



HM Government

Violence Against Women and Girls Newsletter

Spring 2019

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Foreword

I am pleased to welcome you to the Spring 2019 edition of the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) newsletter. We are delighted to be publishing the newsletter following the publication of our draft Domestic Abuse Bill, and the accompanying package of non-legislative action in January, and, our refreshed VAWG Strategy and Male Victims Statement in March.

We set out proposals for this landmark Bill on 21 January, together with a package of practical non-legislative action. We consulted on these, seeking views from victims and survivors, support organisations and frontline professionals, to harness their knowledge and expertise. I know that many of you responded to the consultation and provided much useful and cogent feedback which helped us clarify our thinking. Particular thanks must go to victims and survivors themselves who shared their stories in the hope that we can improve our response and prevent domestic abuse from continuing.

Having considered these responses, we are committed to delivering on the measures set out in the Queen's speech. We are taking forward our draft Domestic Abuse Bill to fundamentally change the way we as a country think about this insidious crime.

We also remain dedicated to ending all forms of violence against women and girls, and our 2016 – 2020 VAWG strategy set out our ambition to protect women and girls from violence, support victims, and provide leadership at a national and international level on ending these forms of abuse. But much has changed since we published our Strategy in 2016, and we have gone much further and faster than ever before. Therefore, we published our refreshed VAWG Strategy which sets out achievements made to date as well as setting out new action to tackle these crimes, in line with our 2016 vision. We are also publishing a position paper on male victims of crimes that are considered as part of VAWG, to reaffirm our commitment to male victims. Our 2016 Ending VAWG Strategy still remains the primary document that sets out our strategic vision for tackling VAWG, and both documents should be read together.

I want to stress to you that our commitment as Government to reduce VAWG and deliver real improvements to the lives of victims and survivors is not something that can be delivered without the efforts of voluntary and community sector organisations. I would like to thank you for all the hard work that you do, up and down the country, day after day on behalf of victims and survivors.

If you have any queries on the Government's work to reduce Violence Against Women and Girls, please email us at VAWGenquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk

Krisz Katona,

Head of Public Protection Unit.

Domestic Abuse Bill

In February 2017, the Prime Minister announced plans for work to transform the way we think about and tackle domestic abuse, leading to the introduction of a new Domestic Abuse Bill. The commitment to introduce this Bill was re-affirmed in the Queen's Speech at the opening of Parliament in June 2017.

We launched a consultation on International Women's Day on 8 March 2018 so that we could consider the views of those outside of government. Our consultation on Transforming the Response to Domestic Abuse ran for 12 weeks and closed on 31 May.

The aim of the consultation was to harness the knowledge and expertise of victims and survivors as well as charities, specialist organisation, and experts across policing, criminal justice, health, welfare, education, social services, employment and local authorities who deal with the effects of domestic abuse every day.

We received over 3000 responses from across the UK from a mixture of professionals and the public. During the consultation period we also held a large number of events across England and Wales, which were attended by over 1000 people including survivors, charities, local authorities and other professionals.

The consultation response identifies nine measures that require primary legislation to implement, which we will now take forward in a draft Domestic Abuse Bill.

These nine measures are:

- Provide for a statutory definition of domestic abuse;
- Establish the office of Domestic Abuse Commissioner and set out the Commissioner's functions and powers;
- Provide for a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Domestic Abuse Protection Order;
- Prohibit perpetrators of domestic and other forms of abuse from cross-examining their victims in person in the family courts (and prevent victims from having to cross-examine their abusers) and give the court discretion to prevent cross-examination in person where it would diminish the quality of the witness' evidence or cause the witness significant distress;
- Create a statutory presumption that complainants of an offence involving behaviour which amounts to domestic abuse are eligible for special measures in the criminal courts;
- Enable domestic abuse offenders to be subject to polygraph testing as a condition of their licence following their release from custody;
- Place the guidance supporting the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme on a statutory footing;
- Ensure that where a local authority, for reasons connected with domestic abuse, grants a new secure tenancy to a social tenant who had or has a secure lifetime or assured tenancy (other than an assured shorthold tenancy) this must be a secure lifetime tenancy; and
- Extend the extra-territorial jurisdiction of the criminal courts in England and Wales to further violent and sexual offences.

More details about the Domestic Abuse Bill and the accompanying package of non-legislative action can be found here on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy Refresh

In March 2016 we published our new Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, setting out an ambitious programme of reform, and which was supported by increased funding of £80m. In March 2017 the Chancellor announced additional funding of £20m to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse, bringing the total committed to £100m, over twice what was committed during the previous Parliament.

Our long-term vision remains the same, and so our refreshed Strategy is set out according to our existing strategic pillars:

- prevention,
- provision of services,
- partnership working, and;
- pursuing perpetrators.

It is important to bring together our work in the UK with efforts to tackle these issues internationally, and so the 2016 Strategy, and this refresh, represents a 'One Government' approach. This Strategy Refresh also sits alongside other, closely linked pieces of work from across Government such as the Victims' Strategy. We will also continue to ensure that our response to vulnerable people, and programmes of work to tackle modern slavery and child sexual abuse and exploitation, remain joined up and mutually supportive of this agenda.

Full details of the refreshed strategy, and our Action Plan Delivery Update, can be found [here](#)

Men and Boys Position Statement

At the same time as we announce our refreshed VAWG Strategy, we are publishing a position paper on male victims of crimes considered as part of VAWG, to reaffirm our commitment to male victims. We know that these crimes disproportionately affect women and girls, which is why these crimes are captured within the cross-Government Ending VAWG Strategy

However, we recognise that a significant number of men and boys also experience violent and abusive crimes that are captured in the Ending VAWG Strategy such as domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking, and so-called 'honour based' violence/abuse (HBV/A), including forced marriage, as well as the risks and harms associated with prostitution and sex work.

We are committed to preventing all forms of gender-based violence and addressing it wherever and however it occurs. Our paper sets out how we will:

- review the National Statement of Expectations to ensure it remains robust and effective, enabling commissioners to commission the best services for male (as well as female) victims;
- work with the Crown Prosecution Service to improve the gender and relationship breakdown of data;
- provide guidance on appropriate support for male victims; and
- provide £500,000 to support male victims of domestic abuse.

The paper can be found [here](#)

Wales Case study: North Wales Regional Partnership

This is a case study from the Welsh Government National Strategy Delivery Framework, which can be found here <https://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/commsafety/181716-vawdasv-delivery-framework-en.pdf>

Over the past several years local authorities and third sector organisations have been moving towards a regional approach for commissioning and funding of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence services. The new approach, which will be implemented incrementally, will improve value for money and provide efficiency savings through regional joint funding for services and shared administration. It will also reduce duplication through increased collaboration.

The North Wales Regional Partnership is made up of the following organisations:

- The six north Wales local authorities with the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) in North Wales acting as banker for the region;
- North Wales Police;
- Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board;
- Office of the Police and Crimes Commissioner (OPCC) acting as banker for the region;
- North Wales Police;
- Wales Ambulance Service Trust;
- North Wales Fire and Rescue Service;
- National Probation Service;
- HMPS Berwyn; and
- third sector organisations.

The region has developed a strong collaborative approach to delivering specialist services to victims and survivors of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. The North Wales Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategic Board was developed in 2016 to work in partnership to

ensure the most efficient and effective response to preventing serious harm caused by violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

The Strategic Board and the regional banker have worked together to pool the current funding by the OPCC and the violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence grant and protect provision of Independent Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence Advisers and perpetrator programmes in all six local authorities. From April 2018 commissioned services will be completing one business plan in accordance with the OPCC's manual of governance to cover all monies from the two funders. They will also be following an agreed outcomes Framework to ensure that they are monitoring their services using similar measurements. The outcomes Framework was ratified in summer 2018 and suggests a set of outcomes that services, working with the OPCC and the regional team, can select from, according to what best suits their service and its impact on service users.

More information about the Welsh Government National Strategy on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence can be found at

<https://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/safety/domesticabuse/?lang=en> and

<https://livefearfree.gov.wales/?lang=en>

Domestic Abuse 'Deep Dive' project

The Domestic Abuse (DA) 'Deep Dive' project was commissioned in 2015 by the National Criminal Justice Board to ensure the capacity and capability of the Criminal Justice System (CJS) to respond effectively to DA cases and effectively support victims. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) developed a DA best practice framework through this 'deep dive' exploration and analysis of the differing levels of performance in DA across local CJS.

- The framework brings together four main components of best practice:
- A clear multi-agency/community approach which addresses risk management and safeguarding procedures;
- Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) support;
- Trained and consistently deployed staff across all agencies (including robust judges); and
- In court services: proactive witness services/pre-trial familiarisation visits/appropriate use of special measures.

Whilst none of these elements are unusual in themselves, they were identified in the 'deep dives' as the most significant contributors to the ability of areas to achieve successful outcomes in DA cases. The DA best practice framework emphasises the importance of all agencies working closely together to ensure cases are handled effectively, and victims and witnesses are supported appropriately.

These four emerging best practice components were tested in three Magistrate Court systems, chosen because of the: high volumes of DA cases going through the MC; low performance on DA and differences in their DA and general crime outcomes; and geographical split across England and Wales with London included.

The full evaluation and recommendations report showed that all of the test sites improved their DA performance on the majority of indicators, improving from low performing areas, to being in line with or above national average DA performance. The four best practice components then were approved as forming the best practice framework by the National Criminal Justice Board (NCJB) in March 2018.

Since September 2018, DA regional leads across England and Wales have been developing local plans to implement the best practice framework. The implementation date commenced in January 2019 and performance will be closely monitored. A full evaluation report will be compiled by the National DA Best Practice Delivery Group and presented to the NCJB in September 2019.

UK Aid and Ending Violence against Women and Girls

Ending violence against women and girls (VAWG) is one of the five foundational areas of the Department for International Development's (DFID) [Strategic Vision on Gender Equality](#). Violence affects women and girls everywhere, both here in the UK and overseas. Rooted in gender inequality, VAWG is a systemic and pervasive human rights abuse that has been normalised into the way societies think and act. It threatens the lives and wellbeing of women and girls, and prevents them from accessing opportunities that are fundamental to both freedom and development: education, healthcare, jobs, and leadership. We cannot achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) without tackling VAWG.

During this year's 16 Days of Activism to end Gender Based Violence, the Secretary of State for International Development announced that DFID will provide up to £50 million to support the Africa-led movement to end Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). This will focus on accelerating the pace of change and achieving results at scale to contribute to the vision in the SDGs of a world free of the practice of FGM by 2030.



The Secretary of State with specialist FGM midwives and activists in a London clinic

This 16 Days, DFID also focused on sharing the growing body of rigorously tested evidence emerging from [What Works to Prevent Violence](#), DFID's £25 million flagship research and innovation programme (2013-19). *What Works* has supported and rigorously evaluated 15 innovative approaches to prevent VAWG across 12 countries in Africa and Asia that have potential to be taken to scale. *What Works* has demonstrated that VAWG is preventable. Interventions tackling values and behaviours – in homes, schools, and communities – can achieve significant reductions of around 50% in just a few years.



What Works event sharing evidence from schools-based interventions, with speeches from Lord Bates, Minister of State; Charlotte Watts, DFID Chief Scientific Officer; and *What Works* researchers and programme implementers

DFID supported the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) on their Prevention of Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) film festival hosted by Lord Ahmad on 23 November. At the film festival, DFID funding of £500,000 to support deployments from the FCO's PSVI deployable civilian expert roster was announced. The experts will provide advice on implementation of the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict in addition to training for peacekeepers on GBV and PSVI issues.

The Secretary of State for International Development with UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie



Northumbria Cyber Stalking & Harassment Pilot

The Cyber Stalking & Harassment Pilot has seen the development of a small team of experts (in IT, domestic abuse investigation and victim support) working on new ways to evidence, investigate and prosecute cyber-enabled stalking and safeguard its victims in Northumbria. The team began work in January 2018 and has already produced some excellent results. By the end of September, for example, the team had taken on full ownership of 39 investigations, had already secured a charge in 21 of these cases and 15 convictions and 2 not guilty outcomes. Indeed the team have seen just 3 of their cases end in 'No Further Action' to date; a great outcome that is due, at least in part, to the excellent levels of victim engagement secured by the team IDVA; a specialist worker who undertakes joint visits with officers and has brought many (initially reluctant) victims fully on board.

Contact with other officers has also been important, with the pilot team triaging cases and assuming responsibility for those identified as high risk, whilst also advising OICs investigating lower risk cases. This work has enabled another 30 cases of suspected cyber-enabled stalking or harassment to be progressed (also with the support of the team IDVA) and has enhanced both the confidence and competence of many front-line staff. But the team haven't stopped there. They have also been involved in wider officer training – including an initial training package delivered to approximately six hundred 24/7 officers in the early weeks of the pilot and the recent development of a digital toolkit. They will also be supporting the development of further officer training in the New Year - focussed on how to identify a case of cyber-enabled stalking or harassment and secure evidence of this behaviour, from the complainant and the suspect, in the earliest possible stages of an investigation – alongside training for specialist refuge and outreach workers on how they can best advise their service users on maximising their on-line security and securing evidence of digital abuse.

If you would like further information about the pilot please contact DCI Louise Cass-Williams through the [VAWG Enquiries mailbox](#), and we will pass on your message.

How your phone can protect you from domestic abuse

Suzanne Jacob, the CEO of [SafeLives](#) recently made this short film for the BBC.

<https://www.bbc.com/ideas/videos/how-your-phone-can-protect-you-from-domestic-abuse/p06sfbnn>

“See Her” work and exhibition

On 26 and 27 November to mark the “International Day for the elimination of violence against Women” Advance held an art exhibition showcasing the work created by women survivors of domestic abuse, supported by Advance. The event enabled us to engage the public and raise awareness about this issue through art.



The art was a result of workshops led by artist Rachel Gadsden and empowered the women to take ownership of their story and for their voice to be heard through this medium.

This was part of the group work funded by “Meeting Survivors Where They Are” project, part of the Home Office Transformation Funding to the three boroughs of Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea and Hammersmith & Fulham. The project aims to make support more accessible and provide long term, step-down support to women who have experienced gender based violence including domestic abuse. Through the support, we aim to reduce isolation, improve confidence and build networks in the community, to enable women survivors to move on from the trauma of their experiences of domestic abuse.



The art group was facilitated by Rachel Gadsden, a British visual and performance artist, who has exhibited internationally and led projects creating cross-cultural visual dialogues that consider the most profound notions of what it is to be human.

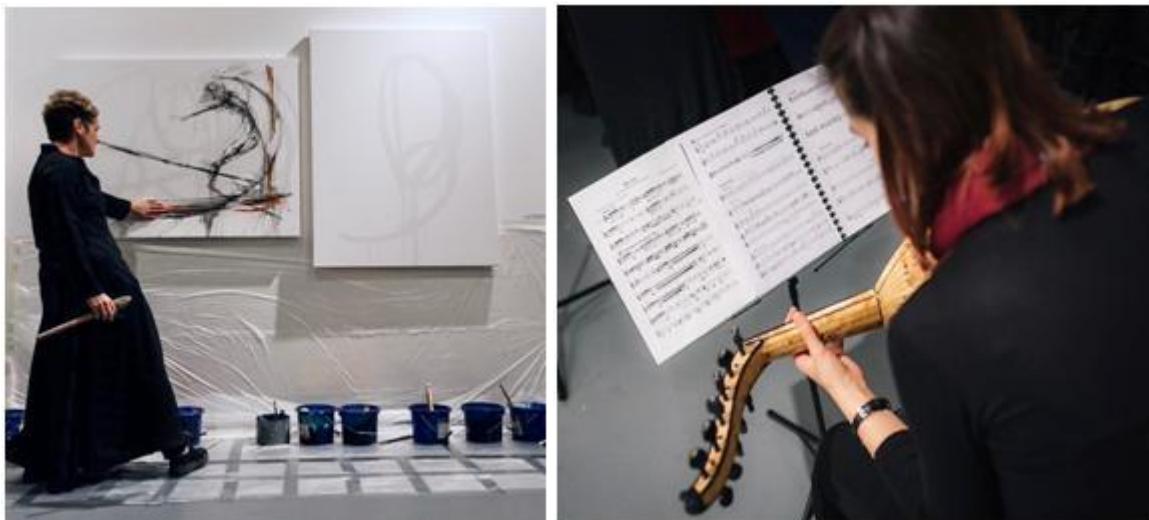


Rachel worked with 10 survivors of domestic abuse supported by Advance. The art focuses on the women celebrating survival and hope through creativity. One of the survivors said of the experience “through the group I made connections with people and with creativity and gained some peace in my mind”. A resounding message from many of the women was that whilst they were in the abusive relationship their creativity was stifled and suppressed but the group has allowed them to rediscover it.



On the 26th there was a private viewing of the exhibition that was opened by Cecilia French, Director of Public Protection, Home Office.





The event included a live art performance by artist Rachel Gadsden and music composer Freddie Meyers featuring oud player Rihab Azar, which expresses the challenges and ultimate survival of women who have suffered domestic abuse.



On the 27th the Advance team hosted professionals from the sector and engaged with the public during an open viewing, raising awareness about the prevalence of domestic abuse and Advance's work.

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