



Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

2 October 2023

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Directorate,
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Ref: Ending Violence Against Women and Girls

Mid Ulster District Council would like to take this opportunity to put forward its views in relation to the proposals detailed in the above-mentioned consultation.

The Council welcomes the co design approach that is used in relation to the development of this draft strategy. It is important that Violence Against Women and Girls continues to be recognised as having a cross-cutting societal impact that requires a joint approach. Co-ordinated action plans underpinned by effective governance and community engagement seems to be the most proactive way to ensure that the voices of people impacted upon can be heard and acted upon.

Mid Ulster District Council also welcomes that prevention forms a key part of the strategy. Awareness raising and challenging attitudes and behaviours can lead to positive outcomes for individuals who are vulnerable to becoming victims of violence and abuse. The Council also supports the role given to community engagement. This will ensure that challenging behaviour can and should, be addressed at the earliest opportunity so that the attitudes, systems, and structural inequalities that cause them, are tackled and resolved at the earliest possible opportunity.

The statistics included in this consultation report make it abundantly clear why there is a need for the implementation of this strategy and action plan at the earliest possible opportunity. Therefore, the Council finds it regrettable that while there is such a clear requirement to address some of the worst levels of Violence Against Women and Girls in Europe, some of the organisations required to provide the support to women and girls are experiencing unprecedented levels of funding cuts. While the Council understands that the Departments are in a very difficult financial situation in relation to financing support organisations, some of these actions are going to be much less achievable without the valuable contribution of some of the community and voluntary organisations who have been so negatively affected by a loss of funding.

In addition, Mid Ulster District Council area is a vastly rural District and as such the Council would have appreciated if the consultation documentation had consisted of a Rural Needs Impact Assessment. The assessment would hopefully highlight that support solutions employed in urban areas may not work in rural areas and that alternatives should be considered. As demonstrated clearly within the consultation document evidence, Violence Against Women and Girls happens right across Northern Ireland. As such access to services and support needs to reflect that this is the case. Isolation can be a real issue for women and girls who live in rural areas and unfortunately it can also be a key factor in allowing all types of violence and abuse to occur and in some cases thrive.

Overall, the support outlined in the draft strategy and action plan seem to be of a comprehensive and practical nature which the Council fully supports. Clear pathways to prevention and support are critical. Tackling the root causes of violence and abuse perpetrated against women and girls are key to ending an acceptance of all forms of gender-based violence, abuse, and harm, including the attitudes, systems, and structural inequalities that cause them.

The Council is also supportive of the Year One action which involves all of government and society working better together to end violence against women and girls. Joint working to tackle the root causes of Violence Against Women and Girls can achieve improvements across communities across Northern Ireland. Therefore, the Council is keen to participate in and promote best practice examples of how to prevent and address all types of Violence Against Women and Girls.

In conclusion, the Council believes that current levels of violence and abuse perpetrated against women and girls in Northern Ireland is completely unacceptable. The Council hopes that the finalisation and implementation of this strategy and action plan will go a long way to addressing the current extremely concerning levels of Violence Against Women and Girls in Northern Ireland. Overall, the Council is fully supportive of what this draft strategy and action plan aims to achieve, particularly the

comprehensive preventative measures and clear pathways of support for women and girls who are impacted upon by all types of violence and abuse.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dominic Molloy', written in a cursive style.

Dominic Molloy

Chair of Mid Ulster District Council