

ACTION PLAN – DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE RESEARCH

Action	Lead organisation	Supporting organisation	Target date
Police training and service provision			
<p>Police training to continue to re-emphasise the need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to treat victims of domestic violence and abuse in a dignified, courteous, sensitive, tailored, professional and non-discriminatory manner; • to treat incidents of domestic violence and abuse seriously; • to advise victims of domestic violence and abuse of the specialist support services that are available; • to make victims aware that their statement should be as detailed as possible, given that this can be key to the progression of a case; • to ensure that victims are provided with adequate time to make their statement, in order that they do not feel rushed; • to inform victims of domestic violence and abuse as soon as possible about the granting of bail, the presumption in favour of bail being granted and the limited conditions under which bail can be refused; • to inform victims that, where possible, there can be flexibility in terms of where statements are taken, dependent on the individual circumstances of the case; • to promote awareness of special measures, which are available to assist victims to give evidence; • to inform victims of domestic violence and abuse on the outcome of a hearing to determine if bail is to be granted, where possible; and • to provide victims with a general indication of how long cases 	<p>PSNI</p>		<p>October 2016</p>

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<p>may take to move through the criminal justice system and that this can vary significantly depending on the circumstances of the case.</p> <p>Steps above to be incorporated into relevant procedures and guidance and actioned.</p>			
<p>Relevant police and victim of crime leaflets, when next revised, to reflect how long cases may take to move through the system and make victims aware that their statement should contain the necessary detail.</p>	PSNI/DoJ	All CJOs	January 2017
<p>The outcomes from the current College of Policing review of the DASH model to be considered, including its applicability in a Northern Ireland context.</p>	PSNI		Within three months of the publication of the College of Policing review outcomes
<p>A service wide direction to issue, reinforcing the practice that DASH forms should be completed by a police officer in person with the victim.</p>	PSNI		June 2016
<p>PSNI to update their policy and training for responding to domestic abuse/violence incidents, when the offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in intimate relationships is in place.</p>	PSNI	DoJ	Subject to the timetable for the new offence
<p>PSNI to continue to work with victims and outside agencies to raise awareness of domestic violence and abuse and the protections that may be available, dependent on the individual circumstances of the case.</p>	PSNI		Ongoing
Engagement and Contact with the Public Prosecution Service			
<p>Victims to be advised that they are entitled to ask for a meeting with a Public Prosecution Service representative:</p>	VWCU/PPS		June 2016

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to discuss a Public Prosecution Service decision not to prosecute a suspect, where detailed reasons for this have been requested; • to discuss a Public Prosecution Service decision to substantially alter a charge, discontinue all proceedings or offer no evidence in all proceedings; and • if a case results in an acquittal or a less serious charge. <p>Victims also to be made aware that they can ask for a meeting with a prosecution representative at any point in their case.</p> <p>To be reflected in instructions that issue to all Public Prosecution Service staff and counsel.</p>			
<p>Training on the revised Public Prosecution Service victims and witnesses policy to be provided to public prosecutors and to be made available to prosecuting counsel. This should include training on the treatment of victims, including victims of domestic violence and abuse, taking account of the issues raised in the research report (particularly around engagement and communication with Panel Counsel).</p>	PPS		Within three months of the policy being finalised and published
<p>Victims to be made aware, as part of the engagement with PPS and Panel Counsel, that difficult questions may be asked as part of the court process and to be prepared for this.</p>	PPS/VWCU		Ongoing
Support services			
<p>Victim Support NI, Women's Aid and the Men's Advisory Project NI to continue to work with the police to improve awareness of their support services.</p>	VSNI, Womens' Aid and MAPNI	PSNI	September 2016
<p>In providing their community service, Victim Support NI will work with the victim and volunteer to ensure that, where possible, the same person provides support.</p>	VSNI		September 2016

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Victim Support NI core learning and training to continue to emphasise the need to appropriately engage with victims and witnesses, taking account of their individual circumstances and preferences	VSNI		June 2016
Consideration to be given to what further provision could be made in terms of support or advice services, including taking account of the views expressed in the research and identified gaps, subject to the necessary funding being available.	DOJ		September 2016
Practical issues at court			
Womens' Aid to be invited to attend the Family User Group meetings.	NICTS		April 2016
Consideration to be given to whether there is scope for developing the Derry/Londonderry domestic violence listing arrangements further.	DOJ	NICTS	March 2016
Consideration to be given to how to improve the way victims and witnesses are managed in courthouses, with a view to developing standards for inclusion in the forthcoming Witness Charter	PPS	NICTS	April 2016
Consideration to be given to the refreshment facilities provided at courthouses following rationalisation of the estate	NICTS		Subject to the timetable for rationalisation of the court estate
Provisions related to the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2015			
Consultation to be undertaken on the need for changes in practice and legislative provisions for a range of initiatives, including a domestic violence disclosure scheme and a domestic abuse offence, of controlling or coercive behaviour in intimate relationships.	DoJ	PSNI PPS NICTS PBNI Voluntary and Community Sector	February – April 2016

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An appropriate model to be developed to identify lessons learnt in, and improve the response to, cases of domestic homicide in Northern Ireland.	DoJ	PSNI PPS NICTS PBNI Voluntary and Community Sector	October 2016
Appropriate guidance to be developed to allow for the implementation (on a pilot basis) of Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders in Northern Ireland, as provided for under Schedule 7 of the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.	DoJ	PSNI NICTS OLCJ	October 2016
Delay, case progression and the treatment of victims			
Regulations to be brought forward to deal with case management and the progression of proceedings in the Magistrates' and Crown Courts, taking particular account of the needs of victims and witnesses.	DOJ	NICTS	Winter 2016
Criminal Justice System awareness and provision of information (effective communication about case progression)			
Victim Charter to be promoted, including the issue of a Victim Charter information card to a range of public and voluntary sector organisation.	DOJ	All CJOs, plus VSNI and NSPCC	March 2016
Victims to continue to be advised about the Victim of Crime Charter at the first practicable opportunity by service providers (including through website and first correspondence) and where further information on services can be obtained.	All CJOs, plus VSNI and NSPCC		March 2016
The Victim and Witness Care Unit to consider steps to raise awareness of the services that are provided by the unit and the role of case officers – including through continued engagement with NGOs and other representative bodies, the format of the contact letter, possible inclusion of contact cards, etc.	PPS and PSNI		June 2016
Victim Support NI to consider ways to continually improve	VSNI		June 2016

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stakeholder engagement, use of the web and social media in order to increase awareness of the services provided.			
Guide to the criminal justice system to be revised.	DOJ	All CJOs, as well as VSNI and NSPCC	Autumn 2016
General			
Service providers to continue to emphasise with staff their obligations under the Victim Charter, in terms of the treatment of victims (including victims of domestic violence and abuse).	NSPCC Young Witness Service, NICTS, PBNI, PPS, PSNI, VWCU, VSNI and YJA		Ongoing
Service providers to include an objective within staff performance development plans relating to the treatment of victims and witnesses, to include staff in securing compliance with the Victim Charter and improving victims' and witnesses' experience of the criminal justice system.	NSPCC Young Witness Service, NICTS, PBNI, PPS, PSNI, VWCU, VSNI and YJA		April 2016
Further consider the issues around male victims of domestic violence and take forward associated actions as appropriate.	DoJ	Voluntary and Community Sector	Autumn 2016
Consider the recommendations of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Report on problem Solving Justice in Northern Ireland and develop the way forward as appropriate.	DoJ	OLCJ NICTS PBNI PPS PSNI	May 2016