

Via E-Mail: [DSAStrategyConsultation@justice-ni.gov.uk](mailto:DSAStrategyConsultation@justice-ni.gov.uk)

Our ref: JM/RJ/0102

26 April 2023

To whom it may concern

### Re: Domestic and Sexual Violence Strategy 2023-2030 consultation

The Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse (COSICA) was established by the Historical Institutional Abuse (Northern Ireland) Act 2019 and the Commissioner's principal aim is to promote the interests of any person who suffered abuse while a child and while resident in an institution at some time between 1922 and 1995 (both inclusive). Articles 24 and 25 of the legislation set out the Commissioner's duties and powers to provide advice on matters concerning the interests of victims and survivors and to make representations and recommendations on such matters. We welcome the opportunity to provide advice on the draft Domestic and Sexual Violence Strategy 2023-2030.

We note that this submission is not intended to be comprehensive but instead highlights the importance of the Departments of Justice and Health respectively, ensuring that relevant aspects of the Strategy take proper account of the interests and needs of victims and survivors of historical institutional childhood abuse. It is vital that the Strategy embeds a **trauma informed approach** to domestic and sexual violence and abuse and recognises that victims of historical institutional childhood abuse will be within its scope. This must be considered in relation to victims and survivors who have been subjected to abuse as children and may not have disclosed this to services.

While we welcome that under pillar one relating to partnership, that 'ensuring policy, legislation and service development is informed with better quality data and research' is referenced, we note that this should include the development of baseline data, including **population prevalence research** on the incidence of sexual violence, including child sexual abuse. We are aware that the Republic of Ireland has recently published the results of the 2022 Sexual Violence Survey<sup>1</sup> and highlight that this timely publication may be helpful to consider in the context of establishing robust data in Northern Ireland.

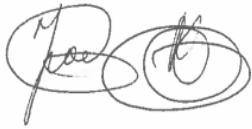
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<sup>1</sup> [Sexual Violence Survey 2022 – Main Results - CSO - Central Statistics Office](#)

As Commissioner, I have highlighted the need for prevalence research regarding violence and abuse in Northern Ireland, including non-recent child sexual abuse. Such research would provide a robust evidence base to inform not only the Strategy and the subsequent planning and delivery of services and interventions but would also support progressing a range of other critical government strategies and initiatives, such as, the Children and Young People's Strategy, the Looked After Children Strategy 'A Life Deserved' and the Violence against Women and Girls Strategy which is currently being developed.

Please do not hesitate to contact my Office if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fiona Ryan', enclosed within a circular scribble.

**Fiona Ryan**  
**COMMISSIONER**