

Welcome

to the new look Women's Engagement Newsletter

Welcome to our new look Women's Engagement Newsletter. More than 20 per cent of you responded to our survey in December, with the highest responses to date for a Home Office readership survey, giving us plenty of information to make improvements. Thanks to all who took the time to feed back to us.

The good news is that the newsletter is well read. The results revealed that 80 per cent of you read it, more than a quarter use the information directly in your work and over a third pass it on to colleagues and associates. You also told us that the content was both relevant (86 per cent) and interesting (87 per cent) and told us of a wide range of subjects you would be interested in reading about. You also told [continued](#) ►

Home Secretary and Minister for Women and Equalities



When it comes to policies that affect women, I think it's only right that we listen to women, to women's organisations and to the women's sector. Many of you are delivering vital frontline services – you know what works – and so we need your views and your expertise.

Our announcement that we will create two new specific criminal offences of stalking shows that we are willing to listen. We are today tabling amendments to the Protection of Freedoms Bill so that these new offences can be enacted as soon as possible. You told us that stalking should be an offence in its

own right, we have listened and we have acted.

Stalking is an abhorrent crime that can devastate lives and it's an issue on which I have campaigned for many years. Millions of people – men and women – have been victims of stalking. A third of victims will

lose their job, their relationship will break down or they will be forced to move house as a result of being stalked. It is because stalking can cause such horrendous damage that we agree it should be taken seriously and should be the subject of new criminal offences.

[continued](#) ►

Pass on our newsletter and sign up

Please pass on our newsletter to anyone you think would be interested. We want to ensure that as wide a range of women and organisations have the chance to receive it. If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, [unsubscribe here](#).

Welcome continued

us that you felt the content could be shorter and sharper and that the design could be improved upon. Finally, you requested more feedback, comment, debate and guest contributions.

We hope this newsletter – which we are re-launching to coincide with International Women’s Day – reflects your feedback. It focuses on Government’s efforts to tackle violence against women and girls, including announcements being made today by the Prime Minister. It also provides information on developments from across Government, including the UK’s contribution to the United Nations summit on women, which is coming to an end tomorrow.

This is just the start. We will be looking to discuss the issues you said you wanted to read about and including a wider range of voices.



In the meantime, if you have any feedback please [email Women's engagement](#).



Home Secretary and Minister for Women and Equalities continued

Dealing more effectively with stalking is just one part of our wider work to tackle violence against women and girls. Today, I am publishing an updated Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Action Plan. Included in that action plan is the commitment to give women access to information about the past actions of a new partner, where that will help keep them safe, a scheme that is sometimes called Clare’s Law.

In total we have allocated £28 million for specialist services until 2015. That money will fund national domestic violence and stalking helplines to which women in need can reach out.

It will pay for trained specialists to give intensive one-on-one support to victims of domestic violence. And it will fund work to bring together the police, social services and other local agencies to help secure the safety of high-risk victims of abuse.

Fulfilling our pre-election pledge, we are also providing new funding of £10.5 million for rape support centres. Since we made that commitment, I’m proud to say that not a single rape support centre has closed.

In future, I want us to do even more. So I recently announced extra money to fund sexual violence support services for those young girls

caught up in gang violence. We are currently consulting on criminalising forced marriage. And we are piloting Domestic Violence Protection Orders which give immediate protection and breathing space to victims by banning a perpetrator from returning to the house.

But I am always keen for new ideas of what we can do to protect women. So I would really value the views of readers of this newsletter. I don’t believe government has all the answers or that government can do it all by itself. That’s why I want to hear from you. Together we are stronger and together I believe we can help end violence against women.

Protecting women from violence and oppression



Find out more about UK government action at home and abroad to protect women from violence and oppression, by visiting the [International Women's Day website](#).

London's top prosecutor challenges social assumptions on rape victims

Alison Saunders, Chief Crown Prosecutor for London has called for a greater debate on ways in which society can challenge, combat and dispel the assumptions and myths associated with rape victims. This call followed a meeting with practitioners, victims groups and partners to discuss how the Criminal Justice System can actively challenge these assumptions.



The full speech is available from the [CPS website](#).

Cross-Whitehall International Women's Day activity

The Secretary of State for International Development, Andrew Mitchell, will today give a speech at the annual Women for Women Join Me on the Bridge event. He will set out his focus on putting women at the heart of the UK's international development effort. In particular he will recognise the critical importance of addressing the

impact of conflict on women and girls and doing more to help women play a central part in negotiating peace and rebuilding their countries.

The UK is working in 25 of the poorest countries – including 17 fragile and conflict-affected countries – to tackle violence against women and girls.



Andrew Mitchell meeting women on a recent visit to Nepal. Photo: Narendra Shrestha/DFID

i To find out more about how UK aid is changing the lives of the world's poorest people, including girls and women visit the [DFID website](#) and listen to a podcast with the recent [Nobel Peace Prize winner Leymah Gbowee](#).

Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme

Women will have the right to ask police about a partner's domestic violence history as a new scheme is trialled in parts of England and Wales.

The Home Secretary announced on Monday 5th March that police forces in Greater Manchester, Gwent, Nottinghamshire and Wiltshire will run a 12-month trial of the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme.

The pilot scheme, which will run from summer 2012, will help victims or potential victims of domestic violence by disclosing information about previous violent offending by their partner.

It comes after calls for a national scheme gained momentum following the tragic case of Clare Wood, who was murdered by her former partner in Greater Manchester in 2009. Her partner had three previous convictions under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.

i More information is available on the [Home Office website](#).

Human Rights and Democracy Programme Fund 2012/2013

The FCO Human Rights and Democracy programme will support projects focusing on priority issues and countries where we believe the UK is best placed to effect transformational change. Combating discrimination against women is one of the thematic areas for funding for 2012/2013.

i Further information and the application form can be found on the [FCO website](#).

Government publishes revised National Action Plan on women, peace and security

The Government has published an update of the National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 Women, Peace and Security.

i The action plan can be downloaded from the [UK Mission to the United Nations website](#).

HOT OFF THE PRESS

Action on stalking

Earlier today, the Prime Minister announced new measures to protect the public from stalkers.

In order to address a gap in the law, the Government will be tabling an amendment to the Protection of Freedoms Bill on 8 March that will amend the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 to introduce two new offences of 'stalking' and 'stalking where there is fear of violence' alongside the existing harassment offences in the Act.

Making stalking explicit in the law – and distinguishing it from other types of harassment such as neighbourhood disputes – will raise the profile of this awful crime and make it clear to the police, prosecutors and the public that stalking is a criminal offence and should be dealt with appropriately.



For more information visit the [Home Office website](#).

Women's Engagement



In the past few months Minister for Equalities, Lynne Featherstone chaired two very successful roundtable events with key women's organisations. These were the start of a series of direct engagement events with women's organisations planned for 2012. Here is a flavour of the feedback from women's organisations:

We found the meeting with Minister Lynne Featherstone MP most informative. The direct engagement with government is working well, much better than previously.

We are a diverse group that works in many areas and we thought the idea of Ministers meeting Ministers – across departments – chaired by Theresa May MP excellent progress: feedback from the meetings on decisions taken and policy focus would be most helpful.

We much appreciated the list of email contact links circulated to us following the meeting.

Sheila Eaton
President, National Council of Women

The meeting with Lynne Featherstone MP was particularly encouraging at a time when women's voices appear to be further from the fore.

The opportunity to speak directly to a Minister in an open discussion forum was certainly a welcomed change. I believe it allowed for all those present to gain greater understanding of the diverse and overlapping experiences of women in the UK.

Through such development of stronger networks, effective changes must now be put into actions for the benefit of all women.

Faeza Vaid
Executive Director, Muslim Women's Network UK

UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

New York, 27 February – 9 March

Lynne Featherstone attended CSW, where she highlighted ways the global community can take action to empower women, by boosting rural investment, tackling violence against women and challenging the way women are represented by the global media.

She called for smarter global investments in rural women as a means to significantly strengthen the impact of agriculture, benefitting women, their families and entire economies and societies.

The Minister also set out progress the Government has made in tackling prejudice and hate crime against lesbian and bisexual women and transgender people.

In a UN first, the Minister led a special event on body image in the media, which explored how we can use education to help women and girls battle negative body image and gender stereotyping in the media.



Open Plenary Session of CSW at the UN General Assembly



Lynne Featherstone at the Open Plenary Session



Lynne Featherstone attending the UK NGOs reception held at the UK Mission to the UN



Visit the Home Office website for more [information on this event](#) and [Ministerial speeches](#). The latest photos from CSW are available on [Flickr](#).

Teenagers asked: “Would you see rape?” as advertising campaign goes live

A powerful new Home Office advertising campaign challenging teenagers to re-think their views of what constitutes rape and consent was launched by Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg and Equalities Minister Lynne Featherstone on Monday 5 March.

Recent NSPCC research shows that the highest proportion of sexual abuse (66 per cent) is perpetrated by young people under 18 years old.

Evidence from surveys also shows that while most teenagers know that rape is wrong, they don't always know what constitutes rape.

The TV, cinema and online advertising campaign is in partnership with charities including the NSPCC, Rape Crisis and Survivors Trust. The adverts are aimed at 13 to 18-year-olds.



i For more information and to get help visit the [This Is Abuse campaign website](#).

Football League pledges support to Sports Charter

On 28 February, Home Secretary Theresa May attended the League Cup final where the Football League signed the Government's Charter to tackle homophobia and transphobia in sport on behalf of its 72 member clubs. With all 20 Premier League clubs signing the Charter earlier in February, all professional clubs in domestic football have now committed to supporting the Charter.

In addition, following a Downing Street roundtable on tackling discrimination in football, the Football Association added its weight by launching a four-year plan LGB&T equality action plan.

Since its launch last March, over 3,000 sporting bodies, clubs, professional athletes, celebrities and fans have pledged their support.



The Home Secretary Theresa May and representatives from the Football League sign the Sports Charter

i Home Office sports charter [news story](#). [LGB&T equality action plan](#). To support the campaign and sign up to the Charter for Action 'like' our [Facebook page](#) or [email us](#).

Body confidence campaign

Lynne Featherstone launched a series of blogs in the Huffington Post to raise awareness about body confidence and outline the work Government is doing.

The January edition was written by the Minister, followed by Rosie Prescott, CEO of YMCA, in February. Each month will see a guest blogger write about body confidence from a different perspective.

i Home Office [body confidence campaign website](#). [Lynne Featherstone's](#) and [Rosie Prescott's](#) articles on Huffington Post.

Three steps to escaping domestic violence

The Home Office, in partnership with Southall Black Sisters, has developed a leaflet for women in black and minority ethnic communities.

It covers advice on the three steps to escaping violence and abuse:

- report the abuse
- how to take actions
- how to keep safe from abuse

It brings together issues like 'honour'-based violence, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, dowry abuse, domestic and sexual abuse, and not having access to public funds.

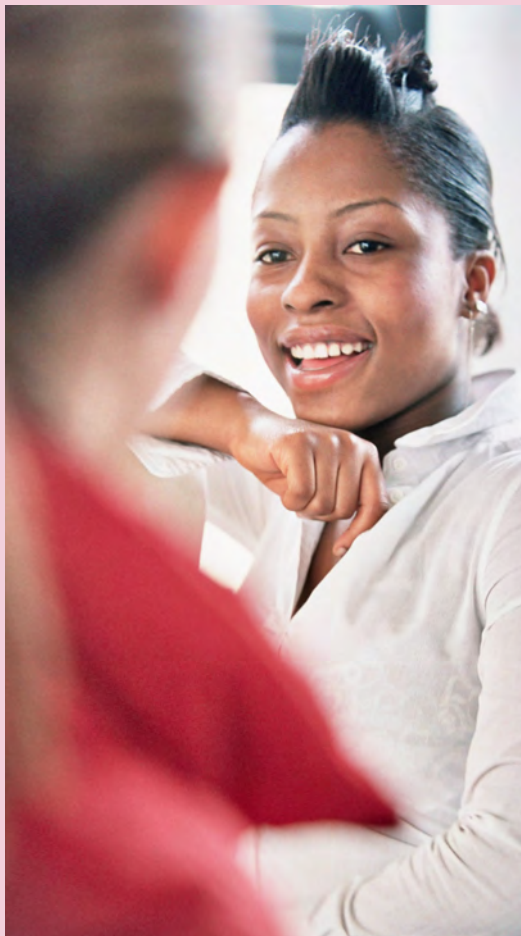
i The leaflet is available in English and 12 other languages on the [Home Office website](#).

Mentoring Scheme

To support women entrepreneurs who want to set up or grow their business, free mentor training is being offered through the GetMentoring website and it can be accessed in one of two ways:

- **Workshops** – free training workshops are running in towns and cities across the UK.
- **Online Learning** – an online version of the workshop is now available for those who prefer to train at home.

Latest figures show that, as of 28 February, 41 per cent of the volunteers (5,989) to have registered for training under the Get Mentoring initiative are women and 42 per cent (1,384 out of 3,296) of those who have completed training are women.



i For more information on how to become a mentor and access your free training, please visit the [GetMentoring website](#). If you are interested in being mentored, visit the [mentorsme website](#).

Have your say

We welcome your views

Definition of Domestic Violence Consultation

This is your last chance to comment on this consultation which seeks your views on:

- whether the current cross-government definition of domestic violence, introduced in 2004, is working and should remain;
 - whether 'coercive control' should be reflected in the definition; and
 - whether the definition of domestic violence should include younger victims below 18 years of age.
- The consultation closes on 30 March 2012.

i The consultation can be viewed on the [Home Office website](#).

Forced Marriage Consultation

The Government is seeking views on whether 'forcing someone to marry' should be a criminal offence or whether current arrangements provide adequate protection. Views are also sought on what more could be done to prevent forced marriage from happening.

The consultation closes on 30 March 2012.

i The consultation can be viewed on the [Home Office website](#).