



Subject:	Ending Violence Against Women and Girls
Date:	22 November 2024
Reporting Officer(s):	Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive and Strategic Director of Corporate Services Damien Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy
Contact Officer:	Jim Girvan, Operational Director Jamie Uprichard, Business Research and Development Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To update Members on recent committee discussions and other meetings related to addressing the issue of violence against women and girls and possible interventions to improve women's safety in the city.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the discussions held and decisions taken at the People and Communities and City Growth and Regeneration Committees (November 2024); • Note the cross-departmental and cross sectoral work being delivered by, supported, or endorsed by the council; • Note the multi-agency stakeholders currently involved in this work and the discussions which took place at the Multi-Agency Operational Task Force on the City Centre which took place on 13 November 2024; • Agree short-term interventions to support women's safety in greater Belfast, together with plans for further engagement with stakeholders to develop further interventions for implementation in the medium term and that these form part of considerations for use of in-year underspend or external funding, if applicable.
3.0	Background and Main Issues
3.1	Members have discussed the important issues of ending violence against women and girls and improving safety for women in several recent committee meetings. This has included:
3.2	<p>Discussion of The Executive Office (TEO) Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Funding Initiative – 2024-2026 which was discussed at SP&R committee on 25 October 2024;</p> <p>The Women's Night Safety Charter, discussed at SP&R meeting on 25 October 2024;</p> <p>Proposal raised by Cllr Ruth Brooks at the People and Communities Committee on 5 November 2024 that:</p> <p><i>...officers (should) examine existing budgets and funding streams with a view to identifying initiatives that would support women's safety in greater Belfast. It was agreed also that a report in this regard be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 22nd November, for consideration.</i></p>

3.3	<p>In addition, the People and Communities Committee agreed that, in conjunction with the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, a special meeting be convened to which a range of stakeholders would be invited to consider city-wide and multi-agency initiatives to support women's safety in greater Belfast. The proposals were also raised at the City Growth and Regeneration Committee by Cllr Tracy Kelly where they were endorsed.</p>
3.4	<p>This report is intended to fulfil the Committees' request for a report to be brought to SP&R Committee, as outlined above, and provide an update on activity currently underway by council, partners and other stakeholders in this space.</p>
3.5	<p>Appendix 1 contains information about the range of council activity currently underway. This work cuts across a number of partnerships and programmes and includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Onus Safe City Award; • White Ribbon Charter; • Onus Workplace Charter on Domestic Violence - Platinum level; • Actions within the Gender Action Plan 2024-27; • Delivery of the Local Change Fund and Regional Grant Programme as part of TEO's Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) Strategic Framework; • Programme of projects funded by and delivered through the PCSP structures; and • Delivery of interventions, advice and guidance to end violence against women and girls within the Wider University & Lower Ormeau (WULO) Action Plan.
3.6	<p>These initiatives provide a useful foundation upon which to build future interventions in partnership with relevant stakeholders and support groups.</p>
	<p><u>Update since Committee Discussions</u></p>
3.7	<p>When the issue was raised, Members at the People & Communities and City Growth & Regeneration Committees were concerned that actions should be identified, if possible, in advance of the Christmas period. A meeting of the Multi-Agency Operational Task Force on the City Centre subsequently met on Wednesday 13 November 2024, attended by DfC, DfI, PSNI, Linen Quarter BID, Cathedral BID, Belfast One, Retail NI, Belfast Chamber and Belfast City Council. At this meeting partners provided a number of updates about activity in the run up to Christmas including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of personal safety alarms to the Linen Quarter BID, with a request for additional funding being brought forward to PCSPs for the purchase and supply of additional devices;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership working with UU and QUB, with a student safety survey having been undertaken and the Community Safety team hosting a number of pop-up safety events and supplying a number of personal safety alarms to students. • The commencement of the PSNI Christmas Programme of activity and • BCC Safe Neighbourhood Officers are planning additional programming over the December period which will see an increase visibility of PSNI and SNOs throughout the day and evening.
3.8	<p>The BCC Women's Steering Group, which includes elected Members and officers met on 11 November 2024 and together with the Women's Network, will consider the possibility of aligning further resource to their action plan particularly those actions designed to highlight the issue of EVAWG including the programme of activity related to International Women's Day. Information has also been circulated in respect of the Reclaim the Night march on Saturday 30 November 2024.</p>
3.9	<p>An internal officer meeting was also held to consider suggestions made by Members at Committee, including the provision of self defence classes in community facilities and the provision of alarms. It has been confirmed that alarms can be covered from within existing PCSP budgets and it is likely that the initial provision of self defence classes will be under £5,000 and it is anticipated this can be found within existing departmental spend limits.</p>
3.10	<p>It is intended that further engagement will take place with stakeholders to discuss further potential interventions so that these can be considered as part of any future discussion around the use of in-year underspend and to take advantage of any external funding opportunities.</p>
3.11	<p>In previous years, anti-spike kits were procured through the PCSP with the aim of distributing to licensed premises across the city. When this proved difficult to implement, the kits were distributed to women and girls through community organisations. Consideration is also being given to whether kits should be made available at council-run events and other events on council land.</p>
3.12	<p>This year saw the delivery of EmpowHER workshops which included safety information to women and girls, including personal alarms. It is proposed that officers work with local community groups and our own Community Services Team to ensure the distribution of the remaining personal alarms before Christmas.</p>

	On-going engagement
3.13	<p>Belfast City Council host and/or participate in a range of multi-agency forums which focus on safety issues and concerns, they include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police and Community Safety Partnerships • Multi-Agency Operational Task Group • City Centre Tasking Group (Community Safety) • Strategic Leadership Group including Complex Lives • Community Safety Forums across Belfast • Night Time Volunteer Group
3.14	<p>With the limited time before the Christmas period and the range of multi-agency meetings currently taking place it may be difficult to get the same stakeholders together to host a conversation on women's safety.</p>
3.15	<p>Given this, the opportunity will be taken to include 'Women's Safety' and 'Ending Violence Against Women and Girls' to the above multi agency meeting agendas to ensure coordination of initiatives and strategies.</p>
3.16	<p>Arrangements will be made for the specific joint meeting of People and Communities Committee and City Growth and Regeneration Committee with stakeholders, which was requested at the November People and Communities meeting as soon as possible following council ratification.</p> <p>Safer Socialising Initiative and Women's Night Safety Charter</p>
3.17	<p>Members will recall that at it's October meeting the Committee received a request to approve the Council's involvement in the Safer Socialising Initiative and for the organisation to sign up to the Women's Night Safety Charter. Members deferred for consideration of the matter to enable further information to be provided. Members are asked to note that a meeting between Members and Hospitality Ulster is being arranged.</p>
	Related Notices of Motion
3.18	<p>At the SP&R meeting on 25 October 2024, Members asked that an update on related notices of motion be provided to the committee. An overview of these motions including their latest status will be brought to the December SP&R meeting.</p>

	Financial and Resource Implications
3.19	The immediate cost implications of this report can be met from within existing departmental expenditure limits.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
3.20	The proposals are intended to support the safety of women and girls in the city.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Current initiatives being delivered by Belfast City Council