



Have your say!

What's it all about?

Home is where everyone should really feel safe. Every day in Northern Ireland there are people who are at home, afraid. Afraid of a partner or a family member.

What can we do to stop this?

The Department of Justice has written this paper to ask for your views on two things that could help.

First - Make Domestic Abuse a crime in Northern Ireland. This would be for doing things that are not violent. Victims we've met have said they've been harmed by both violence and abuse (e.g. bullying).

Second - Give people the right to ask about their new partner's past if they are worried about how they're acting. And give the police more power to tell someone about their partner's violent past.

If we go ahead, we hope this will:

- Stop domestic violence and abuse happening in the first place;
- Stop domestic violence and abuse from happening again;
- Help people come forward and report it when it does;
- Help the police further protect victims of domestic violence and abuse;
- Help people change how they act so they are not violent and abusive; and
- Hold people responsible for their actions.

We want everyone to feel safe, especially in their home.

What's Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse is when a current or former partner or family member is abusive to you.

Partner?

boyfriend, girlfriend,
husband, wife, civil partner

Family?

Mum, dad, son, daughter, brother, sister,
grandparents, in-laws or step-family

What is abuse?

A range of acts against a partner or family member. **The reason?**
To have power and control over them.

Abuse is often described as 'controlling and coercive behaviour':

What does it look like?

Name calling – *“you look pretty tonight...pretty ugly and pretty fat”*

Threats or pressure – *“if you loved me you would.....”*

Bullying – making you a lovely big dinner and then asking: *“How's the diet going?”*

Constantly checking on you – *“Where are you, who are you with, when will you be back?”* Reading texts and logging into your social media account.

Restricting what you can do – *“I don't really go out with friends anymore because my partner doesn't get on with them”*

Being destructive – trashing your house/room, deleting e-mails and texts they don't want you to read/have.

And the list goes on.....

My heart skips a beat when they walk in the room.....I'm terrified.

Violence is a crime no matter where it happens. It includes common assault, wounding, sexual assault and rape.

The law in Northern Ireland also covers some non-violent acts. There is however no law that says abuse that happens within a family or between partners is a crime.

Have your say!

Should the law change?

Should domestic abuse be a crime?

What should the crime include?

Do you think creating a crime would stop domestic abuse?

And now let's think about the second idea.....

Do they have a violent past?

Domestic violence can have a long lasting impact on victims' lives. What if we could stop it from happening in the first place?

The Department of Justice wants to hear your views on whether we need to change what we do. There are four options we want you to think about.

Option 1 – Keep it as it is

The Police can already give information out to someone if they think they are in danger.

People can ask the Police to share information about a person's history of violence.

The Police can then decide if they should share the information. This would happen when the Police want to prevent a crime.

Have your say!

Do you think this is enough?

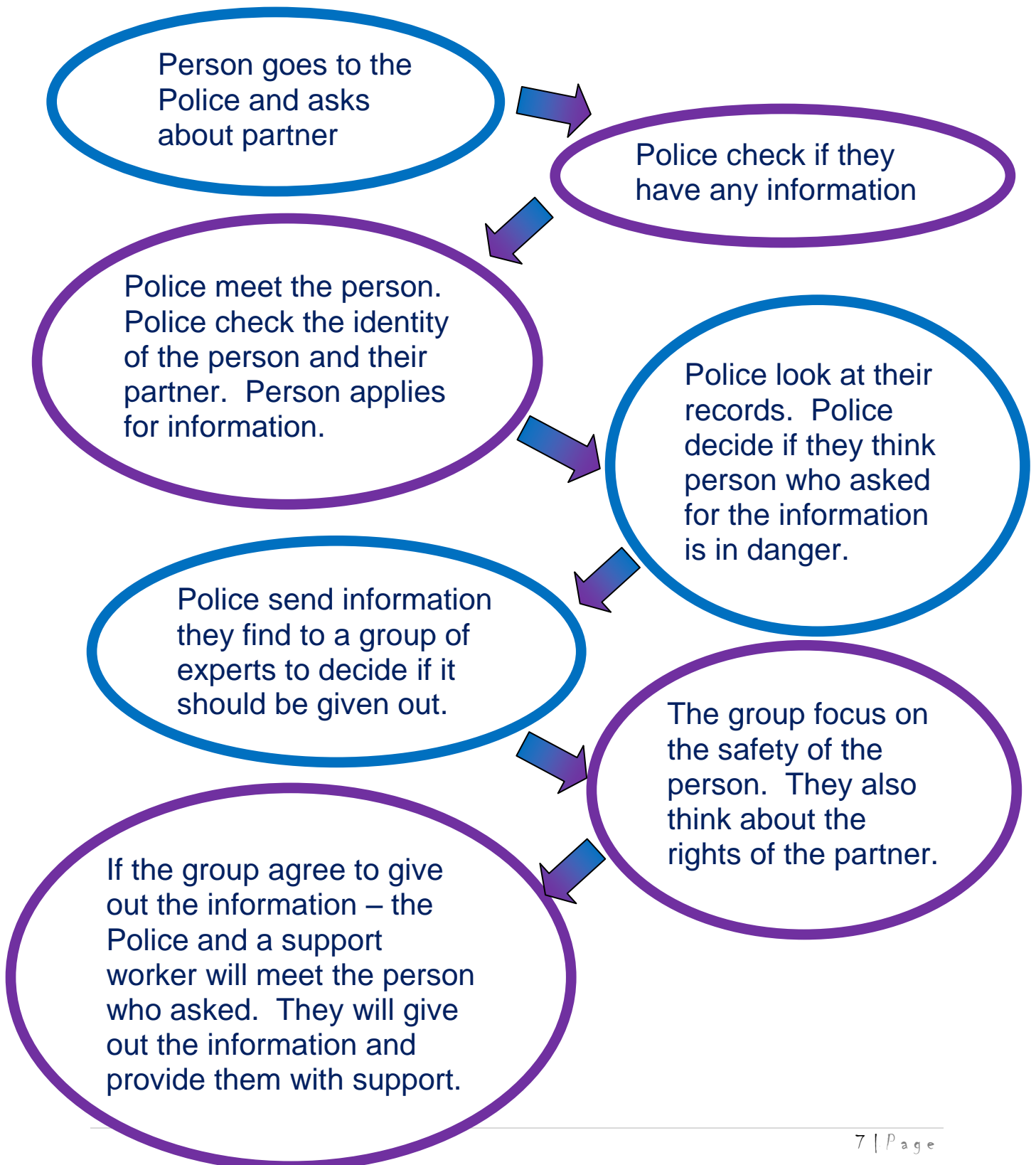
How could it be better?

If we do decide to share information about a person's violent past we will need to think about their rights.

Option 2 – Give people a “right to ask”

In this option a person would be able to ask the Police about their new partner’s past. They might be worried about how their partner is acting.

We think it would work like this example:



Depending on what you say, how it works might change.

Have your say!

Do you think a “right to ask” is a good idea?

Do you think the example would work?

What could go wrong? How could we correct it?

Option 3 – A “right to know”

This option is when the Police can choose to share information on a person with a violent past to a group of experts. This group of experts would then decide if the person’s new partner should be given the information. Information would be given out when the group of experts think the new partner is in danger. Again, the group will think about everyone’s rights when they decide.

Have your say!

Do you think a “right to know” is a good idea?

What could go wrong? How could we correct it?

What else do you think we could do?

Option 4 – A “right to ask” & a “right to know”

This option is currently happening in England and Wales. It would mean that people can ask about a new partners past and the Police can share the information without being asked. It would still be the group of experts who have the final decision.

The Government in England and Wales tried Option 4 and thought it went well. So they decided to run it all the time.

They said:

- it would only work well if everyone knew about it (the public, police, health workers etc.);
- it should fit in with everything else they were doing to tackle violence and abuse; and
- it needed to be done the same way everywhere.

Have your say!

Do you think having a “right to know” and “a right to ask” running at the same time is a good idea?

What could go wrong? How could we correct it?

What should we do to make sure it works well?

Nearly finished!

We would like your views on a few more questions.

Domestic violence and abuse hurts everyone.

How far should we go?

What sort of information should we share? The Police will either have “concerns” or “no concerns”.

“Concerns”

A person has been found guilty of a crime

A person has not been found guilty of a crime. But, the Police know them and think they have been violent before.

“No concerns”

The Police do not have any information.

But it doesn't mean the person will never be violent! It just means the Police don't have any information. The most important thing is that everyone stays safe.

And who should be able to ask?

Should a family member be able to ask. For example can a father ask the Police about his daughter's new partner?

We know no matter who asks, the new partner must be kept safe. We will need a plan to help keep them safe and talk this over with them.

Have your say!

What information should be given out?

(All crimes, all information. Just information about past domestic violence and abuse)

Should information be shared with family members?

**Does it matter how long the partners have been together ?
If yes, how long should they be together before information
can be shared?**

When should information be shared?

Fairness!

Have your say!

If we do this, will it be fair on everyone?

How can we make sure it is fair?

What else do you have to say?

Domestic violence & abuse is always wrong.

If you know about it, report it.

All forms of domestic and sexual violence
are serious crimes

Where there is immediate danger please
call the police on 999

Who can I contact for help:

ChildLine Free helpline

0800 1111

**Domestic and Sexual Violence
Helpline**

0800 917 1414

email: 24hrsupport@dvhelpline.org

text: Support to 07797805839

Child Sexual Exploitation Helpline

0800 3891701

They will believe you.