



3 October 2023

FAO: The Executive Office EVAWG.HaveYourSay@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

Dear Sir/Madam

Consultation on draft Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) and Foundational Action Plan

Belfast City Council established a Women's Steering Group (WSG) in 2006 to develop and the deliver the Council's Gender Action Plan, aimed at promoting gender equality both within the Council and across the city of Belfast.

The WSG welcomes the consultation on the draft Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) and the Foundational Action Plan. We have circulated the consultation widely across the Council and have encouraged officers and elected members to respond. However, on behalf of the WSG we would also like to submit the following response to your consultation.

1. WSG supports the need for the EVAWG strategy and action plan.
2. We broadly agree with the vision and outcomes within the draft strategy. However, we feel that **Outcome 1 – changed attitudes, behaviours and social norms** should also reflect the need for everyone to not only understand what violence against women and girls is, but that they also “agree that it is unacceptable” and play an active role in preventing it.
3. Belfast City Council and the WSG proactively supports programmes aimed at ensuring **Women and Girls Are Safe and Feel Safe Everywhere (Outcome 3)**. We welcome the commitment to further embed the prevention of violence against women within organisations and government and are keen to support its implementation.
4. Belfast City Council provides many community and frontline services, including community centres, play centres, community safety programmes, our youth council and age friendly work. Whilst not directly focused on victims and survivors of violence against women, we would welcome the opportunity to explore how these services could help support the vision and outcomes set out in the strategy. This would be in keeping with the concept of a “whole system with collaboration and cooperation”.
5. Whilst we agree with **Outcome 6 – All of Government and Society Working Better Together to End Violence Against Women and Girls**, we feel the role of local government should be highlighted and not just “government departments”. Local government plays a key role in civic society and, through our Elected Members, is uniquely placed to listen and connect with residents at a local level. Councils are responsible for



leading community planning and the policing and community safety partnerships (PCSPs). We encourage TEO to engage early and continuously with local government and to work collaboratively with us to achieve shared outcomes for women and girls. This will help shape successful places where women and girls are safe, and everyone can fulfil their potential, enabling them to contribute and play a positive role.

6. We strongly support the focus on prevention within the draft strategic framework.
7. We broadly agree with the Foundation Action Plan. We are particularly keen to explore how council, and local government in general, can support the prevention and working together themes.
8. We note that one of the actions relates to developing a funding strategy for EVAWG work. Adequate funding to support the framework will be essential. Community groups, in particular, will need adequate financial assistance to support the ambitions set out in the framework.
9. We generally endorse the findings of the EQIA. We would stress the importance of recognising that women and girls will also fall within other s.75 categories, and that these characteristics may impact how they experience violence, access support or wider EVAWG prevention work. We note that the EQIA recognises this and has identified mitigations to address this.
10. We also recognise that all Section 75 groups have a role to play in EVAWG.

I trust that you have found these comments helpful. We look forward to working with you in the future on this important issue.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aine McCabe', written over a light blue rectangular background.

On behalf of
Councillor Aine McCabe
Chair of Women's Steering Group
Belfast City Council