

Violence against women and girls newsletter

September 2010

INTRODUCTION

Rt Hon Theresa May:

This year the coalition government came into power with a vision of building the Big Society. Now, as both Home Secretary and Minister for Women and Equalities, I want to set out what we will do to support this vision in terms of tackling violence against women.

Women and girls ought to be celebrated and empowered to live without fear and achieve their potential. It is a tragedy that this is not the case, but I am committed to doing all I can to ensure this happens.

And I am not alone in this endeavour. We will publish a new cross-departmental strategy to end violence against women and girls in the Spring. I recognise that we face challenges in how we can do this but we want to tackle the root causes of this violence to engender long-term changes in attitudes and behaviours. And we want to deal fully with the effects of this unacceptable crime.

I look forward to working with you on this very important issue. I know that many of you will be meeting on 10th September to discuss how we can work together to tackle violence against women and girls in a very challenging economic environment. We also want to understand what aspects of this work are most important for you.

As women and as a society we have made great strides but we need to do more to ensure that women and future generations are not held back. My ambition is nothing less than ending violence against women and girls and our strategy document will outline our commitments to seeing this become a reality.

UPDATES

Violence against women and girls strategy

The Home Secretary will launch a cross-government strategy on violence against women and girls in Spring 2011. A focus on a criminal justice response alone to this serious crime is misplaced. Instead, this new strategy will provide a coherent and integrated plan on how this government will end violence against women and girls by striving to prevent it from happening in the first place and providing support where it is necessary. A cross-government communications strategy will also be developed to support our policy in this area. We will set out our strategic vision before the end of the year.

In this issue:

Introduction from the Home Secretary

Violence against women and girls strategy

Supporting women with no recourse to public funds

NHS Implementation group

The role of the voluntary sector

E-learning training package on forced marriage now on-line

Research published on Sanctuary Schemes

Supporting women with no recourse to public funds

The Sojourner Project is a Home Office funded project for victims of domestic violence with no recourse to public funds run by Eaves Housing. The project commenced in November 2009 and was scheduled to run to the end of August 2010. An early decision of the new coalition Government has been to extend this pilot to run until the end of March 2011 to ensure that victims of domestic violence who have no recourse to public funds are not left without adequate support whilst the government finds a long term solution to this problem. The project is monitored on a monthly basis and a full evaluation will take place on its completion.

Since the project's inception in November 2009 until the end of July 2010 support has been provided to 293 women.

NHS Implementation Group

The Taskforce on the Health Aspects of Violence Against Women and Children reported in March 2010. The high level report of the Taskforce featured 23 recommendations including on commissioning, information sharing, workforce and training and care pathways. An implementation group chaired by Melanie Walker, Chief Executive of Newham Primary Care Trust, has been established to oversee the work being taken forward in response to the Taskforce. The group, which will also work to champion the agenda within the NHS, will meet every two months.

Please log on to www.dh.gov.uk/vawc for more information about the group and minutes from the meeting.

The role of the voluntary sector

We recognise the crucial role played by the voluntary sector in the provision of support to victims of violence against women and girls.

It remains a priority for the coalition government that a sustainable funding model for rape support centres is developed, moving away from the short-term and piecemeal arrangements of the past, and that new centres are established where they are most needed. We will work in partnership with the sector to develop a sustainable funding model and to identify, through comparison of existing service provision against predicted demand, those areas where the need for new centres is most acute. This work will be carried out in conjunction with the comprehensive spending review and the results will be announced later in the year, once the outcome of the spending review is known.

Also, the Government Equalities Office is currently analysing responses to the consultation on a draft cross-government strategic action plan for the sustainability of violence against women voluntary organisations. Overall 124 responses were received and the Government Equalities Office would like to thank everyone who took the time to complete the survey.

'As both Home Secretary and Minister for Women and Equalities I believe I have a unique opportunity to bring about real change to the lives and the status of women in this country and my ambition is nothing less than ending violence against women and girls.' **Rt Hon Theresa May, Home Secretary**

E-learning training package on forced marriage now on-line

The Forced Marriage Unit has designed an e-learning training package to support professionals, including education, social and health care professionals, police officers, housing officers, the voluntary sector and others dealing with forced marriage in the course of their work. Using real life case studies, the training will give professionals a basic understanding of the key issues surrounding forced marriage, how cases can present and how to respond appropriately. This tool complements the multi-agency practice guidelines for professionals and should be read alongside the training.

Visit the e-learning site at: www.fmelearning.co.uk and please keep checking the Forced Marriage Unit's homepage: www.fco.gov.uk/forcedmarriage

Research published on Sanctuary Schemes

Research recently published by the University of York shows that Sanctuary Schemes, supported by other agencies, such as the police local councils and specialist domestic violence service providers, have been hugely successful in helping families stay safe in their own homes. The Sanctuary Scheme is an innovative approach to homelessness prevention. It provides security measures and support to allow those experiencing domestic violence to remain in their own accommodation where it is safe for them to do so, where it is their choice and where the perpetrator no longer lives within the accommodation. This often means families avoid the upheaval of having to leave their home and support networks and the risk of becoming homeless.

Guidance is available alongside the report to help share best practice and to help existing and new schemes to shape their response so that they can maximise efficiencies and provide the best service for the survivors of domestic violence.

Visit www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/sancturyschemesreport for further information.