaccepting family and friends when they come out. This alienation can leave LGBTQIA+ people less likely to have a suitable person to share a home with. LGBTQIA+ abuse can also include withholding medication or hormone treatment; an all-too-common experience for trans people.

All victims who have experienced abuse must feel empowered, supported, listened to and believed. Any strategy must be underpinned by the victim's and the survivors' voices, supported by those organisations who are supporting them, and upheld by the direct investment of resources to tackle abuse at a local and regional level.

HERE NI and the Rainbow Project recognise that abuse is a disproportionately gendered issue and that the majority of incidents reported to the PSNI are by heterosexual/cisgender women with heterosexual/cisgender men being the likely perpetrators. However, we also recognise that abuse is not only experienced by heterosexual, cisgender women, LGBTQIA+ people experience high levels of same-sex abuse. Abuse can occur in any relationship, and to tackle the hidden problem of abuse experienced by LGBTQIA+ people, a broadening of our understanding of who can experience abuse and who can perpetuate it must be a priority. It is important that the full complexity of abuse experienced by people of all gender identities and sexual orientations are embedded into awareness raising campaigns. Often public awareness campaigns focus on a woman victim and man perpetrator in a heterosexual relationship. This is a barrier for LGBTQIA+ people not only reporting abuse, but also from even recognising that what they are experiencing is abuse. Public awareness campaigns, legislation, and awareness training for statutory, community and voluntary sector organisations must recognise that there are multiple circumstances abuse occurs in beyond a heterosexual adult relationship.

LGBTQIA+ abuse appears to be vastly under-reported and the experiences from LGBTQIA+ people are under-represented when it comes to engagement with community or voluntary services. This means we make up a 'hidden population' and are often left out of solutions to combat violence against women and girls. The invisibility of LGBTQIA+ women and girls within abuse statistics leads to some believing that intimate partner domestic or sexual violence is exclusively an issue in heterosexual relationships or that services are not designed to be inclusive of LGBTQIA+ people's specific needs. For example, many LGBTQIA+ people will be discouraged from disclosing if service providers use language which reflects heterosexual assumptions. Non-disclosure could be associated with actual or perceived homophobia and transphobia from service providers. As a result it is even more vital that LGBTQIA+ women see themselves reflected in the very strategies to tackle the subject.

Even when LGBTQIA+ people do report abuse, there is a lack of adequate recording, often making the LGBTQIA+ community a hidden population in this area. We recommend that all Section 75 (S75) groups should be monitored inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity. If monitoring of sexual orientation and gender identity is standard procedure, this will remove the onus on the individual to 'come out' in an environment they are not sure will be welcoming. In 2017, Greater Manchester Police began recording LGBT+ domestic abuse figures, and in the first year recorded nearly 800 instances. They note this is 2% of all reports they received and that the issue of LGBT+ domestic abuse in particular is still under reported (<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/apr/10/manchester-police-record-nearly-800-cases-of-lgbt-domestic-abuse>). HERE NI and the Rainbow Project understand that the majority of official incidents reported are of heterosexual cisgender relationships. However, fixing the narrative and preventative work in only that setting does a disservice to other victims who are in abusive relationships. A Stonewall (2008) report (Prescription for Change) stated that one in four lesbian or bisexual women has experienced domestic abuse. Two-thirds of that said that the perpetrator was a woman and one-third said the perpetrator was male (https://www.stonewall.org.uk/system/files/Prescription_for_Change_2008_.pdf). Encouraging

disclosure can be difficult for LGBTQIA+ abuse victims/survivors to enable them to seek help because they may not want to disclose their sexual orientation and/or gender identity to the police or other organisations. Due to the stigma still attached to being a member of the LGBTQIA+ community in Northern Ireland, many victims/survivors of partner violence may be concerned about giving same-sex relationships a 'bad name' and may refuse to speak up about the abuse they are suffering.

Early intervention and prevention are critical in challenging culture and beliefs that underpin and perpetuate violence against women and girls and the LGBTQIA+ community. We support an inclusive and standardised RSE (Relationship and Sexuality Education) curriculum that educates people about the bias nature of social practices, addresses the outdated social norms and educates people around healthy relationships from a young age. This could help LGBTQIA+ young people spot the signs of abuse and encourage them to seek support. LGBTQIA+ Relationships and experiences are not discussed in many schools.

LGBTQIA+ victims and survivors share similar types of abuse as their heterosexual cisgender peers and disclose abuse from both current and former intimate partners, family members and siblings. The abuse can and may include physical, sexual, emotional and financial. It can also include conversion practices, which is any intervention that seeks to change a person's sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Conversion practices work towards one goal, and that goal is to 'cure' someone from being LGBTQIA+. This has been recognised by the UN (United Nations) as a form of abuse and/or torture.

It is also important that the strategy promotes an understanding of violence against women and girls that requires victims to see that violence has multiple manifestations. Other forms of violence can include stalking, hair pulling, catcalling among many others.

NI has seen massive shifts forward in regards to LGBTQIA+ equality and rights, but currently there is an increasing anti-LGBTQIA+ narrative, which aligns strongly with anti-women narratives being perpetrated by online so called social influencers. According to the Rainbow Map and Index, released each year by ILGA-Europe, of the 49 European nations that were ranked on their "legal and policy situation" with regards to LGBTQIA+ rights since 2009, the UK fell from 14 to 17 in the space of a year.

LGBTQIA+ victims/survivors often face multiple vulnerabilities and intersectional issues around risk. The LGBTQIA+ community are not one homogeneous group, and the experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals are going to be different from those of their cisgender heterosexual peers. Transgender victims/survivors experience specific types of abuse that can be linked to their trans identities. The LGBT in Britain: Trans Report published by Stonewall (2018) has shown that two in five trans people (41 per cent) and three in ten non-binary people (31 per cent) have experienced a hate crime or incident because of their gender identity in the last 12 months (https://www.stonewall.org.uk/system/files/lgbt_in_britain_-_trans_report_final.pdf). Here NI and the Rainbow Project believe this is as a direct result of growing prejudice towards trans women. The latest British Social Attitudes Survey released this month (September 2023) shows a sharp rise in prejudice against trans people. Only 64% say that they are 'not at all prejudiced'; a huge fall from 82% in 2019.

Another significant issue is that hate crime reports against the LGBTQIA+ community are at their highest ever level (PSNI, 2023). In 2023, the PSNI reported that the number of crimes with a homophobic motivation, and the number of crimes with a disability motivation, both reached the highest 12 month level since the recording of these motivations began in 2004/05 and 2005/06 respectively (<https://www.psni.police.uk/system/files/2023-05/443047986/Hate%20Motivations%20Bulletin%20Period%20ending%2031st%20March%202023.pdf>).

There is a growing violent narrative around trans people. In 2022, the PSNI reported that transphobic

incidents increased from 63 to 78, while the number of transphobic crimes remained unchanged at 37. This number is still severely underreported. Transgender people are more likely to experience threats of physical or sexual harassment or violence compared with the LGBTQIA+ community as a whole (National LGBT Survey, Government Equalities Office, 2018) (https://www.psni.police.uk/sites/default/files/2022-11/hate%20motivations%20bulletin%20sep%2022_0.pdf). Trans women have suffered an increase in societal threats at a community and political level. These threats are explicit, not implicit and they endeavour to divide and conquer communities, leaving an already vulnerable group further exposed to physical crime and other less tangible forms of hate crime. Any strategy must include measures for tackling this.

12. Do you agree or disagree that Outcome 2 below, will enable us to achieve this draft vision?

Outcome 2 – Healthy, Respectful Relationships.

Everyone in society is equipped and empowered to enjoy healthy, respectful relationships.

Please select only one option

☐ Strongly Agree

Please add any comments you wish to make regarding Outcome 2 in the box below.

HERE NI and the Rainbow Project strongly agree and support the focus in the strategy to partner with government and community to co-design and deliver holistic whole family programmes that embed respectful and healthy relationship education and support across all early years' support programmes. HERE NI currently facilitate numerous LGBTQIA+ family groups and would be very keen to contribute to any further work in this area.

There needs to be a fundamental review of current RSE offerings and introduce the reform of the Education (Minimum Content) Order 2007. The strategy must ensure that schools receive the support they need and that teachers have the vital skills and knowledge to enable young people to grow up happy, loved and feeling accepted. Research conducted by the [Belfast Youth Forum](#) in 2019 found that this is not the case:

- 86% felt that school was the best place to receive RSE, yet only 66% said they had actually received RSE.
- 73% said they had only received RSE 'once or twice' or 'rarely'.
- 60% felt that the information they received was either 'not very useful' or 'not useful at all'.

There needs to be a broader understanding of what healthy, respectful relationships look like including different types of families. The latest Northern Ireland Census (2021) found that in total 31,600 people aged 16 and over (or 2.1%) identified as LGB+ ('lesbian, gay, bisexual or other sexual orientation'), although we expect the number is far higher. Currently, LGBTQIA+ people can legally get married in NI and there is also an increase in LGBTQIA+ people having children. However, these relationships are often not acknowledged as the 'norm' within the majority of schools. HERE NI and the Rainbow Project support a rights-based and proactive approach to RSE which should be mandatory in schools. Young people, alongside specialist staff, should be involved in designing and delivering the programme.

Government and other agencies need to be engaging with young people especially as they tend not to engage in large numbers to public consultations such as this. Ofcom found that Social media users aged between 16 and early 20s veer mostly to Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat and TikTok for awareness and education. There is a need to reach out to more young people using communication channels they are familiar with and speaking their 'language'.

(<https://octave-digital.com/2021/10/14/social-media-belfast-key-trends-in-social-media-in-2021/#:~:text=For%20nearly%2080%25%20of%2016,use%20on%20a%20significant%20level.>)

Additionally, HERe NI and the Rainbow Project urge for advancement on the full implementation of Gillen Review recommendations, specifically on comprehensive RSE into the law and procedures in serious sexual offences. Gillen recognised the role that this plays in the prevention of such crimes as well as in achieving justice in any trials that take place.

There should be investment in public campaigns to increase awareness and understanding of the provisions of the legislation and the pathways of support for victims. These public awareness campaigns should be co-developed/co-designed with specialist community-based organisations and tailored to represent the diverse backgrounds and experiences of domestic abuse and that consideration should be to LGBTQIA+, Male and BAME victims/survivors. In particular, there is a gap in the awareness around areas of support for victims within public transport services and the development of a campaign with Translink NI around reporting sexual abuse would be worthwhile.

There needs to agencies specifically working to support children and young people who are victims/survivors of abuse. Whilst the strategy does acknowledge that the majority of sexual offending takes place against children, there is an insufficient focus on their experiences or barriers faced by them. The strategy also needs to highlight marginalised groups who are in special need of being equipped and empowered to enjoy healthy, respectful relationships. The strategy needs to focus on hearing from minority communities. Critically, Galop found that Black and minority ethnic LGBTQIA+ people who appear more likely to experience domestic abuse from family members, in addition to intimate partners.

(https://galop.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Galop_domestic-abuse-03a-low-res-1.pdf)

13. Do you agree or disagree that Outcome 3 below, will enable us to achieve this draft vision?

Outcome 3 – Women and Girls Are Safe and Feel Safe Everywhere.

Organisations and institutions across government and society embed the prevention of violence against women and girls in all that they do so that women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere.

Please select only one option

☐ Strongly Agree

Please add any comments you wish to make regarding Outcome 3 in the box below

HERe NI and the Rainbow Project strongly support organisations and institutions across government and society embedding the prevention of violence against women in all that they do so that women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere.

HERe NI and the Rainbow Project know that the criminalisation of violence does not stop it from happening in organisations and institutions. A 2023 poll by the Trades Union Congress noted that 3

in 5 women say they have experienced sexual harassment at work – and that this number increases to 2 in 3 women among 25-34 year olds.

HERE NI and the Rainbow Project understand the value outlined in the strategy of promoting the requirements of the International Labour Organisation Convention C190 (the Violence and Harassment Convention) to ensure that workplaces are aware and compliant. Any promotion of the legislation must go hand-in-hand with trainings and educational awareness to begin to change attitudes, behaviours and social norms.

HERE NI and the Rainbow Project recognise that there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to making women and girls feel safe. Organisations and institutions need to recognise the intersectionality of violence, that must include understanding the additional challenges to LGBTQIA+ women and girls safety within environments where they face disproportionate levels of abuse to cis women. The *Invisible Women* report published by the Lesbian Advocacy Services Initiative (now known as HERE NI) in 2007 found that lesbian and bisexual women are 2-3 more likely to attempt suicide and have higher levels of self-harm than their heterosexual counterparts. When considering the safety of women and girls, attention should be paid to the unique challenges and abuse that lesbian and bisexual women face such as ‘outing’, bullying on grounds of sexual orientation and domestic abuse.

HERE NI and the Rainbow Project are particularly concerned about safety of trans women and girls. The deaths of Brianna Ghey, Alice Litman, Naomi Hersi, to name a few, have not prompted enough action from the government to protect the safety of trans women and girls. Trans safety is not of concern among some of UK political parties – Opinion presented more than 500 Conservative members with a closed list of 28 issues they are passionate about, trans issues came 26th and 27th with just 3% of respondents identifying these as issues they are passionate about when given up to four issues they could choose.

There is much concern around the safety of black and minority ethnic LGBTQIA+ women and girls who appear more likely to experience abuse from family members, in addition to intimate partners. Organisations and institutions need to be aware that this group are at risk of abuse, including issues such as forced marriage (https://galop.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Galop_domestic-abuse-03a-low-res-1.pdf).

There is no resourced specialist LGBTQIA+ domestic abuse provision for LGBTQIA+ people at risk, despite evidence from Galop that there are high levels of domestic abuse experienced by both younger and older LGBTQIA+ people (https://galop.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Galop_domestic-abuse-03a-low-res-1.pdf).

We desperately need specialised support services within HERE NI and the Rainbow Project that recognise LGBTQIA+ people who are at risk of or who are experiencing abuse. Having a dedicated support service could go some way to increasing confidence in accessing support services and reporting. Specialist LGBTQIA+ support removes the fear of LGBTQIA+ people experiencing hostility or discrimination, as well as removing the need to ‘come out’ to an extent.

14. Do you agree or disagree that Outcome 4 below, will enable us to achieve this draft vision?

Outcome 4 – Quality Frontline Services, Protection, and Provision for Victims and Survivors of Violence Against Women and Girls.

Provision of high quality services for women and girls who are victims and survivors of violence against women and girls.

Please select only one option

☐ Strongly Agree

Please add any comments you wish to make regarding Outcome 4 in the box below.

Early intervention and prevention are critical in challenging culture and beliefs that underpin and perpetuate violence against LGBTQIA+ women and girls. Specialist services led by and for the LGBTQIA+ community are the best way to support victims and survivors to get support and discuss routes to accessing justice. What is currently happening is that LGBTQIA+ sectoral organisations are working in partnership as an essential means to address the specific needs and demands from our community, and often this work is not adequately resourced.

Unfortunately, the lack of reporting violence and abuse from members of the LGBTQIA+ community and the fact that Criminal Justice Agency are not recording sexual orientation or gender identity effectively means that many policies and services are not being created to address the specific needs of the LGBTQIA+ community.

We are also extremely concerned of the absence of an in-person Rape Crisis Centre in Northern Ireland (please see link: <https://rapecrisisni.org.uk/>). Phone support is not sufficient enough and within organisations counselling capacity is pushed to its limits with recent budget cuts in the health sector. The capacity of public services must be increased so women in need have access to immediate support and can access specialist counselling services quickly.

The current organisations working within the Women's Sector to provide domestic abuse support do not offer specialist LGBTQIA+ services. LGBTQIA+ people are currently supported by four key organisations with just over 35 staff members (both full-time and part-time); these organisations include The Rainbow Project, HERe NI, CaraFriend and Transgender NI. We cannot ignore the 2.1% section (31,000) of the LGBTQIA+ population recorded in the latest Northern Ireland Census (2021) who deserve access to specialised services.

The Rainbow Project and HERe NI have been working in greater collaboration on a wide range of projects. To date, this work is mainly additional and mostly unfunded. There is a lot of work to do to reduce duplication in services and to increase funded services to address the multiple and often complex needs of the clients. Partnerships with mainstream and often better funded services allows us to signpost clients, but these services are not LGBTQIA+ specific and often clients are fearful of accessing services within a mainstream organisation. From 2019-2022, there was a funded project in partnership between HERe NI and Cara-Friend to engage with LGBTQIA+ women and girls who are at risk of or who have experienced sexual or domestic violence and abuse. This funding has now come to an end, and there is currently no specialist domestic abuse funded support.

HERE NI and the Rainbow Project are concerned that the strategy does not highlight the need for these specialised services within the PSNI, PPS, Probation Board, Women's Aid, Victim Support and others to provide specialist services to LGBTQIA+ girls and women. A recommendation would be that adequate funding of an LGBTQIA+ Domestic Abuse Officer who can work alongside partners to support LGBTQIA+ victims/survivors. Continuous investment in an LGBTQIA+ Domestic Abuse Officer housed in the LGBTQIA+ sector means that more LGBTQIA+ victims/survivors will be able to access specialist advice and support.

We would like to see investment into the provision of sustainable and accessible support to accessing advocacy, improved refuge provision for trans and non-binary individuals and increase specialist mental health support. This should include recognising the role that existing organisations like HERE NI and the Rainbow Project play in the delivery of specialist mental health support services and invest in funding their future work. Without the support of specialist dedicated support, many LGBTQIA+ people will not come forward to report incidents of abuse. Many members of the LGBTQIA+ community prefer to access help within their own community. To facilitate expert-specific support for LGBTQIA+ people, sustainable long-term funding must be put in place to ensure the best possible support for S75 groups such as the LGBTQIA+ community is available.

The Rainbow Project and HERE NI are committed to working collaboratively, as then we can create effective policies and appropriate services to assist those LGBTQIA+ people experiencing domestic or sexual violence. However, this can only be done effectively if the workstreams and partnerships work is funded.

At the time of writing this document, we currently do not have any budget, or measurable objectives attached to this strategy. HERE NI and the Rainbow Project recommend that the Executive pass a Budget Bill to provide funding for the Strategy. We recognise that without a functioning Executive a budget cannot be assigned to this specific area of work. This is essential to ensure the provision of high-quality services outlined in Outcome 4. If The Executive Office had responsibility for Equality Strategies, it would perhaps give these Strategies more strength.

15. Do you agree or disagree that Outcome 5 below, will enable us to achieve this draft vision?

Outcome 5 – A Justice System which has the Confidence of Victims, Survivors and the Public in its Ability to Address Violence Against Women and Girls.

In the context of violence against women and girls, a justice system that considers and addresses the needs of people who come into contact with it, holds perpetrators to account, while challenging and supporting them to change, gives victims and survivors a voice and a place in the process, and has the confidence of the public.

Please select only one option

Agree

Please add any comments you wish to make regarding Outcome 5 in the box below.

HERE NI and the Rainbow Project recognise the importance of a Justice System that considers and addresses the needs of LGBTQIA+ women. Currently, the Justice System does not currently effectively hold perpetrators to account, challenge and support them to change, give victims and survivors a voice and have the confidence of the public.

Stonewall (2008) research indicates that ‘Lesbian and bisexual women who had experienced domestic abuse from another woman said that the abuse was emotional and physical’ (https://www.stonewall.org.uk/system/files/Prescription_for_Change_2008_.pdf). The Rainbow Project unpublished ‘State of Our Community’ 2021 report has shown that over 65% of women have felt frightened because of the behaviour of a partner or someone at home. 46% of those women had experienced some form of physical violence and 36% felt pressured into sexual acts.

Far more of the recommendations within the Gillen Review need to be implemented to hold perpetrators to account, as this is not happening currently. We are also concerned about victim-blaming that is an all-too-common experience of survivors of violence and that this can be worse for LGBTQIA+ women who face intersectional levels of abuse.

There must be mandatory training undertaken by Justice Officials on best practice such as using gender neutral pronouns and sexual orientation awareness. Gender neutral language should be used in relation to victim and perpetrator. The use of gendered pronouns in describing victims and perpetrators risks alienating LGBTQIA+ people and can lead to an assumption that they are not included in services, using terms such as victim and perpetrator avoids this. In addition, specifically identifying LGBTQIA+ people in public awareness campaigns means LGBTQIA+ people will be more likely to engage with services. The use of gendered pronouns in describing victims and perpetrators by service providers risks alienating LGBTQIA+ people and can lead to an assumption that they are not included in services, using terms such as victim and perpetrator avoids this.

Trans women can face multi-layered victim blaming for their gender identity and their sexual orientation. HERE NI and the Rainbow Project recognise that discrimination against LGBTQIA+

people in the Justice System is part of a wider cultural problem and funding should be allocated for educational awareness campaigns to begin to change attitudes, behaviours and social norms.

It often takes sectoral organisations to represent the needs and experiences of women. However, organisations are in desperate need of adequate funding. It is unjustifiable to expect LGBTQIA+ and women's sectoral organisations to provide this service within the strategy without the Executive granting them funding support.

There needs to be specialised support system within the Criminal Justice process to enable LGBTQIA+ people to feel safe, supported if they decide to seek justice. This is recognised in the Gillen Review (2019) and would go a long way in solving the significant levels of underreporting within the LGBTQIA+ community.

We support the full implementation of the Gillen Review. Chapter 13 of the Gillen Review focuses on the voice of marginalised communities. This chapter recognises the need for empirical research commissioned by government to learn the prevalence, extent, nature and experiences of serious sexual offences among marginalised groups. The review also advises that consideration should be given to what laws, procedures and mechanisms, including specialist sexual violence services, alone or in combination with the conventional law and procedures in the legal system. The latest Gillen Review Implementation Plan (2020), however, showed limited movement on uplifting the voices of the LGBTQIA+ community. To date 48% of the 253 recommendations have been fully implemented.

We recommend that the Executive work closely with the Department of Justice to enable these outcomes as part of the Strategic Framework.

16. Do you agree or disagree that Outcome 6 below, will enable us to achieve this draft vision?

Outcome 6 – All of Government and Society Working Better Together to End Violence Against Women and Girls.

A whole system approach with collaboration and cooperation by default across government departments and with, within and between the community, voluntary and other sectors.

Please select only one option

☐ Strongly Agree

Please add any comments you wish to make regarding Outcome 6 in the box below.

HERE NI and the Rainbow Project strongly agree that a 'whole system' approach is necessary. We understand that this includes a whole system approach to equality legislation within the Assembly and not only within certain Departments.

We desperately need the development of an LGBTQIA+ Strategy alongside this Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) Strategy to ensure that collaboration and co-operation happens and the needs and experiences of the LGBTQIA+ community are vocalised.

Even more, HERe NI and the Rainbow Project would like to see the Executive Office take responsibility for all Equality Strategies as this would give them more strength. It would also strengthen accountability mechanisms within government.

Early intervention and prevention are critical in challenging culture and beliefs that underpin and perpetuate violence against women and girls in the LGBTQIA+ community. All victims who have experienced abuse must feel empowered, supported, listened to and believed. The LGBTQIA+ community are not one homogeneous group – the experiences of trans, gay, and non-binary individuals are going to be different from those of their cisgender heterosexual peers.

Underreporting of abuse within the LGBTQIA+ is significant, the Rainbow Project's unpublished 'State of Our Community' 2021 research has shown 68% of abuse is never reported to the Police or any other services. Unfortunately, the lack of reporting of abuse from members of the LGBTQIA+ community and the fact that Criminal Justice Agencies are not recording sexual orientation or gender identity effectively means that many policies and services are not being created to address the specific needs of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Compounding the underreporting issue is that PSNI do not record sexual orientation around domestic or sexual violence cases. The Rainbow Project have been asking this to be implemented by the PSNI for numerous years. When Greater Manchester Police began recording LGBTQIA+ domestic abuse figures in 2017, within the first year recorded there was nearly 800 instances. This meant that victims and survivors experiences could be recognised and that they could be signposted on to specific specialist services within the LGBT Foundation.

Additionally, there are further ways in regards to how members of the LGBTQIA+ community are further impacted. If an asylum seeker is experiencing abuse, their abuser may use the threat of reporting them to the home office as a false claim to damage their application. HERe NI and the Rainbow Project recommend that all S75 groups should be monitored inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity. If monitoring sexual orientation and gender identity is standard procedure, this will remove the onus on the individual to 'come out' in an environment they are not sure will be welcoming. Everyone has a sexual orientation and gender identity and society needs to stop othering those who are not heterosexual and/or cisgender.

Placing a focus on Prevention

The emphasis of this draft Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls is on prevention.

"Prevention is about addressing the underlying causes of violence against women and girls, to stop it before it occurs."

UN Women, 2012

17. Do you agree or disagree with our approach of focusing on PREVENTION to end violence against women and girls?

Please select only one option

☐ Strongly Agree

Please add any comments you wish to make regarding our approach of focusing on prevention in the box below.

HERE NI and the Rainbow Project agree that prevention is definitely where the emphasis of the strategic framework should lie. Addressing the under-lying causes of violence is key to solving this systemic problem. It is vital that when addressing structural inequalities, an intersectional understanding of equality needs to also be included. To understand the attitudes that cause violence we recommend that more educational awareness is attached to the objective of prevention to address the root causes of violence.

Addressing the root causes of violence within the LGBTQIA+ community will also perform an important role in achieving intergenerational justice. To do this we need support and funding from the Executive to support the work of organisations in this area.

Attaching targets to the strategy to ensure the focus on prevention is met would go a long way to ensuring that this approach is utilised across Northern Ireland.

We also believe that prevention should be led by and for those impacted by violence. The strategy includes the voices of LGBTQIA+ sectoral organisations, but we are aware that the stories of victims can get lost within this process. We advocate that the implementation of the strategy is led by victims when relevant.

Draft Foundational Action Plan

This Action Plan is a foundational one which establishes our work for the remainder of 2023/24. This approach allows us to make progress in the challenging financial climate this year and to align our planning cycle with the financial year from March 2024. As we go forward, further conversations will be needed to allow us to advise the Executive on decisions to be taken on budgets and priorities.

Draft Foundational Action Plan

Actions falling under the theme of **Prevention**:

1. Develop a society wide communications and engagement strategy to change attitudes, behaviours and social norms.
2. Adopt the Task Group Sprint Model to consider the needs (including Intersectional needs) of specific groups.
3. Establish a forum to coordinate work on equipping and supporting families, children and young people to enjoy healthy, respectful relationships using the curriculum (including Relationships and Sexuality Education), policies and practices in early years, schools and community sector.
4. To embed structures and processes which give space for young people's voices to participate and influence decision makers in ending violence against women and girls (EVAWG) work.
5. Establish a cross sectoral Further and Higher Education working group to develop a plan to address EVAWG on and off campus.
6. Establish a cross-sectoral workplace forum (including unions, Labour Relations Agency, employers' organisations and other professional bodies) to develop workplace policy toolkits/ guidance and to promote workplace training/ best practice in professional standards on EVAWG, Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) to lead good practice in public sector.
7. Support the cross-sectoral group addressing EVAWG issues in the hospitality sector and the night-time economy.

Actions falling under the theme of **Protection & Provision**:

8. Map and undertake gap analysis of violence against women and girls (VAWG) provision in general frontline services to help inform further policy development and service delivery.
9. Map and undertake gap analysis of VAWG provision in specialist frontline services including a review of referral gateways to help inform further policy development and service delivery.

Actions falling under the theme of **Justice System**:

10. Develop further tools for communicating information on the justice system and processes to improve information sharing and enhance confidence amongst victims/survivors in support of implementation of the Victim and Witness Strategy.
11. In the context of care and protections for victims in the Justice system:
 - (a) evaluate agreed interventions that are providing support to victims to access the Justice System;
 - (b) support research on victim attrition rates in serious sexual offences and domestic abuse cases, as part of implementation of Gillen Programme and Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy.
12. Explore with partners options to create specialism in VAWG cases in court proceedings including information provision for juries.
13. Undertake a review of international best practice perpetrator prevention and management systems to inform policy development and practice in support of the review under the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy.
14. Undertake a review of trends in aggravating and reinforcing factors of VAWG to inform policy development and practice.

Actions falling under the theme of **Working Better Together**:

15. Create a Knowledge and Network Hub within the Executive Office (TEO) to provide an accessible central resource on EVAWG research, data & evaluation and communication & engagement.
16. Establish a cross sectoral group located within the Knowledge and Network Hub to develop and lead the programme of EVAWG work on data and evaluation.
17. Through the Knowledge and Network Hub, develop and deliver an agreed annual EVAWG research programme with advice and support from a cross jurisdictional panel of academic research experts.
18. Through the Knowledge and Network Hub create reference groups to engage with lived experience, service provision, and academic research expertise in the development of the EVAWG work programme.

19. Create a five jurisdiction officials forum to share best practice and encourage cross jurisdictional shared learning.
20. NICS will identify and implement mechanisms including Programme for Government (PfG) to mainstream opportunities to EVAWG in public policies and strategies at all levels.
21. Develop funding strategy for sustainable EVAWG work across departments and other sectors.
22. In order to build widespread support for a changed society where women and girls are free from all forms of gender-based violence, abuse and harm including the attitudes, systems and structural inequalities that cause them - to seek endorsement of EVAWG strategic framework and active participation in the whole of society programme of actions by political and civic leaders.

6. Do you agree or disagree that these are the right actions to take in our draft Foundational Action Plan?

Please select only one option

☐ Agree

Please add any comments you wish to make regarding our draft Foundational Action Plan in the box below.

All victims who have experienced domestic abuse must feel empowered, supported, listened to and believed. Any strategy must be underpinned by the victim's and survivors' voices, supported by those organisations who are engaging with them upheld by the direct investment of resources to tackle domestic abuse a local and regional level.

HERE NI and the Rainbow Project recognise that it will take time to get the strategy correct and we welcome the opportunity to be engaged with the Task Group Sprint Model (outlined in the Action Plan) to consider the needs of the LGBTQIA+ Community.

Both the Rainbow Project and HERE NI have conducted significant pieces of research into the health and well-being inequalities experienced by LGBTQIA+ people in Northern Ireland. We consult with the wider LGBTQIA+ Community and help to establish dedicated services to support their needs. The Rainbow Project research in 2021 'State of the Community', has identified two key overarching themes which contribute to negative outcomes for LGBTQIA+ people: isolation and invisibility. This is not unique to LGBTQIA+ people compared to other minority communities in NI.

Over the last number of decades, the causes of and intervention for abuse within heterosexual relationships have been studied and researched and more importantly, investment went into service provision. The same cannot be said for LGBTQIA+ victims and LGBTQIA+ organisations.

Currently, HERe NI and the Rainbow Project supports victims/survivors of abuse, but as an organisations, we receive no dedicated funding for this work. At HERe NI we have particular concerns about the levels of abuse among lesbian and bisexual women. HERe NI are the only charity within Northern Ireland who support LGBTQIA+ women. We believe that a map/gap analysis of VAWG provision will be key to defining work going forward and will highlight the key issues around significant gaps around awareness of S75 experiences of domestic and sexual violence in Northern Ireland.

The Rainbow Project and HERe NI welcome the establishment of a Further and Higher Education working group, cross-sectoral workplace forum, hospitality sector and the night-time economy sectoral group to develop workplace policy toolkits, guidance, training and etc.

We believe that there needs to be significant training programmes within The Justice System and at a community level to help them recognise the specific needs of different groups of people including LGBTQIA+ people. HERe NI and the Rainbow Project currently facilitate Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Awareness training. This training would help increase knowledge around issues for the LGBTQIA+ community and also around the use of appropriate and inclusive language.

Additionally, we believe that there should be an investment in public awareness campaigns to increase visibility and understanding of the provisions of the legislation and the avenues of support for victims. These public awareness campaigns should be co-developed with specialist community-based organisations and tailored to represent the LGBTQIA+ community.

In the Rainbow Project's previous response to The Domestic Abuse Bill, we agreed with other partner agencies who believe that the creation of a Domestic Abuse Commissioner for Northern Ireland would be an effective additional agency in understanding and tackling domestic abuse. We believe that a S75 compliant public authority dedicated to domestic abuse could provide welcome research and visibility to the particular domestic abuse experiences of LGBTQIA+ people and specific policy recommendations for police and other public authorities on how to engage, support and empower LGBTQIA+ victims of domestic abuse.

We want to see a greater partnership with government, statutory agencies, community/voluntary sector partners and the victims to ensure that any new strategies or legislation, and its implementation, work for the benefit of victims and turn the tide against violence towards women and girls.

Impact Assessments

The Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA), completed in relation to our draft Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls and draft Foundational Action Plan, is the first stage in the ongoing monitoring of the inequalities that may be experienced by section 75 groups in respect of ending violence against women and girls. It will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

We have also completed other impact assessments and screenings in accordance with best practice. All Impact Assessments can be viewed on the [Executive Office website](#) (external link opens to a new window / tab).

7. Do you agree or disagree with the way the Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) has been carried out?

Please select only one option

☐ Agree

8. Do you agree or disagree with the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)?

Please select only one option

☐ Agree

Are there any other issues or inequalities that you believe need to be considered in the EQIA?

Northern Ireland has had little or no specific research carried out in regard to the experiences of LGBTQIA+ people around domestic or sexual abuse. So, the claim within EQIA that states “the draft strategy is likely to have an overall positive impact and is not expected to have any differential impact based on sexual orientation” is not based on evidence.

We have noted that it is recorded elsewhere in the strategy response the distinct and compounded barriers LGBTQIA+ people face in regard to domestic and sexual abuse.

LGBTQIA+ victims experience unique forms of coercive control targeted at them because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. For instance, the threat of ‘outing’ members of the LGBTQIA+ community around their sexual orientation or gender identity.

LGBTQIA+ people have their own specific needs and issues concerning abuse. Many LGBTQIA+ people do not realise that they are in an abusive situation. This could be related to a lack of information on violence readily available and visible to those who identify as LGBTQIA+.

To build confidence within the LGBTQIA+ community, there must be appropriate training for Police, Judiciary and specialist support services around sexual orientation and gender. There needs to be specific LGBTQIA+ data collected around abuse cases. If there is no data collected on LGBTQIA+ abuse cases, there is the impression that there are very low numbers of abuse within same-sex relationships.

Next Steps

We have an opportunity to make a generational change that will improve life for everyone here.

In the past, violence against women and girls was a hidden problem. But now, women and girls with experience of violence are telling their stories, young people are asking why we can’t do things differently, people across our communities are saying that we can and must change our culture and attitudes so that violence against women and girls becomes history.

Many thanks for taking the time to respond to this consultation.

- 9. If you or your organisation would like to receive our newsletter, to keep up to date with our work to end violence against women and girls, please provide a contact email address in the box below.**

We will not publish the contact details of individual respondents.

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For further information, please contact:

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