

Have you got what it takes?

Tackling violence against women and girls



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Important facts

The Government's ambition is nothing less than ending all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG). The previous Government published a progress report in March 2015 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/call-to-end-violence-against-women-and-girls-progress-report-2010-to-2015> summarising the steps that have been taken to tackle not only domestic abuse and sexual violence, but also other harms including stalking, forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM). All elements of VAWG show increases in reporting – a critical objective for what are hidden crimes, and the number of police referrals, prosecutions and convictions for VAWG crimes have reached their highest ever level.

But each year, over one million women suffer domestic abuse, over 300,000 women are sexually assaulted and 60,000 women are raped. Around 60,000 girls are at risk of Female Genital Mutilation, and one in six women after the age of 16 are affected by stalking. Experiences of abuse have serious psychological, emotional and physical consequences, and can contribute to multiple disadvantages and, in some cases, a chaotic lifestyle involving substance misuse, homelessness, offending behaviour, gang involvement and mental health problems.

Domestically, the cost of providing public services (including health, legal and social services) to victims and the lost economic output of women affected runs to billions of pounds. An indicative figure for the minimum and overlapping cost of violence against women and girls is **£36.7bn annually**.

The Government published an updated VAWG strategy on 8 March, International Women's Day, setting out how we will do more still to prevent these terrible crimes from happening, intervene earlier in the cycle of abuse, bring more offenders to justice and improve the safety of victims. In particular, we will set out how we will work with local authorities, the NHS and Police and Crime Commissioners to ensure a secure future for specialist FGM and forced marriage units, refuges and rape crisis centres.

More information

Support for victims

Specialist support services for victims have been provided through a combination of stable ring-fenced Government funding and locally commissioned services provided by Police and Crime Commissioners, local authorities and local health commissioners.

The previous Government ring-fenced £40 million of stable funding until 2015 for specialist local domestic and sexual violence support services, rape crisis centres and helplines. This Government has extended that funding through to April 2016, and provided an additional £10m for refuges, £3.5m for domestic abuse services and an uplift of £7m for victims and survivors of sexual abuse. The £7m uplift for victims and survivors of sexual abuse has been continued through to April 2017, £4.7m of which has been allocated proportionally to PCCs for distribution to local non-statutory sector organisations.

We have also devolved greater responsibility for commissioning victims services directly to local areas including PCCs. PCCs have a wide margin of discretion about how they make services available to meet local need but, of the £12.5m PCC competed fund in 2014/15, 66% of the bids which secured funding were to increase and improve the support offered to victims of domestic and sexual violence at a total investment of £7.3m. The previous Government's Progress

Report also highlights case studies of effective local collaboration to identify victims' needs and commission services that meets those needs.

The Government has already committed £40m for domestic abuse services between 2016 and 2020, and provided a £2m donation to Women's Aid and Safelives to support local early intervention pilots. We have also committed to a further year of funding to support the local provision of 144 Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs) and 87 Independent Sexual Violence Advisers for 2016/17 and 54 Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) co-ordinators.

For 2016/17, we have protected funding of over £6.4 million to 86 female Rape Support Centres (also referred to as Rape Crisis Centres) across England and Wales – up from £4.7 million in 2015/16.

The Government's updated strategy will set out the full package of centrally commissioned services for all VAWG victims through to 2020, and how we will work with local areas including PCCs to take a whole family approach to supporting victims and their children, and targeting perpetrators, in order to both provide a critical bedrock of support for victims and move to a model of prevention and earlier intervention.

What services does the voluntary sector provide?

The voluntary sector provides a range of services to help victims including running women's refuges, rape crisis centres and helplines and providing specialist advice and support for women who have suffered from unwelcome cultural practices such as female genital mutilation, forced marriage and honour based violence. They also help to prevent violence against women from happening in the first place by running education campaigns to raise awareness and challenge attitudes.

Improving the police and Criminal Justice System response

The identification, protection and support of victims of VAWG are a vital part of the policing mission to prevent crime and disorder, and the right police response can transform, for the better, the lives of victims.

Recent reports by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary into domestic abuse and honour based violence both highlight the improvements in the overall police response and areas where further improvement is required to ensure that victims are better protected, and supported, and ultimately made safer.

PCCs play a critical role in holding forces to account on performance. HMIC's most recent report into domestic abuse published in December 2015 provides a checklist for PCCs to bring about improved services for victims of domestic abuse. The report can be found here: www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/increasingly-everyones-business-domestic-abuse-progress-report.pdf.

We have also supported the publication of data on rape for every police force in the country as a basis for Chief Constables and PCCs to scrutinise how rape is dealt with in their local area so that further improvements to the service provided to victims can be made. Latest comparative data on adult and child rape was published by the Rape Monitoring Group on 5 November and can be found here: <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/publications/rape-monitoring-group-digests-and-data-2014-15/>

The Government has also driven a step-change in the response to FGM and forced marriage. Awareness of these crimes has increased significantly and, at the groundbreaking Girl Summit, hosted by the Prime Minister in July 2014, we announced a radical package of measures to tackle these forms of abuse once and for all.

The Government has funded studies into the prevalence of FGM which have found that no local area is free from FGM. The study, including a local authority breakdown of prevalence, can help PCCs assess local need and commission services accordingly. The study can be found here: <http://www.city.ac.uk/news/2015/july/no-local-authority-area-in-england-and-wales-free-from-fgm>.

New NHS data reveals 1,385 newly identified cases of FGM between July to September 2015 and can similarly support work with local health commissioners to support victims. The data can be found here: <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/searchcatalogue?productid=19408&q=%22female+genital+mutilation%22&sort=Relevance&size=10&page=1#top>