

LISBURN AND CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Public Meeting of the Policing and Community Safety Partnership, held in Dundonald High School, Dundonald, on Tuesday 18 March 2025 at 7.20 pm

PRESENT: Councillor S Lowry (Chairperson)

Mr D Cairns
Mr B Corr (Vice-Chairperson)
Mr D Drysdale
Councillor B Higginson
Councillor J Lavery BEM
Mr G McClory
Councillor M McKeever
Councillor T Mitchell
Mrs A Playford

OTHER MEMBERS Aldermen H Legge and S Skillen

IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor S Burns

IN ATTENDANCE: Member Services/PCSP Manager (CA)
PCSP Support Officer (JB)
Member Services Officer (CH)
PCSP Administration Officer (EW)

Designated Organisations

Superintendent K Moore, PSNI
Chief Inspector M Rocks, PSNI
Sergeant Danielle Burke, PSNI
Mr J Crymble, EA
Ms C Cullan, YJA
Mr D Marley, NIHE

Commencement of the Meeting

The Chairperson, Councillor S Lowry, welcomed those present to the meeting and extended appreciation to both Dundonald High School, including the Board of Governors and staff, for the use of their premises, and to members of the Policing Board in attendance, Ms Kate Lavery and Mr Peter Osborne for their continued support.

She provided an overview of the evening's meeting, which was dedicated to raising awareness of the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) Strategic Framework, launched by the Executive in September 2024. The partnership noted that the framework's first Delivery Plan (2024-26) focused on supporting organisations that work to challenge harmful attitudes, behaviours, and cultures that contribute to violence against women and girls.

The Chairperson provided details of the Change Fund, launched by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council in support of the initiative, which offered funding opportunities for community and voluntary groups within the Council area. She stated that the application deadline was 24 March 2025, and encouraged eligible groups to take advantage of the opportunity, advising that further information including application guidance could be found on the PCSP page of the Council Website.

The Chairperson explained that the meeting would commence with opening remarks by Superintendent K Moore on how the PSNI are addressing the issue of Violence Against Women and Girls, followed with presentations by Chief Inspector Megan Rocks (PSNI), Ms Siobhan Graham (Women's Aid) and Mr Michael Avila (Victim Support NI). It was further explained that eleven organisations were present at stalls around the room, which provided invaluable support, resources, and advice to victims of domestic and sexual violence.

1. Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance at the meeting were presented on behalf of Councillor C Kemp, Ms C Carville (PBNI), Mrs Y Craig (Independent Member) Ms G McDonald (Independent Member) and Mr C Weir (NIFRS).

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Opening Remarks
Superintendent K Moore, PSNI

At the outset Superintendent K Moore extended her appreciation to the PCSP for facilitating the public meeting and stated that the PSNI were committed to creating an environment where women and girls could feel safe and be safe, within Lisburn and Castlereagh and across Northern Ireland.

Superintendent Moore reported that the PSNI were in year three of their own tackling violence against women and girls action plan and outlined some of the work that the PSNI have been involved in recently alongside other partner organisations, including women and girls' engagement events at running clubs, parks and open spaces across Lisburn and Castlereagh, to discuss the issues and to build confidence and trust.

Attendees noted that the PSNI were launching their Local Policing Plan for 2025/26, and that a key part of that plan focused on tackling the issue of violence against women and girls, and because of this had committed to having at least one public engagement session per year.

Superintendent Moore confirmed that there was an ongoing reduction in reporting of instances of this type of crime, which was not reflective of what was happening in society.

3. Opening Remarks
Superintendent K Moore, PSNI (cont'd)

Superintendent Moore introduced both her colleagues, Sergeant Danielle Burke, and Chief Inspector M Rocks, who would be delivering a presentation that evening on a new campaign called 'Power to Change' which encourages everyone to be more proactive in changing attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs to make our society safer. Attendees noted that the campaign strap line stated, 'Power to Change - you have it, they have it, we all have it'.

4. Violence against Women and Girls – Presentations

4.1 Power to Change
Chief Inspector M Rocks (PSNI)

Chief Inspector M Rocks delivered a presentation in respect of the PSNI's new Power to Change Campaign. She explained that the PSNI launched their first tackling violence against women and girls action plan in 2022, with three main objectives:

- building trust and confidence in policing - the vast majority of abuse, intimidation, harassment and violence against women and girls was perpetrated by men. Objective for women and girls, particularly from marginalised backgrounds, is to have confidence in reporting instances to the PSNI,
- relentless perpetrator pursuit and supporting victims, and
- creating safer spaces for women and girls.

Chief Inspector Rock advised that the Northern Ireland Executive launched the 'Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy' in 2024 and the 'Power to Change Campaign' formed part of that strategy.

She provided an overview of two crucial elements that the Power to Change campaign highlighted:

- challenging attitudes & behaviours – calling on men and others in society to consider their responsibility and how their actions affect others, and
- development of active bystanders' mentality – empowering men and the wider community with the knowledge and skills to safely intervene when they see someone carrying out inappropriate actions or making unwanted comments.

Chief Inspector Rocks explained that the objectives of the Power to Change campaign were to:

- increase awareness,
- influence,
- increase confidence,
- educate and action.

4.1 Power to Change Chief Inspector M Rocks (PSNI) (cont'd)

Attendees noted that currently the police and other agencies often become involved at a crisis point or when abuse had been ongoing for some time, but by highlighting unacceptable behaviour before it escalated, crimes would hopefully be prevented and more importantly harm limited.

Chief Inspector Rocks provided information in respect of the acronym for the Power to Change campaign 'CARE' which set out how to intervene safely:

- **Call it out safely** - say something, highlight that their behaviour is not ok,
- **Alert others** – tell someone,
- **Redirect attention** – distraction techniques to allow the women/girl to move away, and
- **Engage after** – talk to the person at risk, they will feel heard, understood, and supported that someone else knows this behaviour is not right.

She concluded her presentation by providing an overview of the multi-channel communications strategy for the campaign, including outdoor advertising, radio advertising and social media platforms, and information on a dedicated website which included details of support services available for women and girls, signposting for males who are worried about their behaviour, and resources such as posters, for use at work/school and other public places.

4.2 Women's Aid Siobhan Graham

Ms S Graham made a presentation in respect of the work carried out by Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland (WAFNI) – the lead voluntary organisation challenging and addressing domestic abuse in Northern Ireland, which promotes regional collaborative working across all Women's Aid groups and provides a regional lead in areas of training development, preventative education, strategic development of children and young people's services, policy response and advocacy.

Ms Graham outlined current statistics (2023/24) on domestic violence and abuse including:

- 527 women stayed in Women's Aid refuges throughout NI,
- 291 children stayed in refuge with their mum,
- 45 women supported through pregnancy in refuge,
- 266 women who were pregnant received support from Women's Aid,
- 10,955 referrals made to Women's Aid Service,
- 7,637 women received support whilst staying in their homes,
- 5,293 children had mums supported in Women's Aid services, and
- 10 babies born in refuge.

4.2 Women's Aid
Siobhan Graham (cont'd)

Ms Graham explained that the PSNI received calls regarding domestic abuse incidents every 16 minutes during 2023/24. Twenty-six women had been murdered in Northern Ireland since 2020, and even though it made up 20% of all crime, domestic abuse related crimes were still underreported.

Ms Graham provided information on the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy, explaining that a strong pillar for children and young people was included within the Strategy, which had been designed and developed by young people who had experienced domestic abuse, which included:

- police response,
- early intervention,
- healthy relationships,
- listen to our voices,
- safe spaces,
- justice system,
- training adults,
- support for children and young people, and
- working together.

She also provided an overview of the new 'Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2024-31', which was launched by the Executive Office in 2024. The strategy focused on eliminating systemic gender inequality that often underpins violence against women and girls and sought to address all forms of violence and abusive behaviours targeting women and girls.

Attendees noted the strategy's vision:

'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'.

Ms Graham concluded her presentation by highlighting the importance of survivor engagement as they were experts by experience and their voices must be at the heart of all efforts to end violence against women and girls.

4.3 Victim Support Northern Ireland
Michael Avila

Councillor H Legge entered the meeting (7.49 pm).

Mr M Avila delivered a presentation representing the Hate Crime Advocacy Service, which was introduced in 2008, and provided a service across Northern Ireland, working in partnership with a number of organisations to address hate and signal crimes and provide support to victims.

4.3 Victim Support Northern Ireland Michael Avila (cont'd)

Attendees noted that hate crimes were any crime where the perpetrator's hostility or prejudice against an identifiable group of people is a factor in determining who is victimised, i.e. a person targeted for their identity (including religion, ethnic or racial background, sexual orientation or gender identity and for having a disability); and that signal crimes were 'message crimes' that signal that the community of which the victim is a member is different or not accepted (i.e. a group intimidating families out of houses).

Mr Avila explained the aims of the Hate Crime Advocacy Service were to:

- improve support for victims,
- increase confidence & encourage reporting, and
- improve access to the criminal justice system.

Attendees noted that the Hate Crime Advocacy Service worked in equal partnership with Migrant Centre NI, The Rainbow Project, and Disability Action, with advocates ensuring that victims receive support with legal advice, housing issues, health and psychological support, alongside emotional support throughout the investigative process, which could be a long and gruelling process for victims.

Mr Avila provided an overview of the current six protected characteristics of hate crime:

- disability,
- racist,
- homophobic,
- transphobic,
- faith/religion, and
- sectarian.

He provided information on the barriers that each of the above groups faced including language, mobility, access to transport, isolation, discrimination, and lack of support. Attendees noted that unfortunately gender was not included as a protected characteristic in current hate crime legislation, however legislation was currently being reviewed by the Department of Justice to be expanded in Northern Ireland, to include more robust legislation, harsher sentencing and to cover more hate crime strategies.

Mr Avila concluded his presentation by providing information on other services that Victim Support NI offer, including:

- emotional support – forum to speak about trauma,
- criminal injury compensation services,
- witness service – support in court,
- ChISVA – support for young victims of sexual violence,
- SOLA – legal support for adult victims of sexual violence,
- Phoenix Youth – supporting young people with trauma, and
- restorative justice – alternative means to justice.

Conclusion of the Meeting

The Chairperson, Councillor S Lowry, concluded by thanking those present for attending, particularly those who had provided informative presentations, and invited everyone to network with the support organisations in attendance.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 8.06 pm.

Chairperson