

20 July 2022

Belfast Area Domestic & Sexual Violence Partnership

1. Why is The Partnership based in a building that is a safe space strictly for women only?

The Partnership is not an organisation; it does not directly deliver support or services but is a partnership of organisations across Belfast made up of statutory, voluntary and community agencies such as Belfast Trust, Women's Aid, Men's Advisory Project NI, NIHE, Barnardos, NSPCC, Education, Police, Solicitors, Health, Universities etc. The organisations consider ways to work together to strengthen awareness and training for the benefit of all victims of domestic and sexual violence.

The Partnership members are jointly involved in developing guidance documents, awareness training, organise conferences, seminars etc. which can be widely disseminated across all agencies for use/attendance. The work of the Partnership (for which there is one in each of the Trust areas) reports to the Inter-ministerial leads across Justice and Health in line with the Government Strategy for Tackling Domestic and Sexual Violence. The Partnership convenes its meeting in Women's Aid, where the partnership coordinator and some of its members are based.

2. Why is The Partnership's Co-ordinator based in a building that is a safe space strictly for women only?

The Co-ordinator is the Partnership's administrator, they take minutes of meetings, organise conferences, add key documents to the Partnership's website and administratively maintains the Partnership App which is available for all to download including the public. The Co-ordinator post is financed by Belfast Trust but they are employed by Women's Aid.

3. What risk management assessment has been conducted to determine the appropriateness of these arrangements?

The Trust is unable to clarify.

4. How do BHSCT justify the decision to agree that responsibility for the day to day line management of The Partnership Co-ordinator should be supervised by Women's Aid Belfast & Lisburn?

Belfast Trust, as a member of the partnership, has a long standing working relationship with all organisations that support persons who experience domestic violence and sexual abuse including Men's Advisory Project NI, Women's Aid and the Rainbow Project. The key focus of Belfast Trust, as a

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member of the partnership, is to implement the Department of Health and Department of Justice's Strategy on 'Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland Strategy'.

The Co-ordinator post is financed by the Trust but they are employed by Women's Aid. This does not present a conflict of interest nor is it in breach of any sex discrimination legislation as it is per Women's Aid exemption under Section 75 and does not impose or impact on the work of the partnership for all the reasons mentioned above.

5. Who funds The Partnership's Co-ordinator Role recruited by public advertisement in 2021?

Belfast Trust funds this role, but the co-ordinator is employed by Women's Aid.

6. How did members of The Partnership justify the direct sex discrimination criteria applied in relation to this Co-ordinator Role?

As stated above, this post is financed by the Trust but the post holder is employed by Women's Aid. This does not present a conflict of interest nor is it in breach of any sex discrimination legislation as it is per Women's Aid exemption under Section 75 and does not impose or impact on the work of the partnership for all the reasons mentioned above.

7. What advice have members of The Partnership requested or received from the Equality Commission NI in relation to recruitment and the application of genuine occupational requirements (GOQ's)?

As aforementioned in response to number 6

8. What role do the BHSCT play in recruitment for roles working on behalf of The Partnership?

The Belfast Trust's Interim Co-Director, Early Intervention and Safeguarding, as Chair of the Partnership, was one of the recruitment panel members for the Co-ordinator role.

9. Why have The Partnership not responded to my correspondence about this matter (sent in January, February and June 2022)?

The Partnership Co-ordinator post is financed by Belfast Trust but they are employed by Women's Aid. The Trust would suggest that any further queries regarding outstanding correspondence are addressed with Women's Aid directly obo the Partnership.

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10. Are the BHSCT members of any of the other four Regional Domestic & Sexual Violence Partnerships?

No, but there is ongoing liaison with the other 4 DSVPs to share good practice and ensure regional consistency.

11. Are the BHSCT aware of any similar examples of directly discriminatory practices that may impact on any of the Regional Partnership's ability to create inclusive, collaborative multi-agency partnership working environments best equipped to generate positive action to eliminate abuse experienced across all Section 75 Groups? If so how are they justified?

The context and rationale for the location of the Partnership meetings and the coordinator role has been provided in previous answers.