

Progress under the Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy's Year Four Action Plan (2019-20)

A Year Four Action Plan was published jointly by the Departments of Health and Justice, under the Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy, in April 2019. The action plan was based on partnership working with the Department of Education, the Department for Communities and other statutory, voluntary and community sector organisations.

Key highlights in 2019/20 included:

- Introduction of the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill which will provide for a new domestic abuse offence and statutory aggravators.
- Continued provision and promotion of a regional 24/7 Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline.
- The introduction of the 'Identification and Referral to Improve Safety' (IRIS) Pilot in East Belfast and Newry/Down District GP Federations in partnership with Women's Aid Federation NI, Nexus NI, MAP and Victim Support NI.
- Further development of the NI Housing Executive Sanctuary Scheme.
- Continued piloting of Behavioural Change Programmes across the Health and Social Care Trusts.
- Continuation of 'See the Signs' campaign raising awareness of the issue of domestic abuse, promoting information on the 24 hour Helpline and encouraging reporting to the police. This ran across TV, radio and social media over the summer holidays and at Christmas.
- A TV and social media campaign also ran (across TV, social media and outdoor billboards) to raise awareness around sexual consent, with the key message of 'without consent it's a crime'.
- Release of a domestic abuse campaign by PSNI in July 2019 and continuation of a collaborative 'No Grey Zone' sexual consent awareness campaign.
- Raising awareness in the rural community through the Rural Community Network publication and promoting the Helpline in DAERA public offices and across 96 library locations (including 16 mobile services and Homecall Service). Libraries NI also linked in with the PSNI's 'Walking on Eggshells Campaign' as part of the 'New Year New You' campaign and the Samaritans 'Blue Monday' campaign.
- Ongoing work to develop a new streamlined advocacy support service.
- The Criminal Justice Board approved strategic priority areas for implementation of the Gillen Review (into the law and procedures in serious sexual offences in

Northern Ireland). An implementation plan is being finalised and will be presented to the Board.

- Completion of the PILGRIM project, supporting sexual abuse complainants through the criminal justice system.
- A Crown Court Observer's Study undertaken by Victim Support NI.
- Continued review of training provided to public prosecutors and Counsel.
- Widening the remit of the Local Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnerships to include sexual violence and abuse (including abuse outside family and intimate partner relationships).
- Completion of the evaluation of the support provided by Independent Sexual Violence Advisers through Victim Support NI.
- Lessons learned from court mandated domestic violence perpetrators' programme.
- Review of the evidence base on effectiveness of behavioural change programmes.
- Establishment of new multi-agency MARAC Operational Board and progression of actions arising from the MARAC review.
- Continuation of an Independent Advisory Group, informing the police response to domestic and sexual abuse.
- Continued promotion of initiatives under the Strategy's Communication Plan, including through social media channels.

The year four action plan can be found at:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/dsv-4-plan.pdf>

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/Year%204%20draft%20Action%20Plan%20Stopping%20Domestic%20and%20Sexual%20Violence%20and%20Abuse%20Strategy.pdf>