

# Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls Equality Impact Assessment

March 2011



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# Background

## Context

In England and Wales, since the age of 16, 29 per cent of women have experienced domestic abuse, 20 per cent have experienced sexual assault and 19 per cent have experienced stalking.<sup>1</sup> Internationally, between 40 and 60 per cent of women surveyed in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Peru, Samoa, Thailand and Tanzania said that they had been physically and/or sexually abused by their close partners.<sup>2</sup> This is unacceptable and the Government has committed to producing a strategy to end violence against women and girls (VAWG). This has been published in two parts:

- *Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls* outlines the Government's strategic framework for tackling VAWG over the Spending Review period (published November 25<sup>th</sup> 2010); and
- *Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls: Action Plan* details the work the Government will undertake to tackle VAWG in 2011/12 and beyond.<sup>3</sup>

This document summarises the findings from the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) undertaken to inform the development of this work.

1 Smith, K. Coleman, K. Eder, S. and Hall, P (2011) Homicides, Firearm Offences and Intimate Violence 2009/10 (*Supplementary Volume 2 to Crime in England and Wales 2009/10*) Home Office Statistical Bulletin 01/11, Home Office <http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/11/hosb0111.pdf>

2 World Health Organisation (2005) *Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence Against Women* [http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who\\_multicountry\\_study/en/](http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who_multicountry_study/en/)

3 Visit [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/vawg](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/vawg) to download these documents

## Aims and Objectives

The Government's strategy outlines the need for international institutions, government, civil society and the public to work together to end VAWG. Its focus is to:

- **prevent** such violence from happening by challenging the attitudes and behaviours which foster it and intervening early where possible to prevent it;
- **provide** adequate levels of support where this violence does occur;
- work in **partnership** to obtain the best outcome for victims and their families;
- take action to **reduce the risk** to women and girls who are victims of these crimes and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice.

Whilst there are a number of specific actions to address different types of VAWG, the strategy provides a coherent and integrated plan on how central government departments will address VAWG under the four areas outlined above.

## Scope of the EIA work

The VAWG strategy is the start of a longer process, and while we are able to identify the potential impact at a strategic level through this assessment, we will conduct more detailed assessments of the impact of the various elements of the strategy, through individual EIA exercises.

## Methodology

### Approach to data collection and analysis

The VAWG action plan builds upon previous public consultations on this subject including regional events with stakeholders from the statutory and voluntary sector, focus groups with women and young people and seeking the views of the public.

Existing data sources were also reviewed to better understand the prevalence of VAWG. However, gathering robust data on the prevalence of VAWG and the disproportionate impact on groups with protected characteristics is difficult: it is a hidden crime which often goes underreported. The British Crime Survey shows that there is little evidence of variations in the prevalence of domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking at the local level by type of area or socio-economic grouping.<sup>4</sup> It affects women and girls in every socio-demographic group, age and ethnic background.<sup>5</sup>

Further research does indicate that some groups may be more vulnerable to abuse, this is considered further in the next section.

### Results of consideration of existing quantitative and qualitative data

A review of existing data highlighted the following impacts in relation to equality target areas:

<sup>4</sup> Smith, K. Coleman, K. Eder, S. and Hall, P (2011) see 1

<sup>5</sup> Finney, A. (2006) *Domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking: findings from the 2004/05 British Crime Survey* Home Office Online Report 12/06, Home Office <http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs06/rdsolr1206.pdf>

### Race

Women and girls from a black, minority-ethnic (BME) background may find it more difficult to leave an abusive situation due to cultural beliefs or a lack of appropriate services.

Forced marriages, female genital mutilation (FGM) and so called 'honour'-based violence (HBV) are more likely to be prevalent in (although are not limited to) certain communities, including BME communities, although the data we have on these crimes is limited:

*FGM:* 66,000 women in the UK have had their genitals mutilated<sup>6</sup>, this is believed to be an underestimate because of increases in immigration since the 2001 census which provided the basis for this estimate.

*Forced marriage:* In 2010, the joint Home Office/FCO Forced Marriage Unit provided 1735 instances of advice and support related to possible forced marriage. Active assistance was provided in 469 cases of forced marriage.<sup>7</sup>

*HBV:* In 2004, the Metropolitan Police decided to re-open 114 murder cases from the previous decade, which they now think may be so-called 'honour' killings. While there are no published statistics of honour-related violence, it is thought that there are around 12 honour-related killings

<sup>6</sup> Dorkenoo, E. Morison, L. Macfarlane, A. (2007) A statistical study to estimate the prevalence of FGM in England and Wales, Summary Report, FORWARD and the Department of Health  
<sup>7</sup> The joint Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office Forced Marriage Unit [www.fco.gov.uk/fmu](http://www.fco.gov.uk/fmu)

annually.<sup>8</sup> In 2007, IKWRO, a London based organisation, dealt with 60 cases of individuals being threatened with death for reasons of honour suggesting that national figures could be much higher than reported.<sup>9</sup>

Findings from the British Crime Survey show that once other variables are controlled for, white people were more likely to be victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault than those from a non-White background. However, when behavioural factors such as use of any drug, frequency of alcohol consumption and number of visits to a nightclub in the last month are controlled for, there is no statistically significant difference by ethnicity in the risk of being a victim of domestic abuse or sexual assault.<sup>10</sup>

### Disability

People with a long-term illness or disability are more likely to be a victim of domestic abuse and stalking than people without. It should be noted that this does not imply causation and these findings should be treated as indicative rather than conclusive.<sup>11</sup>

Further research indicates that disabled women or those with mental health problems are at a higher risk of victimisation. Disabled women may be around twice as likely to be assaulted or raped, and more than half of all women with a disability may have experienced some form of domestic violence in their lifetime.<sup>12</sup> In addition, at least half of all women in touch with mental health services have experienced violence and abuse, yet the level of awareness amongst mental health professionals can be low and women are rarely asked about their experience of violence or sexual abuse<sup>13</sup>.

### Gender Identity

The report from focus groups run by the Women's National Commission found that transgender women were fearful in public spaces, particularly when using public transport.

Transsexual women reported harassment, violence and they routinely experienced abuse from children and young people<sup>14</sup>.

### Religion and Belief

As outlined above, VAWG cuts across geographical, religious, ethnic and national boundaries. Certain types of violence do disproportionately impact women from some communities, and these have been listed and outlined above under Race.

### Sexual Orientation

A national survey in 2002 found that 64 per cent of lesbian women surveyed had experienced some form of homophobic violence or harassment<sup>15</sup>. A London based study, also in 2002, found that 75 per cent of lesbians who had been assaulted felt unable to report the crime to the Police<sup>16</sup>.

One study of LGBT people in Brighton and Hove showed that 30 per cent of this sample had experienced violence, abuse or harassment from a family member or someone close to them in their lifetimes. There were differences between those within the LGBT grouping, with bisexual and transgender people more likely to experience domestic violence and abuse than lesbians and gay men, as well as those with a disability or poor mental health<sup>17</sup>.

### Gender

Women are more likely than men to have experienced intimate violence across all the different types of abuse. Since the age of 16, 29 per cent of women have experienced domestic abuse, 20 per cent have been sexual assaulted and 19 per cent have experienced stalking. The equivalent figures for men are 16 per cent have experienced domestic abuse, 2 per cent have been sexual assaulted and 9 per cent have experienced stalking.<sup>18</sup>

8 The Metropolitan Police Service [www.met.police.uk](http://www.met.police.uk)

9 Home Affairs Committee (2008) *Domestic violence, forced marriage and "honour"-based violence*

10 Smith, K. Coleman, K. Eder, S. and Hall, P (2011) see 1

11 Smith, K. Coleman, K. Eder, S. and Hall, P (2011) see 1

12 Hague, G. Thiara, R. K. Magowan, P. (2008) *Disabled Women and Domestic Violence: Making the Links* Women's Aid

13 Fritchie, R. (1999) *Secure futures for women: making a difference* Department of Health

14 Women's National Commission (2007) *Still We Rise* [http://www.thewnc.org.uk/publications/doc\\_details/418-still-we-rise-wnc-focus-groups-report-november-2009.html](http://www.thewnc.org.uk/publications/doc_details/418-still-we-rise-wnc-focus-groups-report-november-2009.html)

15 Greater London Authority (2002) *Capitalwoman* Mayor of London

16 Greater London Authority (2002) *Equalities framework* Mayor of London

17 Browne, K. (2007) *Count Me In Too - Domestic Violence and Abuse Additional Findings Report* Spectrum

18 Smith, K. Coleman, K. Eder, S. and Hall, P (2011) see 1

The vast majority of the incidents of domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking are perpetrated by men on women. This is in contrast to findings on overall crime victimisation where men, particularly young men, were more likely to have experienced violent crime.<sup>19</sup>

### Age

Children and young people can be affected directly or indirectly by VAWG. For example, more than one third of all rapes recorded by the Police are committed against children under 16 years of age<sup>20</sup> and in 2002 the Department of Health reported that at least 750,000 children witness domestic violence in their lifetime.

The British Crime Survey reports that the risk of domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking was higher for females in younger age groups. Females aged between 16 and 19 were at the highest risk of sexual assault. Females aged between 16 and 24 were at a higher risk of domestic abuse or being stalked.<sup>21</sup>

### Other risk indicators

**Pregnancy:** Studies show that 30 per cent of domestic violence starts during pregnancy<sup>22</sup> and up to 9 per cent of women are thought to be abused during pregnancy or after giving birth.<sup>23</sup> A further study indicates that 70 per cent of teenage mothers are in violent relationships.<sup>24</sup>

**Marital status:** People who were separated, divorced or widowed may have higher odds of being victim of domestic abuse and stalking compared with all other marital status groups.<sup>25</sup> It is important to note that this link does not imply causation.

**Drug use:** People who had used any drug in the last year had higher odds of being a victim of domestic abuse and sexual assault compared with those who had not. 9 per cent of those who had experienced serious sexual assault since the age of 16 thought the offender had been under the influence of drugs. 2 per cent of those who had experienced serious sexual assault since the age of 16 were under the influence of drugs they had chosen to take at the time. 6 per cent of victims reported that the offender had drugged them during the last incident of serious sexual assault they had experienced.<sup>26</sup> It is important to note that this link does not imply causation.

**Alcohol:** 36 per cent of those who had experienced serious sexual assault since the age of 16 thought the offender had been under the influence of alcohol. A quarter of those who had experienced serious sexual assault since the age of 16 were under the influence of alcohol at the time.<sup>27</sup> Alcohol use has also been found to be associated with a four fold risk of violence from a partner.<sup>28</sup> It is important to note that this link does not imply causation.

19 Flatley, J. Kershaw, C. Smith, K. Chaplin, R. and Moon, D. (Eds.) (2010) *Crime in England and Wales 2009/10*. Home Office Statistical Bulletin 12/10 London: Home Office

<http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/10/hosbl1210.pdf>

20 Walker, A. Kershaw, C. and Nicholas, S. (2006) *Crime in England and Wales 2005/06* Home Office Statistical Bulletin, Home Office <http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/06/hosbl1206.pdf>

21 Smith, K. Coleman, K. Eder, S. and Hall, P (2011) see 1

22 Lewis & Drife (2001, 2005) and McWilliams & McKiernan

(1993) cited in Home Affairs Committee, Domestic violence, forced marriage and 'honour-based' violence: Volume 1, 2008, p23

23 Taft (2002) cited in Home Affairs Committee, Domestic violence, forced marriage and 'honour-based' violence: Volume 1 (2008)

24 Harrykissoon et al., (2008) *Prevalence and patterns of intimate partner violence among adolescent mothers during the postpartum period*, Archives of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine Vol. 156, No. 4, 2002 quoted in Women's Aid, Safe Issue 26, (2008)

25 Smith, K. Coleman, K. Eder, S. and Hall, P (2011) see 1

26 Smith, K. Coleman, K. Eder, S. and Hall, P (2011) see 1

27 Smith, K. Coleman, K. Eder, S. and Hall, P (2011) see 1

28 Gil-Gonzalez D, et al., (2006) *Alcohol and intimate partner violence: do we have enough information to act on?* European Journal of Public Health



# Consultation and involvement

The Government's approach to tackling VAWG builds on the findings from several previous consultations on this subject and reports from focus groups which were conducted by the National Children's Bureau and the Women's National Commission. Specific consultation events have also been held with the voluntary and statutory sector.

## Consultation activities

### Event with voluntary organisations (2010)

The Home Office organised an event for stakeholders from the voluntary sector. Approximately 50 organisations attended including Respond (which works with children and adults with learning disabilities), IKWRO (which provides support and advocacy for speakers of Kurdish, Arabic, Farsi, Dari and Turkish) and Forward (an African Diaspora women charity).

### Informing our work on stalking (2010)

Stalking as an issue has been underserved by previous policies in this area. In order to develop and strengthen our approach, the Home Office arranged a workshop with approximately 20 experts including specialist women organisations, families of victims and people who had been stalked themselves.

This was followed up by a National Stalking Conference with the Police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to raise awareness and consult on the next steps. Representatives

from all 43 police force areas, 10 CPS areas and specialist stalking charities took part.

### Events with domestic violence co-ordinators and representatives from local statutory organisations (2010)

Approximately, 70 representatives from local statutory agencies from London, South West, North East, East Midlands and East of England took part in consultation events arranged by the Home Office and run in partnership with an organisation. These meetings were held to ensure that the Government's strategy took account of the local perspective on tackling VAWG and the experiences of frontline specialists. The events were targeted mainly at local domestic violence and VAWG co-ordinators but agencies such as Primary Care Trusts, the Police and Victim Support were also represented.

### Baroness Stern's Review into How Rape Complaints are Handled by Public Authorities in England and Wales (2010)

Baroness Stern conducted 11 regional visits across England, Wales and Scotland during her review. These events were attended by a range of public sector agencies and, voluntary organisations who represent victims (and perpetrators) of sexual violence, including local authorities, the Police, the NHS, members of the judiciary, workers in Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) and academics. She also met with almost 40 professionals, ranging from

barristers and members of the judiciary to, representatives from voluntary organisations and members of academia.

#### Sara Payne's Report into rape: The Victim Experience Review (2009)

Between September and October 2009 Sara Payne held three focus groups in Coventry, London and Essex. The majority of women who attended had experienced rape or sexual abuse themselves and some were speaking on behalf of their children. She met separately with frontline police officers and members of the Crown Prosecution Service.

#### Ipsos Mori Polling (2009)

Ipsos Mori, funded by the Home Office, carried out 1,006 telephone interviews with people aged over 18 in Britain from 27<sup>th</sup> February – 1<sup>st</sup> March 2009. The questions covered women's safety; acceptability of hitting/slapping a woman; likelihood of taking action if violence is suspected; prevalence of suspicion or knowledge of violence against women, and the perceptions of a woman's responsibility in a situation where a rape has occurred

#### Women's National Commission: Still We Rise (2009)

24 focus groups with 300 women and girls were conducted by the Women's National Commission to find out about their experiences. The full report from the focus groups is available at [www.thewnc.org.uk](http://www.thewnc.org.uk)<sup>29</sup> The groups comprised of:

- Refugee and asylum seeking women (x2)
  - Trafficked women
  - Women in rural areas
  - 'Vulnerable' women
  - Lesbians
  - Black and minority ethnic women (x3)
  - Girls and young women
  - Older women
- Women offenders
  - Women in prison
  - Disabled women
  - Women sex workers
  - Young women (University students)
  - Women working shifts / in retail
  - Women affected by female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Bisexual women
  - Transgender women
  - Women in prostitution/ street homeless women
  - Sexual violence survivors (x2)
  - Traveller women

Of the 300 women and girls who opted to complete a form to monitor equalities:<sup>30</sup>

- 7% were aged 12-16; 18% were aged 16-24; 26% were aged 25-34; 21% were aged 35-44; 17% were aged 45-54; 6% were aged 55-64 and 3% were over 65 years of age;
- 17% identified as being disabled;
- 10% identified as lesbian, 4% as bisexual, 60% heterosexual and 4% as 'other';
- 42% women identified as Black, Asian or other minority ethnic group; 3% identified as mixed parentage, and 55% identified as white;
- 18% women stated they were not religious; 5% identified as Buddhist, 2% Hindu, 11% Muslim, 2% Sikh; 32% identified as Christian; and 1% as Jewish.

<sup>29</sup> Women's National Commission (2007) *Still We Rise* [http://www.thewnc.org.uk/publications/doc\\_details/418-still-we-rise-wnc-focus-groups-report-november-2009.html](http://www.thewnc.org.uk/publications/doc_details/418-still-we-rise-wnc-focus-groups-report-november-2009.html)

<sup>30</sup> Note that the numbers do not add up to 100 as all the questions were not answered.

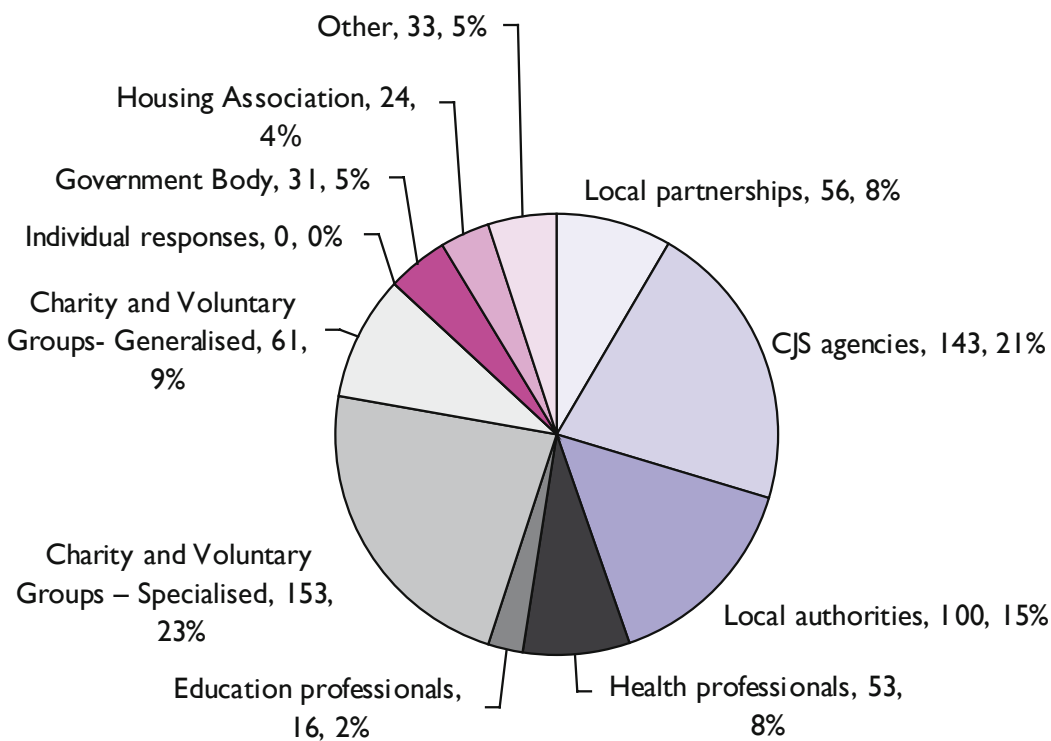
National Children’s Bureau (NCB): Young People’s Response (2009)<sup>31</sup>

The NCB held a series of focus groups with 153 young people. These included people between the ages of 14 and 19 (and up to 21 for one group with learning difficulties) from a variety of backgrounds, geographical spread and ability. 11 focus groups were held in total, nice focus groups were held in youth clubs, special interest groups, support groups and groups specifically targetting young people with specific needs and abilities. These groups were run by youth worker/ community workers. Two focus groups were school-based and run by NCB staff.

Regional stakeholder events (2009)

The Home Office organised nine stakeholder events in each English region with involving a total of 670 frontline practitioners from the statutory and voluntary sector:

Attendance at Stakeholder Events – totals



Consultation achievements

All the consultation activities outlined above helped inform the strategy development stage and was successful in:

- understanding public attitudes towards VAWG;
- raising awareness of VAWG;
- getting feedback from the statutory sector and voluntary organisations on the Government’s future approach; and
- using the knowledge and experiences of women’s organisations and victims to shape policy.

<sup>31</sup> The report is available on the archived Home Office website: [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100418065544/http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/Violence\\_against\\_women\\_and\\_i.html](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100418065544/http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/Violence_against_women_and_i.html)

## Assessment and analysis

A cross-departmental response to tackling VAWG was considered as crucial. Research showed that this response should take into account a range of equality issues to ensure positive outcomes for all women and girls. Measures in the action plan will give due regard to the following equality areas:

### Voluntary organisations

Three key areas of concern were identified: cash, commissioning and capacity. Key issues within these areas were:

- the patchy and inconsistent funding for specialist voluntary organisations who support women affected by abuse;
- a lack of influence over the setting of priorities in the local area; and
- little opportunity to engage local commissioners of services.

### Race

A lack of existing service provision for BAMER (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee) women and children was reported by voluntary organisations. This was echoed by women who took part in the focus groups who also advised that they preferred BAMER-only services as the service provided was accessible and relevant to them. BAMER women also spoke about mainstream services stigmatising and judging them following disclosure.

### Disability

Disabled women reported a lack of services which were tailored to their needs including a

lack of information in sign language. Disabled women also advised that their access to the criminal justice system was limited and recommended advocates are provided to support them while their case was going through trial, as well as, improved training for professionals including the Police.

### Gender Identity

Transgender people reported the limited provision of transgender-friendly support services or dedicated transgender support services in generic organisations. Transgender women also reported concern about the inconsistent treatment they received from agencies in the criminal justice system, particularly from the Police.

### Religion and belief

Some women said they wanted faith groups and religious leaders to do more to raise awareness about VAWG. They also highlighted the potential conflict between religious-based tribunals and the Government's commitment to end gender-based violence.

In particular, women recommended that local authorities should use service agreements with community groups to encourage work to tackle VAWG. They noted that where community or faith groups were consulted it was with the male leaders only and therefore not representative of female opinion.

### Sexual Orientation

Women reported a lack of trust and confidence in the way in which services respond to violence and wider LGBT issues. Where women sought help after experiencing abuse from their partner, they first looked to family members or friends for assistance. Women were unsure about what support services were available to them and felt that agencies assumed that the perpetrator was male. LGBT women also spoke about being stigmatised and judged by services.

Women felt that some of these issues could be resolved and their lives vastly improved if schools raised awareness about LGBT issues to tackle stereotypes, homophobia and transphobia. There was also strong support for schools to teach healthy relationships including discussions on same-sex relationships.

### Gender

The gendered pattern of VAWG needs to be acknowledged and understood and there was general agreement across groups that prevention of violence should be prioritised. Women felt that the Government has a clear leadership role in this area but raised the concern that statutory services had limited understanding of equality issues and there remains of culture of institutional sexism.

Organisations supporting male perpetrators stressed the importance of working with men to challenge their behaviour and getting them to support work to end violence.

### Age

Women and girls advised of the importance of considering healthy relationships from a young age. They note that there was a need for appropriately signposted support services which took into account young people's needs.

Older women advised that empowerment should be a key part of work to prevent VAWG and that there should be clearer information about how the criminal justice system works.

### Other groups

Women working in the sex industry, traveller women and other minority groups all reported

feeling less believed and less supported by agencies.

Women offenders felt they were given a poor service from agencies because of their previous convictions or their involvement in prostitution, and there was a lack of awareness of the availability of specialist violence against women services in prison. In particular women offenders wanted women's prisons to have posters on violence against women with national helpline numbers, and information about other support available. Women also wanted all probation and prison officers in women's prisons to have training on identifying and responding to VAWG.

## Overview

The overall aim of the Government is to tackle the disproportionate impact of inter-personal violence on women and girls through its strategy. The Government acknowledges that such violence is fuelled by gender inequality and makes a firm commitment to end this.

The Government will not treat women and girls as a homogenous group. Rather it will seek to understand the potential impact of an action on particular groups of women and girls in this country and overseas. More detailed analyses will be developed of the potential impact of each action contained in the VAWG strategy.

### Monitoring and governance

The actions and milestones in the strategy will be monitored by:

- A VAWG Inter-Ministerial Group (IMG) chaired by the Home Secretary which will meet on a quarterly basis.
- A cross-departmental VAWG Delivery Board, managed by the Home Office, with responsibility for oversight of the actions to which all individual departments, and associated agencies have agreed. The Delivery Board will meet every six weeks and will report to the VAWG IMG.



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