



ALL MPs IN ENGLAND & WALES

BY EMAIL ONLY

20th February 2023

Dear Colleague,

TACKLING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) are despicable crimes that must be tackled with a whole-of-society approach. These crimes include domestic abuse, sexual offences, stalking, 'honour'-based abuse, 'revenge porn' and 'upskirting'. They are violent and frightening crimes which can cause devastating harm and damage the lives of those impacted by them. Yet these crimes continue to blight the lives of too many women and girls.

It is completely unacceptable that women and girls are still subject to these crimes – I am committed to tackling offenders and providing victims with the support and justice they deserve. We believe it can be prevented and are taking action to reduce the terrible harm it causes. Domestic abuse is widespread, affecting 2.4 million adults every year. It is also a deeply harmful crime, with 1 in 5 cases of murder and manslaughter being domestic abuse-related. We are absolutely determined to crack down on these crimes.

This government has made tackling VAWG a key priority. We are already delivering on our commitment to make sure women and girls feel safe, at home and in public. The 2022 Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan committed to investing over £230 million over three years. The Plan complements the Tackling VAWG Strategy published in 2021, and which committed to continuing to make record investment so that victims and survivors were supported with more than £300 million being invested in that year.

We have given domestic abuse victims more time to report assaults – ensuring abusers cannot evade justice through increasing the time limits to report incidents of common assault or battery. We introduced tougher sentences for offenders, rolled out initiatives to create safer streets, and are transforming the justice system's approach to rape and domestic abuse. But the fact remains that these crimes are still far too prevalent.

Today, we are going further to tackle violence against women and girls. We are announcing a package of measures that will work to hold perpetrators to account and better support victims:

Adding the most dangerous domestic abuse offenders to the Violent and Sex Offender Register

We will legislate so those with convictions of controlling or coercive behaviour (CCB) with a sentence of twelve months or more are subject to more intensive management by the police, probation and prison service.¹ This will also place a duty to cooperate on other relevant agencies to ensure the risks associated with that offender are properly targeted and managed. Currently, CCB offenders are managed in this way on a discretionary basis. This policy seeks to remove that discretion for CCB and make it automatic where the offender meets the sentencing threshold, putting this crime on par with serious physical violence. This is crucial as we know that CCB is a key risk factor in domestic abuse-related murder and manslaughter cases. We will seek to legislate for this change at the earliest possible opportunity.

We will also add these offenders to the Violent and Sex Offender Register so there is a record of the most dangerous domestic abuse offenders and information about them is appropriately shared. However, we cannot wait for legislation to start recording these dangerous offenders. We will start work immediately to ensure they are placed on the Violent and Sex Offender Register so that information about them can be appropriately shared and they don't fall through the cracks.

Adding violence against women and girls to the Strategic Policing Requirement

VAWG has been elevated to a crime type that policing leaders must treat as a national threat, as part of the revised Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR). Inclusion in this key operational document places VAWG on the same footing as other threats including terrorism, serious organised crime and child sexual abuse and sets the Home Secretary's clear expectations of the police capabilities necessary to make women and girls safer.

Piloting the expansion of the 'Ask for ANI' codeword scheme

The 'Ask for ANI' (Action Needed Immediately) codeword scheme is being piloted in jobcentres across the UK from today. The 'Ask for ANI' scheme has provided victims of domestic abuse with a simple and discreet way to signal that they need immediate help from the safety of their local pharmacy since its launch in January 2021. The scheme was developed with the help of partners, including the domestic abuse sector, pharmacy associations and the police, and is designed to work alongside and build on the existing work carried out by local areas. It provides an additional tool that can be used to help the most vulnerable victims access emergency support in the community.

In the Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan, we highlighted the importance of making it easier for victims to ask for help. That is why we committed to work with the Department for Work and Pensions to trial, and if successful, consider a national rollout of the Ask for ANI codeword scheme in jobcentres. The pilot will be available in 18 pilot sites; 14 Jobcentres in England, Wales and Scotland and 4 Jobs and Benefits Offices in Northern Ireland. We aim to undertake an independent evaluation to understand the impact of the scheme across the jobcentre network, and if proven to be successful we will consider a national roll out.

We have also launched an online postcode checker where everyone can check their nearest Ask for ANI provider, including both participating pharmacies and jobcentres.

¹ Under Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).

Piloting new Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Orders

In the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Government legislated for a new civil Domestic Abuse Protection Notice (DAPN) to provide immediate protection following a domestic abuse incident, and a new civil Domestic Abuse Protection Order (DAPO) to provide flexible, longer-term protection for victims. DAPOs will be available in all court jurisdictions, and breach of any requirement will be a criminal offence. The court will be able to impose positive requirements such as attendance on perpetrator behaviour change programmes, alongside electronic monitoring and mandatory notification requirements of changes to the perpetrator's name and address to the police.

The new notices and orders will be piloted for two years in Gwent, Manchester, and three London boroughs with the Metropolitan Police and the British Transport Police, and other partners. The pilot will be independently evaluated, which will inform whether the notice and orders are rolled out nationally.

Creating a new digital domestic abuse harm risk assessment tool

We will develop a digital tool so that police forces can quickly identify their highest-risk domestic abuse perpetrators and take appropriate action. This includes domestic abuse perpetrators without a conviction - which is crucial as in the year ending March 2022 there were 910,980 domestic abuse-related crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales, compared to 40,647 convictions. We will appoint the tool's developer this Spring and identify police forces to trial and pilot it next year. In the meantime, I am clear that police forces must be proactively identifying and managing the most dangerous perpetrators.

Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme

We have published updated guidance for the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, also known as 'Clare's Law'. This is ahead of the commencement of section 77 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 next month, which will place this guidance into statute.

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme allows the police to disclose information about an individual's previous violent or abusive offending in order to protect their partner or former partner. Putting the guidance on a statutory footing will mean the police can apply the Scheme consistently across the country. Under the new guidance, police will have 28 days to disclose the information, down from the current guidelines of 35. This will mean victims and potential victims should have the information that could be critical to their safety faster.

Funding interventions for domestic abuse perpetrators

This Government continues to invest heavily in funding interventions to address perpetrators of domestic abuse. We are clear that the onus must be taken off victims and placed on the abusers to change their behaviour. This year the Home Office has committed up to £36 million over two years to fund more domestic abuse perpetrator interventions in local areas from April 2023.

This is in addition to the £40.9 million of funding we have given to local areas since 2020 for perpetrator interventions and the £2.36 million invested in research into improving our

understand of perpetrators so we can better prevent harm. This will bring the total funding committed to tackling domestic abuse perpetrators to over £79 million since 2020.

Funding support services for victims

We must first and foremost seek to prevent domestic abuse from happening. But when it does occur, we need to do everything in our power to support victims and survivors. This is why the Home Office has allocated up to £8.4 million over two years for victims' services. This is targeted to fund between 17 and 33 projects or programmes, which will mobilise on 1st April 2023. This will fund specialist organisations, many of whom work within the communities they serve and are a vital component in providing the trauma-informed, tailored support the Tackling VAWG Strategy committed to. Funding will also allow organisations to develop the 'whole-system' capability of providing support to victims of sexual violence and the employers' response to victims of domestic abuse. This portfolio of activity is designed to allow the Home Office to support thousands of victims. This is part of the government's wider commitment in the Domestic Abuse Plan to invest £140 million to support victims.

Together, these measures will help us to build a society that has zero tolerance to violence against women and girls and lets us take the necessary steps to protect the safety and freedom of women and girls across the country.

Yours



Rt Hon. Suella Braverman KC MP

Home Secretary