

Ministerial Foreword

Domestic abuse is never acceptable, no matter what form it takes, be it physical or non-physical abusive behaviour. It can affect people of every class, age, race, gender, gender identity or sexual orientation, from every workplace and community, our neighbours, our friends and even our families. Often the abuser is a partner or former partner, a close family member, the person who sits across from them at the dinner table, a person with whom they have shared their life, their home and their vulnerability; someone they should be able to trust but, tragically, cannot.

I am committed to doing everything I can to ensure effective measures are in place to protect victims of domestic abuse, in order to have a society where there is zero tolerance of this abhorrent behaviour, and importantly to ensure that victims feel safe. For too many home is no longer a safe place, nor does it offer a haven from harm. Rather it is the very place some are most vulnerable to abuse and to their abuser.

Since becoming Justice Minister measures to tackle domestic have been a key priority for me. This has included progressing legislation to introduce a new domestic abuse offence; work to introduce domestic homicide reviews; as well as the development of a new advocacy support service for victims of domestic and sexual violence and abuse. I am now bringing forward proposals for new Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Orders. The Notices would provide immediate short term protection from abusive behaviour, while the Court Orders would provide longer term protection to those subjected to abusive behaviour or at risk of this (whether physical or non-physical). Notices could be brought forward by the police while Orders could be applied for by the police, victims, potentially by specified third parties or made by the Courts as part of proceedings.

Finally, I would encourage those who are suffering abuse, who are vulnerable and who need help at this time to reach out, to call or email the Domestic and Sexual Abuse helpline (0808 802 1414 and 24hrsupport@dvhelpline.org), to reach out to a friend or neighbour, or to call the police (in an emergency call 999, otherwise telephone 101). Help is available. You are not alone.

NAOMI LONG, MLA
JUSTICE MINISTER