



<b>Subject:</b>	Ending Violence Against Women and Girls
<b>Date:</b>	21 November 2025
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Damien Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Jim Girvan, Operational Director Jamie Uprichard, Business Research and Development Manager Cate Taggart, Neighbourhood Services Manager Suzanne Gowling, Safer City Coordinator

### Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

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No

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Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

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### Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

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No

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<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	To update the committee on the programme of work that council is delivering to support The Executive Office's (TEO) strategic framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG).
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note the update on the wide range of work being delivered by council in support of TEO's strategic framework to EVAWG; and</li> <li>• Endorse the Women's Night Safety Charter, to support partner organisations with its promotion and roll-out to the hospitality and entertainment sector as part of TEO's strategic framework.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p><b><u>Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Policy Context</u></b></p> <p><b>What is Violence Against Women and Girls?</b></p> <p>Violence against women and girls is comprised of actions and the threat of actions including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>physical, sexual, psychological and emotional violence</b> occurring in the family including children and young people (Domestic Abuse), in the general community, or in institutions, including coercive control and stalking</li> <li>2. <b>harmful sexual behaviour</b> which is sexual behaviours expressed by children and young people that are inappropriate or abusive</li> <li>3. <b>sexual harassment, bullying, and intimidation</b> in any public or private space</li> <li>4. <b>commercial and non-commercial sexual exploitation of women and girls, trafficking, child sexual abuse, so-called honour-based violence</b>, including female genital mutilation, forced and child marriages, and so-called honour crimes</li> <li>5. <b>online and technology facilitated abuse</b> [or gender-based violence] including cyberstalking, cyber flashing, sexual harassment, grooming for exploitation or abuse, image based sexual abuse and abuse through emerging technologies such as 'internet of things' devices</li> <li>6. <b>workplace sexual harassment</b> ranging from sexual jokes or comments to unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favours and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature</li> <li>7. <b>financial abuse</b> 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 permission</li> <li>8. <b>everyday harm</b> caused by everyday misogyny, sexist jokes and language, and discrimination which contributes to an atmosphere in which the threat of violence, specific or general is consistently in women's minds.</li> </ol>

3.2	<p><b>The Executive Office's Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls</b></p> <p>In 2021, the Northern Ireland Executive directed that a Strategy to End Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) be developed, and the Executive Office (TEO) is leading on this whole of government, whole of society approach.</p> <p><a href="#"><u>TEO led the development of a co-designed Strategic Framework</u></a> which sets the agenda for all of government and society to address the whole range of gender-based violence, abuse and harm which is disproportionately experienced by women and girls, and which is rooted in gender inequality. The framework is ambitious, long term, and wide reaching. The Vision is: <i>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.</i> There are six outcomes organised under the four themes of 1) prevention; 2) protection and provision; 3) justice system; and 4) working better together:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Outcome 1: Changed attitudes, behaviours and culture</b> - Everyone in society understands what violence against women and girls is, including its root causes, and plays an active role in preventing it.</li> <li>• <b>Outcome 2: Healthy, respectful relationships</b> – Everyone in society is equipped and empowered to enjoy healthy, respectful relationships.</li> <li>• <b>Outcome 3: Women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere</b> – 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.</li> <li>• <b>Outcome 4: Quality frontline services, protection, and provision for victims and survivors of violence against women and girls</b> – Provision of high-quality services for women and girls who are victims and survivors of violence against women and girls.</li> <li>• <b>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</b> – In the context of violence against women and girls, a justice system that is trauma informed, considers the needs of people who come into contact with it, gives victims and survivors a voice and a place in the process, holds perpetrators to account, while challenging and supporting them to change and has the confidence of the public.</li> <li>• <b>Outcome 6: All of government and society working better together to end violence against women and girls</b> – A whole system approach with collaboration and cooperation by default across central and local government, statutory bodies, and with, within and between the community, voluntary, trade unions, employers, business and other sectors.</li> </ul> <p>The council is supporting TEO with the implementation of its strategic framework for EVAWG. This works comprises several separate workstreams as set out in sections 3.3-3.5. In addition,</p>
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	the council is also delivering, supporting, endorsing or signposting a range of activities to support women's safety and the campaign to end violence against women and girls both internally and externally within the Belfast district. This work is detailed at section 3.6.
3.3	<p><u>Regional Change Fund</u></p> <p>The council administers a regional funding programme on behalf of TEO with eight specialist delivery organisations receiving a share of £1.2 million up to 31 March 2026. There is a possible uplift of £50-£75K per group to be complete in year (process not yet confirmed).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Action                      • NSPCC                      • Women's Aid                      • White Ribbon</li> <li>• WRDA                      • Nexus                      • Barnardo's                      • Relate NI</li> </ul>
3.4	<p><u>Local Change Fund</u></p> <p>The council also administers a smaller grant programme (budget of £255,000) through the Central Grants Unit for projects which equip third sector groups in Belfast to achieve the prevention outcomes of the EVAWG Strategic Direction which are detailed below. Every project must contribute to changed attitudes behaviours and culture; and may contribute to the other two outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Changed attitudes, behaviours and culture</b> - Everyone in society understands what violence against women and girls is, including its root causes, and plays an active role in preventing it.</li> <li>2. <b>Healthy, respectful relationships</b> – Everyone in society is equipped and empowered to enjoy healthy, respectful relationships.</li> <li>3. <b>Women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere</b> – 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.</li> </ol> <p>The grants (which include three separate tiers – up to £5k, £15k and £25k) provide funding up to 31 March 2026 to support 27 local groups to deliver events, projects or programmes of activity aimed at EVAWG within the communities they support. At its meeting on 5 August, the People and Communities committee agreed the proposed approach to allocate any additional Momentum fund, Local Change Fund grant support and additional in-year allocations for the Regional Change Fund on the understanding of receiving further funding from TEO (demand £1,251,422 greatly exceeded the available budget). However, at the time of writing there has been no confirmation or letter of offer received from TEO.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Belfast Mobilisation Programme</u></p> <p>The Belfast Mobilisation Programme (budget of £110,000) enabled immediate and urgent action to raise awareness of the new EVAWG Strategy. This funding (agreed by People &amp; Communities in December 2024) facilitated an expansion of existing good work by council and</p>

	<p>communities, in addition to new activity within the 2024/25 financial year. The diverse programme reached over 1,000 participants across 65 sessions with a number of extremely successful projects, including training for council officers and local community organisations; high profile area events; safety awareness sessions for women and girls; targeted training and support for people working in hostels or with female who are rough sleeping and a bystander conference for leaders in sport to explore how men can help end violence against women and girls. While this programme has been very successful, many of the participants were keen to continue their involvement. An evaluation of the programme to date notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 95% of respondents felt that participation had increased their knowledge of what violence against women and girls is.</li> <li>• 89% responded that the programme has given them a better understanding of the underlying causes of violence against women and girls; and</li> <li>• 91% feel that participation has increased their confidence about what they can do to help end violence against women and girls.</li> </ul> <p>Given the success of council-led initiatives, TEO has indicated that it wishes to support an extension of the Momentum Programme for 2025/26. A Programme of activity is currently being developed and is expected to be brought to the People &amp; Communities Committee for final approval as soon as possible once the Letter of Offer has been received from TEO.</p>
3.6	<p>Ending Violence Against Women and Girls is included as a priority within the council's 3-year Corporate Plan 2025-28. The Deputy Chief Executive and Strategic Director of Corporate Services, and Strategic Director of Place and Economy have both been appointed as champions for women's safety and EVAWG. The Council has been delivering, supporting, endorsing and signposting a range of activities to support women's safety and the campaign to end violence against women and girls. This includes a range of internal staff based training and external interventions amplifying the council's leadership role within the city, and is detailed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Onus Workplace Charter on Domestic Violence</b> (Platinum level) this comprises a Workplace Policy on Domestic Violence and Abuse, associated network of trusted colleagues, regular trusted colleague training and support, and general awareness raising training, communications and signposting to additional support outside of work.</li> <li>• <b>International 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign</b> – this year the council's campaign begins on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (Tuesday 25 November) and ends on Human Rights Day (Wednesday 10 December). Corporate HR has organised a series of Raise Your Voice workshops, including one specifically for male colleagues. All sessions aim to promote allyship and support safer communities for everyone.</li> </ul>

- **White Ribbon Pledge** – an annual commitment to Belfast being recognised as a Safe City and creating a safer society by challenging harmful behaviours, promoting equality and respect, and fostering a community where everyone feels safe and valued. The pledge is that “together we pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls”. The Lord Mayor, Chief Executive and Director of HR will sign the Charter on 2 December 2025.
- **Gender Action Plan** – the council’s 2024-27 Plan contains actions that supplement domestic violence training and awareness raising across the city, annual funding of the International Women’s Day rally and march in the city (organised by Reclaim the Agenda), and delivery of a partnership research project with Queen’s University to improve design of public spaces.
- **Onus Safe City Award** (assessed annually) – Domestic Abuse Policy and support for staff is integrated within a much wider cohesive and co-ordinated approach to addressing both domestic and sexual abuse and violence against women and girls across the Belfast City Council area.
- **Community Safety – 2025/26 Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership Action Plan** - Delivery of a range of specific projects and activity that addresses issues related to violence against women and girls, including but not limited to funding for Belfast Area Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Partnership Programme, additional Safer Neighbourhood Officer patrols, safety awareness classes within our community centres and funding for safer socialising kits which include bottle covers to prevent drink spiking.
- **Late Night Transport** - At September’s SP&R meeting, the committee agreed to provide funding to support a one-year pilot scheme extending hours for late-night transport in Belfast which will contribute towards reducing the potential for violence against women and girls on late night transport on their way home from socialising in the city centre.
- **Safer Socialising** - as part of EVAWG Foundational Action Plan, Hospitality Ulster have partnered with TEO, PSNI, SIA, Youth Work Alliance, Health and Social Care NI, Department of Justice, SOLACE, Translink, Tourism NI and the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland to establish a Safer Socialising Steering Group (SSSG), which will coordinate a range of NI-wide initiatives, including the rollout and oversight of the [Women’s Night Safe Charter](#). Members are asked if they are content to agree to endorse the Charter, which has been signed by 10 Councils across NI, to support its promotion and roll-out to the hospitality and entertainment sector as part of the TEO’s strategic framework.
- **Entertainment Licensing current work and Best Practice Signposting** – The Building Control Licensing team actively promote the ‘Ask for Angela’ initiative when engaging with hospitality premises that apply for or have an entertainments licence. This may include discussing the scheme with licensees and managers during renewal inspections and asking bar staff if they are aware of the scheme when during performance inspections are

	<p>being carried out at night. The SSSG are currently reviewing a range of safer socialising initiatives including 'Ask for Angela' which is led by HU in partnership with the PSNI. As soon as the group have finalised their recommendations, Building Control Licensing officers will proactively promote and signpost to any updated scheme. Under entertainments licensing the building control licensing team assess event management plans including the health and welfare and medical provisions proposed to keep people attending outdoor concert events safe, when often there is considered to be a high risk of harm and vulnerability due to drugs and alcohol, often particularly for young women and girls. Officers from the council's community safety and the alcohol enforcement team work in conjunction with licensing and event promoters and provide support to vulnerable people on the ground before, during and after outdoor concerts. For indoor nightclubs and dance music venues the licensing team references conditions within the safer dancing appendix of the council's Rules of Management for Indoor Places of Entertainment which have the aim of helping keep people attending indoor dance events safe from drink/drug related harm.</p>
3.7	<p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>TEO currently provides funding to enable council's management and administration of the Regional and Local Change Fund Projects to March 2026. As outlined in section 3.4, further in-year funding may be received from TEO to allocate additional Momentum fund, Local Change Fund grant support and additional in-year allocations for the Regional Change Fund. However, at the time of writing there has been no confirmation or letter of offer received from TEO. The Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership Action Plan is funded by the Joint Committee of the Department of Justice and the NI Policing Board. A number of workstreams have been incorporated within relevant corporate work programmes and utilise existing staff and resources. Specific funding has been allocated to the late-night transport pilot scheme.</p>
3.8	<p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>The Executive Office's Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and Action Plan has been screened for Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs Implications.</p>
4.0	<p><b>Appendices - Documents Attached</b></p>
	<p>None</p>