

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS NEWSLETTER

Introduction – Justin Russell Chair of the VAWG Strategy Delivery Board

On 25 November 2009, the Home Secretary launched a cross-Government strategy *Together We Can End Violence Against Women and Girls*. The publication of this strategy was only possible through the support it received from colleagues across Government colleagues and Ministers as well as from the commitment shown from voluntary organisations and survivors who worked in partnership with us to shape this important document. Thanks to all of you for your effort – this strategy is an achievement for us all.

Now that we have launched the strategy, implementation of the many commitments is our key priority. After only four months we have much to update you on and I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Please keep checking the violence against women and girls home page on the Home Office website for further updates: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime-victims/reducing-crime/violence-against-women1/index.html>



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30 November 2009

Supporting women with no recourse to public funds

Approximately 500 women a year try to escape from abusive partners but cannot access emergency housing provision or other benefits because of their immigration status.

The Home Office has funded Eaves to run a pilot to assist survivors of domestic violence who have entered the UK on a spousal/partner visa and have no recourse to public funds. The pilot is providing up to 8 weeks of funding to refuges providing support to these victims. During this period, the victim will be expected to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain under the Domestic Violence Rule. The pilot is running nationally until the end of August and is being independently monitored and evaluated throughout with an overall evaluation being conducted on its completion which will assist in informing our next steps in developing a longer-term solution to the issue.

During the first three months of the pilot we provided support for 90 women and 47 children.

16 December 2009

Violence Against Women and Girls incorporated into the NHS operating framework 2010/11

The NHS is a key partner in tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and has an important role in preventing violence and providing help to women and girls.

The commitment of the NHS to ending VAWG, despite a tighter economic climate, is now reflected in the NHS Operating Framework 2010/11 which is a key document for all senior NHS managers. This year's framework is the first year of a five-year strategy NHS 2010–2015: From Good To Great to deliver the most benefits to patients in the future, with a particular focus on prioritising prevention, including preventing VAWG and supporting local action to tackle it.

“Together we can end violence against women and girls sets out ways in which the NHS, working with partners, can help prevent violence and abuse against women and children and support the victims.”

“PCTs will continue to work as a member of the Crime Disorder Reduction Partnership to identify and share information effectively in order to support local action on reducing violent crime – especially, serious youth violence, including knife crime, and violence against women and children. This may include engaging (where these are in place) multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs). PCTs will want to consider how new commissioning guidance and recommendations of the Violence Against Women and Children Health Taskforce findings could help deliver the outcomes

agreed with their partners and deliver its obligations on gender equality. PCTs have a crucial role in working with local partners to ensure that a properly resourced sexual assault referral centre can be in place in every area by 2011. The National Support Team on Response to Sexual Violence and additional central funding will be available to help with this process.”

NHS Operating Framework

You can read the Operating Framework here: http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_110107

22 December 2009 to 15 March 2010

Supporting local commissioners and partnerships to address VAWG

A consultation on draft guidance to mainstream the commissioning of local services to address VAWG closed on 15 March 2010.

The final guidance will be made available in Spring 2010 and act as a resource to support local commissioners and partnerships to develop the best approach to commissioning services to prevent VAWG, protect victims and potential victims and provide services to victims and perpetrators in the local area.

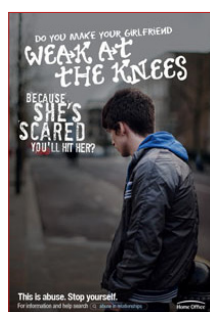
The guidance was downloaded almost 400 times. Thank you to all of you who took the time to read it and respond.

The final guidance will be available on the Home Office VAWG page: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime-victims/reducing-crime/violence-against-women1/index.html>

15 February 2010 – 21 March 2010

Campaign to challenge abuse in teenagers' relationship

The Home Office launched a new advertising campaign (jointly funded by the Department of Health) to challenge teenagers' attitudes to violence and abuse in relationships. The campaign is the first part of our commitment to a longer-term communications



strategy announced in the *Together we can end violence against women and girls* strategy.

Recent research undertaken by Bristol University for the NSPCC showed that young people have shockingly tolerant views on the acceptability of violence in relationships and that these views are surprisingly prevalent.

The adverts send a strong message to 13 – 18-year-olds, challenging them to stop abusive behaviour and to seek help, as well as, highlighting the signs and consequences of abuse.

The campaign includes television, radio and print adverts, as well as a website detailing sources of help. There are also posters, leaflets for healthcare professionals and educators. Packs for schools including lesson plans, guidance for teachers and information for pupils will be distributed shortly.

Preliminary online results show that the campaign is engaging young people. To date, the campaign videos on youtube (www.youtube.com/ukhomeoffice) have

had 240,000 views and over 62,000 visitors to the campaign website (www.direct.gov.uk/thisisabuse). The website encourages visitors to leave comments and debate the topic of abuse in relationships; so far there have been 838 comments posted on the site.

We hope this campaign will help teenagers to recognise the signs of abuse and equip them with the knowledge and confidence to seek help, as well as understanding the consequences of being abusive or controlling in a relationship.

Changing attitudes will take time but it is essential if we are going to stop violence against women and girls.

Alan Johnson, Home Secretary

It was great to work with the Home Office on such an important campaign. Teen violence is a subject that is close to my heart as I grew up in a place where violence and bullying were an integral part of life and accepted as the norm.

My job as director was to make sure that these adverts are compelling, real and utterly authentic. They give you the chance to look back at yourself and your actions, and have a moment when you can step out of the immediacy and complexity of the moment. They show you that there is another choice.

Shane Meadows, Director of the TV adverts

Visit the campaign website at thisisabuse.direct.gov.uk

**TOGETHER WE CAN
END VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN
AND GIRLS**

26 February

Dr Linda Papadopoulos' Review into the Sexualisation of Young People

An independent review into the sexualisation of young people was published at the end of February and received a great deal of national press coverage, starting a national debate on the subject. The author and psychologist Dr Linda Papadopoulos was commissioned by the Home Office to look at how sexualised images and messages may be affecting the development of children and young people and influencing cultural norms. She also examined the evidence of a link between sexualisation and violence.

The full list of recommendations will now be considered in more detail but the Prime Minister has already committed the Government to two key actions:

- Launching an online 'one-stop shop' to let parents report their worries over irresponsible marketing which sexualises children; and
- Working with the NSPCC to make manufacturers and retailers take greater responsibility for merchandise which is offensive and harmful.

We know that parents are concerned about the pressures their children are under at a much younger age, which is why we have already committed to a number of the recommendations in this report.

Changing attitudes will take time but it is essential if we are going to stop the sexualisation which contributes to violence against women and girls.

Alan Johnson, Home Secretary

The review into the sexualisation of Young People is available on the Home Office VAWG page at: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime-victims/reducing-crime/violence-against-women1/index.html>

3 March

Protecting children: Child sex offender disclosure scheme

The Home Secretary, Alan Johnson, announced the roll-out of a pioneering scheme that will improve protection for children. The child sex offender disclosure scheme gives members of the public a formal mechanism to make enquires about people who are in contact with children.

Under the terms of the scheme, a parent, carer or guardian or another interested party can request that an individual who has access to their child or children is checked to see whether they have a record of committing child sexual offences.

Piloted in four police areas over the past year, the scheme will roll out to a further 18 police force areas from August and will reach all forces by the end of March 2011.

The disclosure scheme pilot protected more than 60 children from potential abuse over the 12-month period. The police areas involved received 585 enquiries and 315 applications, with 21 disclosures made about registered child sex offenders. A further 11 general disclosures were made, while another 43 cases led to a range of other child safeguarding actions.

The evaluation has shown the huge benefits of increased but controlled access to information. The input of the police, children's charities and academics to the pilots has ensured consensus has been reached and we are working together to keep children safe.

Sara Payne, Victims' Champion

You can read more about the pilot at http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/N11/Newsroom/DG_171707

8 March 2010

Marking International Women's Day

A package of announcements were made to mark International Women's Day including:

Tackling demand for prostitution

A series of laws to protect vulnerable women by reducing the demand for prostitution, including ending the requirement for the police having to show kerb-crawlers are "persistent" before arresting them, will come into effect on 1 April.

The new laws are designed to hit those who create the demand for prostitution hardest, while helping people leave prostitution – placing the emphasis on the sex-buyer rather than the vulnerable women involved.

A new poster campaign was also launched on 8th March, warning of the criminal penalties involved in paying for sex with someone who has been exploited.



**International
Women's Day**

**TOGETHER WE CAN
END VIOLENCE
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We are determined to tackle the demand for prostitution and provide help for those who wish to leave prostitution.

These new measures build on the significant action we have already taken to tackle prostitution and trafficking for sexual exploitation. They will help bring greater protection to vulnerable people involved in prostitution.

Alan Campbell, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Crime Reduction

Other prostitution measures introduced from 1 April include:

- A new strict liability offence that will make it illegal to pay for sexual services with a prostitute who is subject to exploitative conduct, which includes force, deception or threats. It will no longer be an excuse to say 'I did not know' and men who ignore this risk a fine of up to £1,000 and a criminal record;
- Giving courts the power to close down premises associated with certain prostitution and pornography offences. Currently there is little to stop such premises continuing to operate even when they have been raided by the police. This will allow the police to disrupt criminal activity associated with sexual exploitation – especially involving children;
- A new order available as an alternative to a fine for the offence of loitering or soliciting for the purposes of prostitution. The penalty will include a requirement for women to attend meetings to address the causes of their involvement in prostitution and is designed to help them to leave street prostitution; and
- Changing the law to amend the term 'common prostitute' as this term is outdated and offensive.

Addressing VAWG through our schools

In response to a report from the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Advisory Group chaired by Gill Frances, the Government confirmed plans to revise training for new teachers and to include VAWG issues in the PSHE curriculum from 2011.

The recommendations, accepted in full by the Government include:

- All schools to receive guidance to help prevent and respond to VAWG;
- All young people to be taught about gender equality and VAWG in PSHE as part of the national curriculum;
- Teachers to be given clear advice on how to deal with suspected cases of VAWG in their schools and referring young girls at risk to support services.
- The full report from the Violence Against Women and Girls Advisory Group can be found at: <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00281-2010>

The Government's full response to the Advisory Group report can be found at: <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00288-2010&>

Working together to end domestic violence

As part of the government's commitment to tackling domestic violence, the Home Office has allocated a further £4.3 million in 2010/11 for the roll-out of Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences and Independent Domestic Violence Advisers for every area.

The Home Office has also announced the continuation of funding in 2010/11 for the following helplines: National Domestic Violence Helpline; Men's Advice Line; Respect phonenumber and Broken Rainbow.

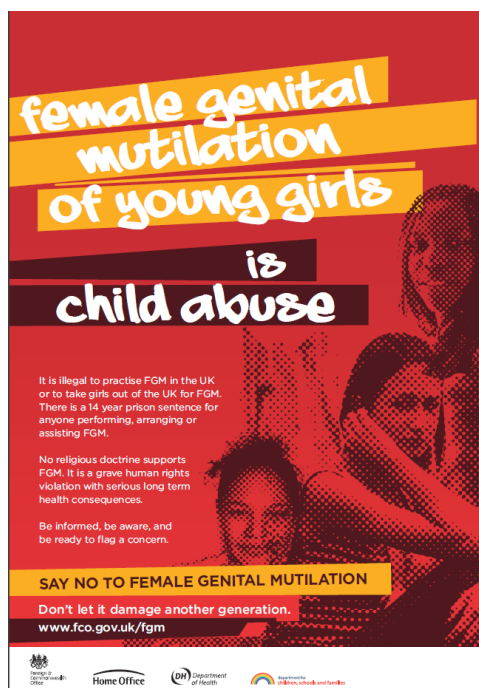
Supporting practitioners to tackle domestic violence

The Home Office launched a toolkit developed with the Greater London Domestic Violence Project to support the coordinated community response model (CCRM) to domestic violence. The CCRM recognises that all agencies must work together in an integrated and coordinated way to tackle domestic violence. The toolkit brings together guidance, research, policies and information in one place and can be accessed at <http://www.ccrm.org.uk/>

Raising awareness to end female genital mutilation

A new campaign to raise awareness the cruel and brutal practice of Female Mutilation (FGM) was launched on 8 to coincide with International Women's The campaign includes a poster and leaflet designed to be displayed nationwide in key locations such as school staff and social workers' offices alongside dedicated website to provide help and for professionals, victims and survivors. more information and to download a copy poster and leaflet please visit the dedicated website: www.fco.gov.uk/fgm

If you wish to order hard copies of the or leaflet please email fgm@fco.gov.uk



11th March

Responding to violence against women and children – the role of the NHS

A major review into the role of the NHS in addressing violence against women and children was published. A taskforce led by Professor Sir George Alberti comprising health professionals, NHS managers and representatives from the public, social services and the voluntary sector reported its findings to support the NHS in providing an improved service for women and children who are affected by violence.

The report sets out a series of recommendations for the NHS to better support victims of violence. It stressed that increased awareness, training and education is necessary for NHS staff to be able to apply the same rigorous, systematic approach to this issue as has been applied to other areas of NHS work, such as diabetes and strokes.

The Department of Health will raise awareness of the roles and responsibilities of NHS staff in treating victims of violence and call for increased understanding of the variety of health issues that may be a direct result of sexual violence against women and children, domestic violence and harmful traditional practices and human trafficking.

In a bid to help the many thousands of women and children who experience violence and abuse every day across England, the Department of Health will also publish guidance to help the NHS commission appropriate local services.

The NHS already plays a major role in helping those affected by violence. Each and every day across the country, staff treat and help patients with mental health and anxiety problems, unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and alcohol abuse – but we are aware that the NHS needs to do more to ensure that patients are treated consistently, confidently and sensitively.

That is why we have set up an Implementation Group to drive work forward in this area. Our aim is to ensure that victims of violence receive the very best of care to help them through such difficult times and Sir George Alberti's report will help us build on work already under way.

Andy Burnham, Health Secretary

More women suffer rape or attempted rape than have a stroke each year, and the level of domestic violence in the population exceeds that of diabetes.

It's a public health issue of great concern and the NHS has a clear duty to help and contribute to the multi-agency efforts to increase the safety of women and children in our society and provide much greater support.

**Professor Sir George Alberti,
Chair of the Health Taskforce**

Copies of the Taskforce report, the four sub-group reports, the findings from focus groups with women, children and NHS staff, and the interim Government Response are available at www.dh.gov.uk/vawc

15 March

Publication of Baroness Stern's Review into the handling of rape complaints by the police and other agencies

An independent review by Baroness Stern into how rape complaints are handled by public authorities in England and Wales has now been published. It was commissioned by the Home Office and Government Equalities Office as part of the wider consultation for the VAWG strategy.

Key areas covered by recommendations from the Stern Review include:

- Improved data management and analysis;
- Sustainable funding for key victim support initiatives;
- Improved standards and provision of forensic services;
- Improved performance management of the criminal justice response to rape;
- Better coordination and oversight of rape prevention work by local agencies; and
- Improving information about compensation for victims.

The review and the Government's interim response is available at http://www.equalities.gov.uk/stern_review.aspx

The Government will publish its proposals for further action before the end of this year.

Rape is a devastating crime that traumatises victims and shatters lives. Public perception of the way rape complaints are handled lags behind reality. We warmly welcome Baroness Stern's report which acknowledges the significant improvements we have made since 1997, but also identifies where work remains to be done. We want all victims to feel confident that when they come forward and report rapes it will be taken seriously and they will be treated with dignity and respect.

Vera Baird, Solicitor General

15 March

Supporting victims of sexual violence

The Government announced 41 independent organisations that have successfully bid for funding Independent Sexual Violence Advisors for 2010/11. Each organisation will receive up to £20,000. The full press notice including a list of successful applicants is available at: <http://press.homeoffice.gov.uk/press-releases/victims-sexual-violence.html>

19 March

Supporting victims of domestic violence

Victims of domestic violence will benefit from a further 14 new Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVCs) making a total of 141 courts around England and Wales. This exceeds the Government target of having a total of 128 SDVC systems by 2011 a year early.

These court systems are a fundamental part of the Government's efforts to improve the support and care provided for victims of domestic violence. The SDVC programme promotes a combined approach to tackling domestic violence by the police, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), magistrates, courts and probation together with specialist support services for victims, which situates the court and the Criminal Justice System as part of a community-wide response to Domestic Violence.

The new courts will be located in the East Midlands, London, North East, North West, and the South East. An area in Wales has also extended one of their SDVCs to a further court increasing their coverage.

The full press notice including a list of the new SDVC systems areas can be accessed at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/news/newsrelease190310b.htm>

Specialist domestic violence courts are a key part of our fight against domestic violence and part of a wider government commitment to putting victims at the heart of the criminal justice system, helping the victim and family, and stop them ending back in the court.

**Bridget Prentice, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State,
Ministry of Justice**

COMING UP IN SPRING 2010

Publication of guidance to mainstream the commissioning of local services to address VAWG

The majority of the funding to prevent VAWG and support those affected by VAWG will continue to come from local areas and it is important for local commissioners and partnerships to adopt a common process that all partners can recognise and in which they can participate.

Following a 12 week consultation, final guidance will be published to support local commissioners including Community Safety Partnerships, Children's Trusts Boards and Health and Well Being Partnerships in commissioning VAWG services in the most effective way.

The final guidance will be available on the Home Office website at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime-victims/reducing-crime/violence-against-women1/index.html>

Supporting survivors of sexual violence

Government Offices and Strategic Health Authorities are working with the Home Office and Department of Health to allocate £3.2million funding to Sexual Assault Referral Centres in 2010/11. Final allocations will be made in April.

Also, this year the Special Fund held by the Government Equalities Office has been combined with the Victims Fund, creating a single fund of £2.25 million. This development is in line with the more joined-up approach signalled in the strategy on Violence Against Women and Girls and is consistent with National Audit Office guidance on financial

relationships with the third sector. The priority for this funding is to ensure continuity of frontline provision of sexual violence support services for victims. The funding round is now closed and successful bids to the Combined Fund will be announced by Office for Criminal Justice Reform shortly.

Training about forced marriage to frontline practitioners

The Forced Marriage Unit are currently developing forced marriage e-learning training for frontline practitioners to complement the revised practice guidelines issued to professionals in July 2009 which will be rolled out in Spring 2010.