



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Notice of Motion re: Domestic Violence and Abuse- Response from the Minister
Date:	22nd February, 2013
Reporting Officer:	Mr. S. McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (extension 6314
Contact Officer:	Mr Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer (extension 6313)

1.0	Relevant Background Information
1.1	<p>Members will recall that the Council at its meeting on 7th January passed the following notice of motion:</p> <p>““This Council recognises that domestic violence and abuse is not a one gender issue – that it can affect anyone irrespective of age, gender, profession, race, religion, sexuality, disability or social background;</p> <p>This Council commends the work undertaken by Council officers in developing the Workplace Policy on Domestic Violence and Abuse that was launched on 25th October, 2012 and encourages other employers to undertake similar initiatives;</p> <p>This Council applauds the work of the Women’s Aid Federation in its efforts to continually highlight the issue of domestic violence and abuse, regardless of gender, and commends the work carried out by that organisation’s Belfast and Lisburn offices and that of other agencies associated with domestic violence; and</p> <p>This Council calls upon the Minister for Justice to examine how the Public Prosecution Service handles cases involving domestic violence and abuse and the impact it has on the victims.”</p>

2.0	Key Issues
2.1	The motion called upon the Minister for Justice to examine how the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) handles cases involving domestic violence and abuse and the impact it has on victims.
2.2	In his response, the Minister points out that the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 established the Public Prosecution Service a fully independent body and, therefore, it is not within his remit to accede to the content of the Motion.
2.3	He does suggest, however, that the Council should write directly to the Director of Public Prosecutions to raise its concerns about how it handles such cases.
2.4	The Minister also refers to the establishment in 2003 of the Criminal Justice Inspectorate Northern Ireland, which is an independent, statutory inspectorate which can inspect agencies such as the Public Prosecution Service.
2.5	That Inspectorate published a report in December 2010 on the effectiveness of the criminal justice system in responding to, and handling cases of, domestic violence and abuse which resulted in a number of recommendations for improvement across the criminal justice system. It has planned to conduct a follow up review of the recommendations during 2013.

3.0	Resource Implications
3.1	None associated with this report.

4.0	Equality and Good Relations Implications
4.1	None associated with this report.

5.0	Recommendations
5.1	The Committee is asked to note the receipt of the correspondence and take such action thereon as may be determined.

6.0	Decision Tracking
	Jim Hanna

7.0	Documents Attached
	Copy of Correspondence from the Minister of Justice