

The National Lottery Community Fund

The Committee Clerk,
Room 242, Parliament Buildings,
Ballymiscaw
Stormont, Belfast
BT4 3XX
1st June 2020

Reference: Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill

Dear Sir/Madam,

The National Lottery Community Fund welcomes the development of the new Family and Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill to be brought to the Committee stage by the Committee for Justice.

We have invested over £13.5 million in more than 70 projects through our grant award schemes since April 2015 to support people impacted by domestic abuse. The larger projects seek to educate about domestic abuse and to offer therapeutic interventions to help support young people who have experienced domestic abuse. Many involve the mental health aspects of having lived through trauma and offer support to build the resilience of these young people to help them cope in later life and return to work or education. Some of these projects also aim to support children who have grown up in care and who need additional support on tackling isolation and improving social development. Victim Support Northern Ireland uses art therapy and counselling to help young people, who were disengaged from education and/or leaving the care system and engaged/at risk of engaging in criminal activity, as a direct consequence of their experience of aggression related trauma.

As well as helping younger people, many of the projects help adults through these adverse experiences. They focus on the wider community and develop relationships and networks between victims, as well as between organisations who specialise in domestic abuse. Fermanagh Women's Aid was a recipient of a grant which helped them to create tailored crisis intervention support and a personal development programme that provided women with the tools they need to improve their confidence, help them understand the patterns of abusive behaviours, develop coping strategies and improve their social networks to reduce isolation.

We have funded organisations such as The Fostering Network and Women's Aid who support families facing crisis situations with the intention of preventing separation of children from their families and being placed into care, as well as providing practical and emotional support through these situations.

The smaller projects we funded were to help organisations to run weekly activities, educational workshops, networking and celebration events, as well as practical grants to pay for improvements to advice centres and to purchase essential equipment for support groups to use.

We welcome this opportunity to highlight learning from our funding that supports women, children and all victims of domestic abuse. The above examples are non-legislative, practical approaches organisations have developed with National Lottery funding, to support people affected by domestic abuse. These projects primarily deal with responsive and restorative support.

We would welcome an opportunity to discuss this further with you. You can contact myself or David, Knowledge and Learning Officer to arrange a meeting and/or request further information.

Yours sincerely,

Norrie Breslin

Head of Knowledge and Learning, NI