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To: +Comm Justice Public Email <committee.justice@niassembly.gov.uk>
Cc: [REDACTED] >
Subject: Potential Amendments

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For the Attention of the Justice Committee

I am writing to the Justice Committee on behalf of Women's Aid Federation NI. As the lead domestic abuse support organisation in this jurisdiction, we have been campaigning for several years for the need to update our legislation here in relation to suicide in the aftermath of domestic homicide.

We know that unfortunately 30 adult women have been murdered here in Northern Ireland, the vast majority of whom there is suspected or confirmed domestic abuse background in these cases.

These are the women we know about, but they do not take into account all the women who have lost their life due to domestic abuse who have completed suicide following horrendous domestic abuse.

Within the Domestic & Domestic Abuse Strategy Year 2 Action Plan there is a commitment to working on introducing suicide within the current domestic homicide reviews, this however, has not happened as yet. Women's Aid are

Given the recent case outlined below, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with the Justice Committee to discuss the issue of suicide in domestic abuse cases. The Committee may have been aware of a legal precedent that was set in Scotland last week with the jurisdiction with the first prosecution of its kind in Scotland has changed the legislative framework in cases of suicide: [Man jailed for killing wife who jumped from bridge - BBC News](#)

Lee Milne was convicted of culpable homicide. The jury found him responsible even though his wife had jumped to her death.

Police said Kimberly was "clearly terrified" of 40-year-old Milne, and that her death was the result of her taking "a course of action to get away from him".

Milne was also found guilty of a separate charge of domestic abuse at several properties in the city.

Prosecutors said Kimberly had suffered significant violence at the hands of Milne in the 18 months prior to her death.

This included choking, grabbing her by the hair, striking her, shouting and swearing.

Women's Aid would like this to be a precedent here in NI and to consider the following:

- **Manslaughter Charge is Possible, but Complex:** In England and Wales, it is possible to charge a perpetrator with unlawful act manslaughter, even if the victim's final act was self-inflicted, provided it can be proven that the abuser's unlawful actions made a substantial contribution to the death. However, securing such convictions has been difficult due to legal complexities surrounding the "chain of causation" and the need to prove a direct link between the abuse and the suicide.
- **Calls for New Offence:** Organisations like Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse (AAFDA) and Project Resist run a "Suicide is Homicide" campaign, calling for a specific new law or statutory offence of "manslaughter by coercive or controlling behaviour". They argue this would provide juries with clearer guidance on the causative relationship and ensure perpetrators are held accountable with a sentence similar to manslaughter.
- Recent landmark inquests have explicitly highlighted the link between domestic abuse and subsequent suicide, bringing increased attention to the issue and supporting the calls for legal reform.
- While the law allows for potential manslaughter charges in some cases, there is **no specific legislation** that automatically changes the charge for all domestic abuse-related suicides, but we need to campaign and call for government action to improve accountability and prevention.
- Train and better equip PSNI in coercive control and to apply an investigative mindset when attending unexpected or sudden deaths including introducing guidance to police in attending unexpected deaths, including suspected suicides,
- Mental Health Strategy to be stronger on domestic abuse
- Suicide prevention strategy to include domestic abuse
- Public awareness of the issue – we need to be having these conversations

Women's Aid would also welcome the opportunity to discuss the issue of femicide as a specific crime, treating the murder of women motivated by gender-based violence as a specific crime. Many countries have already passed legislation recognising femicide as a separate offence punishable by life imprisonment. Countries include Italy (2025), Croatia (2024), Cyprus (2022) and Belgium (2023) within the EU that have adopted this historic law against femicide.

The NI Assembly has an opportunity to take a stand against femicide by introducing this landmark change to legislation and becoming beacons of change in a jurisdiction in which the issue of femicide affects so many people despite our small population.

Thank you to the Committee in advance for considering the above we welcome an opportunity to raise the issues with them and are happy to provide a more detailed briefing paper on request.

Kind regards

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