

Foreword from the Home Secretary



The ambition of this government is to end violence against women and girls. This is not a short-term task, but a long-term goal, the achievement of which will not be easy. But it is essential to make clear that however much progress we make in tackling this problem, no level of violence against women and girls is acceptable in modern Britain or anywhere else in the world.

The causes and consequences of violence against women and girls are complex. For too long government has focused on violence against women and girls as a criminal justice issue - dealing with the fallout of these terrible crimes. For girls, violence often results in sexual, physical and emotional abuse, which in many cases has an ongoing effect into their adult lives. This government will continue to ensure that the police and the courts have the tools they need to bring offenders to justice and to ensure victims have the support they need to rebuild their lives. However, at the heart of our approach will be prevention. We will work across the whole of government on preventative measures to stop violence from happening in the first place.

This is not a task for central government alone. We will need to work with families and communities to change attitudes. Local authorities, Police and Crime Commissioners, voluntary and community organisations, Community Safety Partnerships, the NHS and developing public health service, and the devolved administrations will need to work together to meet the needs of their local communities. Already many of the services that support the victims of violence are run by local community groups and charities, which we welcome and encourage. But government will still have to deliver on its side of the deal by making sure that any central funding is provided on a stable basis over the coming spending review period, giving the police the tools they need, spreading effective practice, and giving communities the information they need to hold government to account.

Our work will not stop at the borders of the United Kingdom. For the first time our strategy will include the innovative work we are doing internationally to tackle this global problem.

No woman should have to live in fear of violence. No man should think it acceptable to perpetrate violence against women. No child should grow up in a home where violence is an everyday occurrence. Working together we can make that a reality.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Theresa May'.

Rt. Hon Theresa May, MP
Home Secretary

Foreword from Lynne Featherstone, MP



Every day women experience fear, or the aftermath of horrific crimes against them. These are real women; women and girls as victims at the sharp end of the statistics.

This suffering is a form of gender inequality and it is wrong. It is a situation I am determined to change and I am delighted to have the opportunity to work with the Home Secretary and other colleagues to make this happen.

Tackling violence against women and girls needs action. We need to **do**, not simply talk about doing. The action we take collectively as a government – the details of which we will publish in the spring – needs to make a real difference to women and girls who have suffered (or who are at risk of suffering) violence to ensure they can achieve their full potential and live fulfilled lives.

As the Home Secretary says, prevention and changing attitudes to this unacceptable behaviour will be at the heart of what we do. And where we, sadly, cannot prevent these acts from occurring, we will help ensure that our partners and local communities have the resources and tools they need to provide a robust response and that victims have access to the support services they need to get their lives back on track.

This government's guiding principles are freedom, fairness and responsibility, and a shared desire to work in the national interest. It is unequivocally in the national interest to ensure that women and girls can live their lives without fear of violence.

We will achieve this by working together as a government, by working together with our partners, and by working together with families and local communities.

We will make a difference.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynne Featherstone". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Lynne Featherstone, MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Equalities and Criminal Information

Strategic Vision

There were over 1 million female victims of domestic abuse in England and Wales in the last year¹. Over 300,000 women are sexually assaulted and 60,000 women are raped each year. Overall in the UK, more than one in four women will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime, often with years of psychological abuse¹. Worldwide violence against women and girls can be a problem of pandemic proportions. This is unacceptable.

The vast majority of these violent acts are perpetrated by men on women. In 2009/10, women were the victim of over seven out of ten (73%) incidents of domestic violence¹. More than one third (36%) of all rapes recorded by the police are committed against children under 16 years of age². This is unacceptable.

Internationally, findings in a number of developing countries suggest that violence against women and girls is significant and is often endemic. Between 40% and 60% of women surveyed in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Peru, Samoa, Thailand and Tanzania said that they had been physically and/or sexually abused by their close partners³. This is unacceptable.

Violence against women and girls is a gender-based crime which requires a focused and robust cross-government approach underpinned by a single agreed definition. It is for this reason that we are using the United Nations (UN) Declaration (1993) on the elimination of violence against women to guide our work across all government departments: *'Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation*

of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life'. The declaration enshrines women's rights to live without the fear of violence and abuse and the United Kingdom's ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) upholds this principle. This is the first time that government has agreed to work to a single definition and we will specifically include girls in our approach.

The gendered pattern of violence against women and girls need to be understood and acknowledged. However, we recognise that men and boys can be victims of violence and that it can affect whole families, including children. Our work will include them⁴. Men also have a key role in challenging violence and helping to change the attitudes and actions of their peers. We want to work with them to achieve this.

Our vision is for a society in which no woman or girl has to live in fear of violence. To achieve this vision, society needs to:

- **prevent** such violence from happening by challenging the attitudes and behaviours which foster it and intervening early where possible to prevent it;
- **provide** adequate levels of support where violence does occur;
- work in **partnership** to obtain the best outcome for victims and their families; and
- take action to **reduce the risk** to women and girls who are victims of these crimes and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice.

¹ Figures derived from 2009/10 British Crime Survey data <http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/>

² Walker A, Kershaw C and Nicholas S (2006) *Crime in England and Wales 2005/06*, Home Office Statistical Bulletin <http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/>

³ WHO (2005): *Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence Against Women* www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/9241593512/en/index.html

⁴ The government is committed to continuing to uphold the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It takes all forms of violence against children extremely seriously and has in place clear frameworks and guidance to promote and safeguard the welfare of children. It has ratified the optional protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, drawing special attention to these serious violations of children's rights and the steps to combat them.

We will work together across government, with local partners and internationally, to ensure that our response is cohesive and comprehensive. We recognise that women also face violence in the context of commercial and sexual exploitation. There are separate initiatives dealing with those issues, including a review of local effective practice in working with women engaged in prostitution and a new strategy to combat human trafficking to be published in 2011.

Violence against women and girls is a hidden crime. We want to bring it into the spotlight as an issue that should be talked about and that must be addressed.

We need, however, to achieve a balance between encouraging local areas to take responsibility for tackling violence against women and girls and ensuring that, as an issue which has been overlooked historically, it does not get marginalised. We think we can best achieve this in the short term by working to ensure that central and local oversight, local focus and local drive come together to create a stronger response for women and girls.

Government will have a strong leadership role at national level in tackling violence against women and girls. Through setting out our approach and the framework through which we will work, we will provide a strategic direction for local areas to draw on. Government can only do so much, however, and we know that a one size fits all model does not exist. It is very important that local areas are able to work together to develop an approach that addresses their local needs, the needs of the women and girls affected, and to optimise their existing services and the capacity of the local community to respond effectively.

Greater decentralisation will give local people a stronger voice in setting local priorities, and give local areas the means through which to understand what those priorities are. Government will have a role in supporting this. We will create

the conditions for the voluntary and community sector, the statutory sector and communities to work together. We will also support action by providing the impetus, tools and information to get things moving; and provide a source of support by sharing expertise and know-how.

Once Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) are elected, the government will take steps to help familiarise and involve them in tackling violence against women and girls and foster their understanding of the role of local services in supporting victims.

We will monitor how we achieve this balance over the coming spending review period and consider whether, over time, it is appropriate that further responsibilities should be devolved to local areas.

Our approach to tackling violence against women and girls is part of our overall approach to tackling all forms of crime which will be set out in the forthcoming crime strategy.

The document we are publishing today will be followed by the detail of the supporting actions and policies in the spring, accompanied by an overarching equality impact assessment.

The Context

The previous government's approach to tackling violence against women and girls was top down and over-centralised. National targets, rigid indicators, central directives and inspection frameworks removed professional discretion and prevented local areas from innovating local solutions. At the same time, where central funding and support was provided it was usually on an annual basis providing no stability either for the organisations delivering services or for victims. Too much emphasis was put on criminal justice outcomes and enforcement without equal attention being paid to preventing this violence from happening in the first place.

The coalition government's ambition is to ensure that tackling violence against women and girls is treated as a priority at every level. Greater decentralisation and our vision for Big Society will give local people a stronger voice in setting local priorities, and give local areas the means through which to understand what those priorities are.

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 in the United Kingdom is estimated to be £36.7bn annually. However, this does not take into account the long-term emotional and mental health problems experienced by victims or the fact that many of these crimes go unreported and undetected each year.



[Diagram reproduced and adapted with the kind permission of new Philanthropy Capital]

We are working in a very different economic context - one which requires us to spend less and be more efficient. We know there will be challenges both at national and local level. We recognise this and our priority will be to free up and support local areas to meet these challenges in the drive to tackle violence against women and girls. We will do this in a number of ways.

The majority of services for victims of violence against women and girls are delivered at a local level. We will support local areas to deliver the services that are right for their communities by stripping away unnecessary central government targets and initiatives. At the same time we will ensure that there is greater transparency and accountability for how effective the local area is in responding to this issue. We will do this by opening up data and information to the women's sector and the general public to help them work with public services and make the case for tackling violence against women and girls a local as well as a national priority.

We will work to ensure that local areas have the tools that they need to respond to their priorities and we will support them by gathering and spreading effective practice and innovations from across the country. Between now and 2013/14, we will also radically change the way these services are commissioned and delivered and encourage the involvement of local communities in deciding which local priorities should be funded.

5 Walby, S (2009) *The Cost of Domestic Violence Up-date 2009* Lancaster University, www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/doc_library/sociology/Cost_of_domestic_violence_update.doc Professor Walby found the cost of domestic violence had reduced between 2001 and 2008 by almost 30% from £22.9bn to £15.7bn. Cost estimates include emotional cost. The original 2004 research is available at [http://www.equalities.gov.uk/pdf/cost%20of%20domestic%20violence%20\(walby\)%20sep%2004.pdf](http://www.equalities.gov.uk/pdf/cost%20of%20domestic%20violence%20(walby)%20sep%2004.pdf)

6 Jarvinen, J et al (2008) *New Philanthropy Capital Hard Knock Life: Violence against women, A guide for donors* New Philanthropy Capital www.philanthropycapital.org/publications/community/violence_against_women/default.aspx

While most of the funding for services needed by women and girls will continue to be provided locally, we will lead at a national level by continuing to prioritise central funding for core frontline and national services. This means we will ensure that Home Office funding for independent sexual violence advisers (ISVAs)⁷, sexual assault referral centres (SARCs)⁸, independent domestic violence advisers (IDVAs)⁹, multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC)¹⁰ co-ordinators and the national helplines will continue on a stable basis over the coming spending review period.

Effective prevention work will be at the core of our strategy. We will work across departments and services, both at a local and national level, to change attitudes and behaviours. We want everyone to be aware of the unacceptability of violence against women and girls. It is a message that begins at birth and continues through life.

Internationally, the United Kingdom is fully committed to advancing women's rights through the UN, including through UN Women which has a key role in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment worldwide and will ensure greater international co-ordination in tackling violence against women and girls. We have created the role of violence against women and girls overseas champion to ensure the coherence of this work.

7 ISVAs provide support and advocacy to victims of sexual violence and abuse throughout and beyond the criminal justice process.

8 SARCs are one-stop locations where victims of recent sexual assault can receive medical care and counselling quickly and which allow for the collection of forensic evidence for potential prosecutions.

9 IDVAs are trained specialists who work with victims who are at high risk of harm, addressing their safety needs and helping them manage the risks they face.

10 The MARAC is a multi-agency meeting that focuses on the safety of high-risk domestic violence victims. MARAC co-ordinators oversee this process.

I. PREVENTION

By 2015 our ambition is to have increased awareness of violence against women and girls that begins at birth and continues for life. Our message is that there are attitudes and behaviours that are wrong because they impact on the lives of women and girls and cause fear. We will challenge the individuals who think those attitudes and behaviours are right and we will put in place actions to prevent this violence from happening.

I.1 ATTITUDES, BEHAVIOURS AND PRACTICES

We are committed to leading by example in challenging the attitudes, behaviours and practices which cause women and girls to live in fear.

Violence against women and girls is unacceptable whatever form that violence may take. Raising awareness of it for those who may come across it in the course of their jobs, such as health workers or those who may be close to a victim, is essential.

The communications we see around us on a daily basis can reinforce negative messages on the role of women and contribute to the excessive commercialisation and premature sexualisation of children. It is essential that we take steps to challenge these messages, demonstrate why they are unacceptable, and work to put positive models and messages in their place.

We know that practices such as forced marriage¹¹ where the majority of those affected are women and young girls¹², 'honour' based violence (HBV)¹³ and female genital mutilation (FGM)¹⁴ are likely to

affect women from specific communities. We need to ensure that there is effective action to prevent this from happening and we need to encourage greater reporting of all these crimes. We recognise that not all women and girls want to take action through the criminal justice system; but if they have been affected by this type of abuse it is important that they are able to seek the support which is most appropriate to them. This could be from a hospital, a school, the police, a housing service, a voluntary agency or from family and friends.

Women who are able to work want to support their families as best they can. These women need to be supported. We do not want Job Centres to be a means of recruiting women for exploitative activities such as to work in lap dancing clubs. So we will take action to stop this happening and challenge the behaviours which suggest this is acceptable.

We will:

- develop a cross-government communications strategy which will explore the role for national communications to change behaviour including raising awareness of sexual violence¹⁵;
- run a targeted communications campaign on violence against women and children for NHS staff, public and patients to raise awareness of the problem;
- continue to raise awareness of forced

¹¹ Underreported in the UK: Between January and end September 2010 the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) received 1241 reports relating to possible forced marriage

¹² In 2009, where the age of the victim was known, 37.5% of assistance cases dealt with by the FMU involved children, with 16.5% of those being under 16yrs.

¹³ HBV, including 'honour' killings, is any type of physical or psychological violence committed in the name of 'honour' predominantly against women for actual or perceived immoral behaviour, which is deemed to have shamed their family or community.

¹⁴ 66,000 women are estimated to be living with the consequences of FGM in England and Wales

¹⁵ Baroness Stern emphasised the importance of raising awareness of sexual violence in her review into how rape complaints are handled by public authorities in England and Wales (2010)
www.equalities.gov.uk/PDF/Stern_Review_acc_FINAL.pdf

marriage among communities and front line practitioners through community engagement and outreach programmes;

- continue to raise awareness of 'honour' based violence (HBV) and ensure victims are aware of their rights and the support available to them. For example, we will develop a resource pack about forms of HBV for new and recent entrants to the United Kingdom to assist them in understanding their rights here and signpost them to support services;
- continue to champion a different way of thinking about female genital mutilation by ensuring that front-line practitioners have access to information about handling cases of female genital mutilation sensitively;
- continue to support outreach work on female genital mutilation with young people from the communities where it takes place to make them aware that the practice harms the women and girls concerned and degrades the men that let it happen;
- follow up on the government's commitment to take action to protect children from excessive commercialisation and premature sexualisation taking into consideration the findings and recommendations set out in recently published and on going policy reviews¹⁶; and
- introduce provisions to provide a statutory basis to allow Jobcentre Plus to reject job adverts where the person concerned is expected to carry out a performance or

activity where the aim is the direct sexual stimulation of others.

1.2 INTERVENING EARLY

Children can be exposed to violence from birth and, unless an alternative view is established, are likely to grow to accept that behaviour as normal. Setting out which attitudes and behaviours are acceptable and which are not therefore needs to begin early on in a child's life and be reinforced over time. We also need to strengthen protection for vulnerable children by ensuring that those on the frontline can focus on taking action.

Good schools know that the teaching of sexual consent is an important theme which should be part of their curriculum. Helping children understand early on the meaning of consent in relation to sex and relationships will be important in helping them make that distinction in later life. Similarly, teaching that models healthy relationships and ways of dealing with conflict and getting support will help children calibrate their own experiences.

We want schools to ensure staff are aware of how violence may affect a child's behaviour and what action they should take if they suspect that it is. There is guidance for schools¹⁷ to help them protect and support pupils who are at risk of violence or who are actually experiencing violence.

Alcohol use is associated with a four fold risk of violence from a partner¹⁸ and is more common when sexual violence is involved.

¹⁶ Reviews include:

Byron, T (2008) *Safer Children in a Digital World: The Report of the Byron Review*
<http://publications.education.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00334-2008&>
Papadopoulos, L (2010) *Sexualisation of Young People Review*
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100418065544/http://homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/Sexualisation-of-young-people.html>
Buckingham, D (2009) *The Impact of the Commercial World on Children's Wellbeing*
<http://publications.education.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/00669-2009DOM-EN.pdf>

¹⁷ *Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education*, www.schoolsrecruitment.dcsf.gov.uk/themes/default/pdfs/content/Safeguarding_Children_and_Safer_Recruitment_in_Education_Booklet.pdf
Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to multi-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
<http://publications.education.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/00305-2010DOM-EN.PDF>

¹⁸ Gil-Gonzalez D, et al (2006) *European Journal of Public Health Alcohol and intimate partner violence: do we have enough information to act?*

Both of these forms of alcohol related violence disproportionately affect women and particularly so when a woman is pregnant or just after she has given birth. In fact, 30% of domestic violence starts during pregnancy¹⁹ and up to 9% of women are thought to be abused during pregnancy or after giving birth²⁰.

Any violence during pregnancy can affect not just the mother but also the unborn child. Indeed, domestic violence is known to be a major cause of miscarriage and still-birth²¹. There is also a connection between violence and teenage pregnancy. According to Women's Aid, 70% of teenage mothers are in a violent relationship²². Midwives and health visitors who are in contact with pregnant women need to be appropriately skilled to recognise domestic violence, respond to the issue when raised, provide support and to signpost them to other services²³. This includes ensuring that women are aware of safe care for their baby after the birth.

Children can be directly or indirectly affected by

-
- 19 Lewis and Drife (2001, 2005); McWilliams and McKiernan (1993), cited in Home Affairs Committee, Domestic violence, forced marriage and 'honour'-based violence: Volume 1, 2008, p23
- 20 Taft (2002), cited in Home Affairs Committee, Domestic violence, forced marriage and "honour"- based violence: Volume 1, 2008, p23
- 21 Mezey, G (1997) *Domestic Violence in Pregnancy*, in Bewley, S., Friend, J., and Mezey, G: (ed.) *Violence against women*, Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, 1997, cited by Women's Aid:
<http://womensaid.org.uk/page.asp?section=000100010010000400020003>. Causing a miscarriage is an offence under the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 and causing a child to die when it is capable of being born alive is also an offence under the Infant Life Preservation Act 1929. In the last year for which data is available there were no prosecutions for causing a miscarriage. (Jack Straw MP, Hansard, 15 July 2008, Column 368WVA)
- 22 Harrykissoon et al, (2008) *Prevalence and patterns of intimate partner violence among adolescent mothers during the postpartum period*, Archives of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, Vol. 156, No. 4, 2002 quoted in Women's Aid, Safe, Issue 26, 2008, p7
- 23 The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) clinical guidance, *Pregnancy and complex social factors - A model for service provision for pregnant women with complex social factors*, was published in September 2010 <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/CG110>

violence towards their mothers. Alcohol misuse can put children and young people at risk of neglect and physical and sexual abuse. These are families with complex needs and they are some of the most vulnerable if they are not supported across the whole range of those needs.

Violence and abuse can also be a risk factor in such families. In Britain²⁴, there are around 142,000 families (an estimated 117,000 families in England) with five or more problems²⁵, including domestic violence, and approximately 56,000 (around 46,000 in England) of these include children with behavioural problems. Research from the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) highlights that domestic violence is a significant issue for families supported by family intervention projects and it found that the projects reduced the proportion of families reported to have this issue with domestic violence from 26% to 12%²⁶.

We will address these complex issues using the three principles which will underpin the government's approach to reform of child protection: early intervention; trusting professionals; and removing bureaucracy so they can spend more of their time on the frontline and work to ensure more children are protected.

-
- 24 Cabinet Office (2007) *Reaching Out: Think Family; Analysis and themes from the Families At Risk Review* www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/social_exclusion_task_force/assets/think_families/think_families.pdf
- 25 Typically these problems include domestic violence, substance misuse or mental health problem, long-term unemployment, parenting problems and children experiencing neglect, in trouble with the police, showing behaviour problems in school or involved in offending.
- 26 Department for Education (2010) *Statistical Release* www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STR/d000956/osr09-2010.pdf

SHEFFIELD DOMESTIC ABUSE PARTNERSHIP CASE STUDY

Sheffield City Council, South Yorkshire Police, voluntary sector organisations and other partners realised that the pathways to support for victims of domestic abuse were unclear and confusing. There were several well established support services, such as refuges and outreach projects, but no single point of contact. Moreover, services were difficult to access from some parts of the city and for certain groups of people. As a result of this, the Sheffield Domestic Abuse Partnership was launched in May 2010. It is a multi agency team consisting of a helpline, independent domestic violence advisers (IDVAS), and outreach workers (all voluntary sector staff) co-located in the maternity wing of the main hospital along with Police Domestic Violence Officers, Social Workers and a Youth Offending Service Officer working together to provide coordinated support to victims. Refuges and other support services who are key partners and advocates are also based in the hospital. The service is provided citywide and to all members of the community, including male victims. Risk assessment and safety planning is at the heart of the service and there is also a new multi agency process for safeguarding children living in domestic abuse situations. For example, police attending incidents will ask the victim for consent for their details to be passed to voluntary sector staff enabling an early intervention to be offered to people who may otherwise not have accessed support. 784 people have been supported through the multi agency team between May and the end of September 2010.

We will:

- consider how to improve the teaching of sexual consent within the curriculum;
- explore how health visitors may have a greater role in identifying the signs of domestic violence in women they visit;
- investigate a new approach to provide greater support for families with multiple problems along with a new national awareness campaign²⁷ to support and help turn around the lives of such families; and
- consider carefully the findings from the independent Munro Review²⁸ of child protection to focus on supporting better, child-focused, front-line practice and to recommend ways of overcoming obstacles to this and freeing social workers to spend more time with children and families.

²⁷ The coalition programme includes a commitment to 'investigate a new approach to helping families with multiple problems' and the spending review makes a commitment for a national campaign to support these families

²⁸ Munro, E (2010) *Munro Review of Child Protection: Better frontline services to protect children* www.education.gov.uk/munroreview/

1.3 GETTING THE FIRST RESPONSE RIGHT

The role of the police in tackling violence against women and girls is traditionally regarded as enforcement but they and their multi-agency partners also make a very significant contribution to preventing violence from occurring in the first place. We need to provide all our partners with sufficient tools, such as training and data, to tackle violence against women and girls and to be more responsive and accountable at a local level. By making models of effective practice available and encouraging innovation and sustainable improvements through effective partnership working, we will support them in their work to prevent vulnerable people from becoming victims and repeat victims, to prevent perpetrators from becoming repeat offenders, and to help all sections of communities feel safe.

The police have an important role to play in preventing harm before it occurs. They also routinely come into contact with victims and perpetrators of violence against women and girls in the course of their duties. How they respond can be hugely influential in preventing that woman or

girl from being victimised again and in preventing the perpetrator of that violence from repeating it. For example, domestic or sexual violence is not always the direct reason for a victim or perpetrator to seek help from the police or other agencies. So officers and other frontline staff need to be aware that violence against women and girls can be an underlying issue in other crimes or health problems, particularly substance abuse. They also need to be aware of how they should respond.

Other countries have developed approaches which we may learn from. The New York Police Department, for example, has a pro-active approach to dealing with domestic violence perpetrators. They maintain contact in a variety of ways with families in homes where recent domestic incidents have occurred or where there is a history of such incidents.

Frontline multi-agency professionals cannot simply be expected to know that violence against women and girls exists as an issue. We need to ensure they receive appropriate training to recognise and respond to it. For example, we are working with a number of organisations, including the Royal Colleges, to identify where existing training and guidance for doctors on violence against women and children can be expanded.

Throughout this work, we will also seek to challenge the culture of disbelief that many women and girls face when they seek help. We recognise that speaking out about abuse is one of the biggest obstacles for victims. Services should not add to these difficulties by apportioning blame and it is important that they act appropriately the first time a disclosure is made.

We will:

- raise awareness of tackling violence against women and girls in the professional lives of all frontline practitioners. We will do this through training and effective practice including ensuring that awareness of violence against women and girls is part of the information provided to alcohol and drugs workers located in custody suites;
- work with our police partners to see what we can learn from the police response to violence against women and girls in other countries and how those approaches might be applied in England and Wales; and
- fund the development of an e-learning course aimed at GPs to raise their awareness of violence against women and children. The course will cover domestic violence, sexual violence, child sexual abuse and practices

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL: CHAMPIONS SCHEME

In 2004 Oxfordshire's Domestic Abuse Strategic partnership introduced the Champions Scheme. The partnership includes representatives from the county and district councils, police, probation, the Crown Prosecution Service, civil law, health and children's services, and the voluntary sector. The aim was to encourage early disclosure and an effective multi-agency response to domestic abuse. The partnership meets quarterly to enhance joint working and to develop the integrated service encompassing victim, offender and child. Frontline professionals have also received specialist training to deal with domestic abuse. The scheme has proved to be very successful with a 34% increase in the reporting of domestic violence incidents between 2004/05 and 2006/07.

Champions act as a focus of expertise within their agencies and a conduit to all other local support services. They use a common risk assessment for identification and rapid signposting of victims at high risk. Their skills and knowledge are regularly updated through meetings, a dedicated website www.amiabused.com and an e-bulletin. Champion networking has shown to inspire practitioners and to be an effective approach to early intervention. Oxfordshire currently has a total of over 600 active champions in the community and in schools and Domestic abuse services have won regional and national awards for their "It Could Be You" inclusive campaign.

such as female genital mutilation. It will also include key issues such as identification, and understanding the scale of the problem. It will also include the role and importance of partnership working such as engaging in multi agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs).

CASE STUDY – BRISTOL: SEXUAL VIOLENCE “BRISTOL WORKING TOGETHER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE”

Agencies in Bristol had worked over a number of years to establish sound protocols for working together to respond to sexual violence. They then wanted to consider what more they could do pro-actively to tackle sexual violence within the city. Their aim was to provide an enhanced and co-ordinated response to sexual violence.

As a result, new services were opened, including a Sexual Assault Referral Centre and Rape Crisis Centre, and a new approach to investigation was taken with the creation of a dedicated police unit within the Avon and Somerset police force. Building on these developments and the strong partnership approach within the city, a range of new work streams are currently being piloted. This includes looking at the linkages between mainstream health services and services that provide specialist care in the aftermath of a sexual assault, recognising that victims may seek help from different services in the aftermath of violence. The pilot is also testing the suitability of the multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) structure for co-ordinating the support of vulnerable victims of sexual violence that may already be in contact with numerous agencies in the city.

Finally, the pilot is also considering how analytical approaches can be utilised to identify high risk sexual violence perpetrators and then how the principles of Integrated Offender Management can be applied to reduce that risk. This would be done through greater coordination of mainstream police and probation interventions and closer joint working across agencies.

2. PROVISION

By 2015 our ambition is to have created a robust commissioning framework for the provision of violence against women and girls services supported by stable Home Office funding for that period. We will continue to work to raise awareness of the issue through training and funding for multi-agency working, such as MARACs. We will strengthen legal provisions to manage perpetrators where we have identified gaps.

2.1 FRONTLINE SERVICES AND FUNDING

We will continue to support those who support victims in an economic climate which requires us to spend less and work more efficiently. As well as the government's commitment to support existing rape crisis centre provision on a stable basis and to establish new centres, the Home office has allocated a flat cash settlement of over £28m over the next four years for work to tackle violence against women and girls. This allocation includes direct support to voluntary and community sector organisations.

Tackling violence against women and girls will remain a key objective over the coming spending review period. The priority of this government is to move away from the previously short-term and piecemeal funding arrangements for the provision of key services. We recognise that the majority of funding for work to tackle violence against women and girls will continue to come from local authorities and other funding sources. However, in a context of competing priorities, central government will demonstrate the importance this work has at a national level by continuing to provide a core of stable funding. Through this, we want to encourage local decision-makers to take account of violence against women and girls as a national priority when determining local ones.

We need to improve our response to sexual violence overall and how we support the provision of services to victims of sexual violence to ensure they have access to adequate support.

The work of multi agency risk assessment

conferences (MARACs), independent domestic violence advisers (IDVAs) and independent sexual violence advisers (ISVAs) at local level is effective in protecting high risk victims and supporting victims to access the help and advice they need. The government is determined to demonstrate the importance of the continued provision of these services at local level through continued central funding.

Some services are best provided at a national level as this achieves better consistency and economies of scale. Helpline services, which provide advice to many women, girls and men, is one example; as is the quality assurance of MARACs and the provision of training places for IDVAs and MARAC co-ordinators to ensure there is a consistent delivery of service nationally.

There are particular challenges with the provision of services in rural areas due to the higher cost of delivering them in more remote locations, the dispersed nature of rural communities and the demographic features of the rural population. However, it is important that women and girls in rural areas should have access to the same services as those in towns and cities and are not disadvantaged by a local commissioning process which does not recognise violence against women and girls as an issue.

We are aware that women who seek asylum in the UK may have experienced gender-specific violence and/or gender-specific persecution where there is insufficient protection in their country of origin. The UK asylum system is dedicated to being as gender sensitive as possible, from the point that an individual claims asylum to the point of removal or integration. This process includes engagement

with partners and continuous review of our asylum determination, detention and support services. Guidance and training covers specifics such as the significance of providing same-gender interviewers and a reassuring interviewing environment. It also covers awareness of gender-specific violence such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and 'honour' based violence (HBV), and the importance of objective use of country specific information.

Some women enter the United Kingdom on a spousal visa and are subsequently forced to flee that relationship as a direct result of domestic violence. Our intention is to ensure that such women and their children are supported while their case for indefinite leave to remain in the UK is developed and considered. We need to ensure that the solution is both financially viable and sustainable.

It is also important to consider the specific needs of child victims of sexual and domestic violence that are often distinct from those of adult victims. Local authorities, and in due course GP commissioning consortia, have a statutory duty to ensure that they safeguard and promote the welfare of all children (including child victims). We need to help them understand how they can best do this.

We will:

- provide over £28m (in total) of stable Home Office funding for specialist services over the next four years including making funding and advice available to local areas to support IDVA posts, ISVA posts and the role of MARAC co-ordinators. We will also continue central funding for the quality assurance of MARACs and for training places for IDVAs and MARAC co-ordinators to ensure there is a consistent delivery of service nationally;
- maintain levels of funding support for specified national functions including making over £900,000 available per year over the next four years to support national helplines;

- ensure that information for the provision of services for women and girls in rural, as well as urban, areas is available to commissioners to provide a locally-relevant response which meets the needs of women and girls in both these communities;
- develop, using proceeds from the victims surcharge, a sustainable funding model for rape support centres and the development of new centres where they are most needed. We will also work in partnership with the sexual violence sector to develop a mechanism through which funding can be provided on a stable basis;
- set out, through our response to Baroness Stern's Review into how rape complaints are handled by public authorities in England and Wales, our policy on access to sexual assault referral centres in the long term;
- fund the establishment of the Diploma in the Forensic and Clinical Aspects of Sexual Assault to improve the quality of forensic service provision for victims of sexual violence. We will also examine the feasibility of transferring funding and budgetary responsibility for forensic sexual assault work from the police to the health service;
- continue to provide support to victims of forced marriage and frontline practitioners through the Forced Marriage Unit²⁹ and its national helpline;
- continue to work with individuals seeking asylum on a case-by-case basis, including victims of trafficking and victims of torture, to ensure the process is sensitive to gender specific issues;
- identify an effective and sustainable solution to support women and their children who come to the United Kingdom on a spousal visa and who are forced to flee that relationship as a

²⁹ The Forced Marriage Unit is jointly funded by the Home Office and Foreign Office.

direct result of proven domestic violence. We will continue to fund support for victims in this situation until we have identified the most suitable way forward; and

- take appropriate steps to help local authorities, and in due course GP commissioning consortia, consider how they can ensure that child victims are identified, protected and given support that is appropriate to their age.

2.2 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE AND TRAINING

We will help local areas to inform and develop locally appropriate responses to violence against women and girls by providing ways to share information and effective practice. We will ensure that the agencies we work with have the training they need to deliver effective outcomes in tackling violence against women and girls.

We know that sharing effective practice can provide confidence to a local area or organisation when it is developing its approach to tackling violence against women and girls.

Sharing effective practice also has an important role in dealing with issues relating to women and girls from vulnerable groups, such as disabled women; or those who are subject to abuse which is less understood and, arguably, less discussed such as forced marriage, 'honour' based violence and female genital mutilation. For example, accurate recording of these issues and joint needs assessments will help local authorities build a picture of the prevalence of violence in their area and how best to respond.

We know that women with learning difficulties may also be victims of forced marriage³⁰. We need

³⁰ Research carried out by Ann Craft Trust 2009, funded by the Forced Marriage Unit, through its Domestic Programme Fund suggests 45% of the people with learning difficulties who experience forced marriage are women, 38% are men, and 17% of the research group did not disclose their gender.

to raise awareness of this both in the communities it may affect and with the practitioners and agencies who deal with the cases and victims.

Female genital mutilation is a complex issue deeply rooted in the cultures of certain communities. Like many such issues, it cannot be tackled by one agency alone. It is something that needs a cross-partner response which, if possible, involves the communities concerned.

Overall, we will have a role in fostering effective practice. For example, we will bring experts in a field together to discuss and work through key issues that we want to resolve. We will then use the output from those discussions to develop effective practice that local areas can draw on.

We will:

- support information sharing and effective practice in the criminal justice system through a network of Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) specialist co-ordinators. The co-ordinators will be responsible for implementing CPS policy locally, supporting specialist prosecutors as necessary, and working with local violence against women and girls services;
- take steps to ensure that issues relating to consent and confidentiality when information is shared in this way are also taken into account;
- conduct a review of the multi-agency statutory guidance³¹ for dealing with forced marriage to evaluate how it has been implemented across agencies to identify effective practice and possible areas for improvement;
- develop effective practice information which will highlight the sensitivities in cases of forced marriage involving women and girls with

³¹ The guidance was issued to agencies under the Forced Marriage Civil Protection Act 2007 in November 2008. It set out the strategic responsibilities that public agencies must have regard to in order to improve the way that cases of forced marriage are handled.

learning disabilities and assist professionals in providing appropriate responses to support them; and

- develop multi-agency guidelines for practitioners to assist in preventing further incidents of female genital mutilation and ensure that victims and potential victims receive appropriate support.

2.3 SUSTAINABILITY OF THE SECTOR

The women's voluntary and community sector is dedicated to its role in protecting women and girls from violence and to the provision of adequate and consistent services to help victims. As a sector dependent on a range of local funding sources, it has always been vulnerable to fluctuations in that funding. We want to work with the sector to help put it on a more sustainable funding basis.

Joint commissioning, for example, is one important means of improving services by getting rid of inefficiencies and duplication. The 2010 spending review has already highlighted ideas to encourage joint commissioning, cut bureaucracy and improve local accountability. For example, we will establish community budgets in 16 local areas which means we will pool departmental budgets for families with complex needs to get better results. We will then introduce this way of working to all local areas over the spending review period.

Joint commissioning is also important in the health sector. Health and wellbeing boards³² would bring together elected representatives, NHS and local authority commissioners and local Health Watch to promote partnership working between the NHS, social care, public health and other local services and improve accountability. If they are established, we would want health and wellbeing boards to provide a useful way of engaging with local commissioners of health, social care and

³² Health and wellbeing boards were part of the recent consultation, *Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS*, the responses to which are still being analysed.

potentially wider health services.

Value for money will be a key driver in commissioning services. It is important that it is not interpreted just as a need to secure low cost services because lower cost does not necessarily mean more effective provision and quality of service. Intelligent commissioning, which takes account of local needs and opportunities, is one way in which local areas can ensure they commission services that are appropriate and effective.

It is important that we look for new models and ways of working which help support sustainability. One such model is a social impact bond which is a contract between a public sector body and social impact bond investors³³. In the case of violence against women and girls, this might mean that fewer victims are referred on a repeat basis to MARAC or that more victims are helped to rebuild their lives and their social productivity fully.

Another example is the Women's Resource Centre³⁴ pilot which is a two-year project (April 2009 to February 2011) specifically researching the social return on investment for women's organisations, including specialist providers of services for women who have experienced sexual and domestic violence. We will use the learning from this work to help inform commissioning at local level.

We will:

- use the findings from the Government Equalities Office's consultation on sustainability in the violence against women and girls voluntary sector to consider how we can develop a robust platform for the

³³ The initiative is currently being trialled by the Ministry of Justice to reduce re-offending by prison leavers from Peterborough prison. Through the model, the public sector pays only for positive outcomes, the investors receive a greater financial return as the social return improves, and providers are encouraged to innovate in order to achieve the best possible outcomes.

³⁴ www.wrc.org.uk

commissioning of services locally. We will give particular consideration to how this could, subject to the recent consultation, be integrated with the work of the proposed health and wellbeing boards and how they might take responsibility for producing a joint strategic needs assessment;

- use effective practice to help local areas understand intelligent commissioning and how it can be used to support specialist women-only services where these best meet the local need;
- explore whether new initiatives such as social impact bonds could provide a good model for longer term sustainable funding in the violence against women and girls sector; and
- help local commissioners understand the overall benefit of investing in these services by using the results of the Women's Resource Centre pilot to communicate how this can work.

CASE STUDY – BRIGHTON & HOVE: INTELLIGENT COMMISSIONING MODEL

Brighton & Hove Strategic Partnership, led by the city council, is transforming joint commissioning arrangements to integrate comprehensive information, and enable a long term approach and the widest perspective to be taken.

To do this it is balancing needs, priorities and resources to identify joint commissioning outcomes that acknowledge the contribution and impact different issues have on each other. Intelligent commissioning is being piloted for domestic violence, and the learning from this pilot will be applied to addressing other strategic priorities, including preventing violence against women and girls, safeguarding and criminal justice concerns.

In September, local residents, survivors, community and voluntary organisations and partnerships came together with statutory partners to develop and constructively challenge an assessment of needs; review how well needs are being met, and what needs to change, including how communities can better address violence against women themselves. The pilot aims to build an evidence-base to demonstrate value for money and the social value of local interventions, and through survivor engagement to identify a set of joint outcomes in the city that will be central to a more intelligent joint commissioning plan for domestic violence services from 2011.

3. PARTNERSHIP WORKING

By 2015 our ambition is to have supported the public, local areas and organisations to access the tools and information they need to give themselves a strong voice with Police and Crime Commissioners, new NHS commissioning structures and forthcoming public health service, and service commissioners. We will make the same information available to local decision makers to help them understand the scope and scale of violence against women and girls in their local areas.

3.1 WORKING WITH SECTOR ORGANISATIONS AND COMMUNITIES

The coalition government is committed to tackling violence against women and girls, but government cannot solve these problems alone. Community and voluntary sector groups have an excellent track record in delivering support and provide a strong voice for victims. We want to work with local partners to help them work with local and national government to create a stronger response for women and girls.

The women's sector has always worked together to address violence against women and girls and to provide practical solutions in support of those who most need them. They are the experts in this field and they have been speaking out for women and girls for decades. We want to build on their expertise. And we will support them in this through the provision of stable funding over the next four years.

But we are working in a very different economic context. So we need to go beyond financial support and look at all the ways in which we can help the women's sector have a strong voice at the local level.

Transparency of information and data will be at the heart of helping the sector make the case locally for the priority of tackling violence against women and girls.

We want the same information and tools to be available to Police and Crime Commissioners and others in the local area so that they can

understand the prevalence of violence against women and girls for themselves and demonstrate that the actions they are taking are having a positive impact on tackling this crime.

Victims themselves know what makes an effective response for someone who has suffered violence. The challenge for all of us is to encourage them to speak out, to listen to them and to respond effectively³⁵. Communities can help in this by recognising an issue and working together to address it. There are some community based initiatives which can foster this type of collective support and which also have the benefit of raising awareness of violence against women and girls more widely in that community:

- participatory budgeting involves local people in deciding how to allocate part of a public budget to address a particular issue. In the case of violence against women and girls, it will be an opportunity for the wider public to hear about local need and current services, and to decide which voluntary sector services provided in their area best meet local need; and
- in every community there will be women and girls who have recovered better from being a victim than others in similar circumstances. Community coaching encourages the women and girls to work together to identify how they might influence the way in which local

³⁵ The Women's National Commission held 24 focus groups with 300 women to gather women's views. The report Still We Rise (2009) summarises these findings http://www.wrc.org.uk/includes/documents/cm_docs/2010/s/still_we_rise_wnc_focus_groups_report_nov09.pdf

support services are delivered and improve the outcome for more victims.

This approach fits well with our commitment to support the women's voluntary and community sector both in terms of empowering it and supporting it to influence the local decision-making process.

We will:

- support women's sector organisations to compete effectively to provide services commissioned locally. We will do this by helping them build an effective evidence base to influence local decisions and by helping them understand how they may be able to work together with other organisations to achieve a common goal;
- work with the police and others to ensure that local communities have access to the information, for example crime maps, they need to make the case for violence against women and girls to be a local priority and to hold the local decision makers to account;
- ensure appropriate safeguards are in place to minimise the risk of identification of individuals through data being in the public domain;
- support the development of an online tool to be available for local areas, service commissioners and Police and Crime Commissioners to understand what the prevalence of violence against women and girls might be in their area and what the optimum level of service provision to meet it might be;
- work with eight local areas on a project exploring how tackling violence against women and girls can be supported by community projects in local areas (participatory budgeting and community coaching); and
- make the effective practice coming out of these projects available to local areas so they can decide whether these approaches would work for them or could be adapted to their

local circumstances.

3.2 INTERNATIONAL WORK

Violence against women and girls occurs in all countries and is an issue that crosses borders. We are committed to working with our European and International partners to tackle it.

Tackling violence against women and girls does not stop at the borders of the United Kingdom. This violence stops progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) when women are unable to contribute to society and benefit fully from health, education, economic opportunities and other services due to physical suffering or fear of being attacked. The costs – both direct and indirect – are also extremely high for developing countries³⁶. For example, the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (SIDA)³⁷ has estimated that the cost of gender based violence to Zimbabwe in 2009 was US\$2 billion.

We recognise that violence against women and girls impedes development in the poorest countries where physical suffering or fear of being attacked mean that women and girls are unable to contribute to society and benefit fully from health, education, economic opportunities and other services. The voice of women and girls and, more generally, their ability to contribute to the political process is also restricted.

Women and children are disproportionately affected in situations of conflict and post-conflict where they face high risk of sexual violence. Rape is increasingly used as a weapon of war. In July and August 2010, over 500 rapes were reported in

³⁶ Direct costs include services to treat and support abused women and their children and to bring perpetrators to justice. The indirect costs include lost employment and productivity.

³⁷ Primson Management Services
www.primson.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1:welcome-to-primson&catid=1:about-us

eastern Congo alone.

Entrenched social and cultural attitudes and gender biased criminal justice and informal justice mechanisms mean that most victims suffer in silence with little or no recourse to justice, care or support. Moreover, the institutions which are supposed to protect citizens, such as police and armed forces, are often key perpetrators of abuse.

The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), other international human rights treaties and more recently UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on Women, Peace and Security have laid the foundation for the UN's efforts to improve the protection of women and girls within a framework of rule of law and respect for human rights.

However, there is increasing understanding across the international community that violence against women and girls has been massively under-addressed, including through development programmes, with insufficient focus on prevention and tackling root causes such as gender inequality.

Working with our partners globally we can make a real difference to women and girls whose lives are blighted by such violence. Part of this work is ensuring that international agreements are agreed, ratified, implemented and upheld. It is also about continuing the impetus of our country programmes and building a robust evidence base and expertise to support our work.

We are already prioritising action, through our aid programme, to tackle violence against women and girls including the implementation of the Department for International Development's commitment to pilot innovative new approaches to tackling violence against women and girls.

Our continuing support for local, cross-sector responses, with an increasing focus on prevention and tackling root causes such as gender inequality, alongside standalone projects to address violence against women and girls, is raising the profile of these issues overseas.

CASE STUDY – DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (DFID) SIERRA LEONE: A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

In Sierra Leone, DFID has adopted a comprehensive approach through ongoing programmes to support civil society, justice sector development and the security sector. For example, through the funding of the International Rescue Committee, they have supported the development of legislation on gender based violence (protection), the provision of medical and psychosocial services for victims (response), and played a key role on the National Committee of Gender Based Violence (partnerships, alliances, advocacy). Key achievements to date include supporting the Government of Sierra Leone to establish 40 Family Support Units to provide confidential and effective advice to women and child victims of sexual offences.

We will:

- continue to support strongly implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Optional Protocol and other international human rights treaties;
- push internationally for countries to ratify or accede to CEDAW and the Optional Protocol;
- work to ensure that there are robust human rights monitoring frameworks in place to track countries' progress on international commitments;
- remain a driving force behind implementation of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325³⁸ on Women, Peace and Security and

38 UN security Resolution 1325 recognises that women and girls are particularly vulnerable in situations of conflict, and affirms their important role in conflict prevention, resolution, peace-building and governance. Including: the Dakar Platform for Action; Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; African Plan of Action to Accelerate the Implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms; Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court; the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa; and the UN

- implement it on the ground in conflict and stabilisation contexts through bilateral country action plans, including promoting women's participation in political and peace processes;
- continue to implement, and assess progress annually of, the UK National Action Plan, which supports domestic implementation of UNSCR 1325 and provides momentum to the work we are doing internally;
 - continue to work with our international partners to support action on commitments in other international action plans on violence against women and girls³⁹;
 - continue to support actively the role and contribution of the Council of Europe (CoE) in preventing and responding to violence against women and girls, including through participation in the negotiations of the mandate for the CoE Convention on Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence⁴⁰;
 - establish evidence for what we know actually works to reduce violence against women and girls, take steps to communicate it and identify knowledge gaps that require further research;
 - define clear measurable commitments for our work at country-level and report on the impact of these;
 - appoint a high level champion to lead the United Kingdom's international work on tackling violence against women and girls. The role will include providing policy coherence and

coordination across Whitehall, and representing the United Kingdom overseas; and

- support our staff to develop their expertise to further our work on tackling violence against women and girls and to transfer their knowledge across country programmes and sectors. This will include a specific focus on women in conflict and security training across government. It will also build expertise on gender issues in civilian experts to ensure that people with the skills to support women in conflict are available to go at short notice to areas needing stabilisation.

CASE STUDY – BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION, ISLAMABAD: BRITISH NATIONALS OVERSEAS SUPPORTING VICTIMS OF FORCED MARRIAGE

The British High Commission in Islamabad deals with approximately two thirds of the Forced Marriage Unit's cases overseas. There were 105 cases in Pakistan in 2009. The majority of victims are women but approximately 10-15% of cases involve young men.

Since 2000 the High Commission has been building relationships with the Pakistani authorities and non-government organisation (NGO) partners to help our response to cases. This partnership approach is vital in providing the best possible service to British nationals facing forced marriage. They enjoy good working relationships with local authorities in Pakistan on the issue of forced marriage.

Consular Section in the High Commission conduct rescues of forced marriage victims with the support of the police. If the victim is willing to say that they want to leave with the High Commission and go back to the UK, they are able to offer assistance and help them return home. The ability to respond to cases quickly and flexibly in this way is important and fits with the victim-centred approach. Victims who have been rescued are accommodated in a women's refuge run by an NGO partner. Here the victims can stay in a safe and supportive environment and receive counselling and medical attention if necessary while we make arrangements for them to return to the UK.

Secretary General's Unite to End Violence Against Women campaign

39 Including: the Dakar Platform for Action; Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; African Plan of Action to Accelerate the Implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms; Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court; the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa; and the UN Secretary General's Unite to End Violence Against Women campaign

40 This convention is under negotiation. It is intended to provide a European mechanism to prevent violence against women, protect victims of violence and punish perpetrators. It will not create rights for individuals enforceable in a UK court.

4. RISK REDUCTION AND JUSTICE OUTCOMES

By 2015, our ambition is to bring more offenders to justice for crimes committed against women and girls. We will do this through better understanding and rigorous application of our current legislative powers and understanding of where new legislation may be required. At national level, we will have taken steps to ensure consistent application in the way we manage the level of risk faced by victims of violence against women and girls.

4.1 LEGISLATION AND JUSTICE OUTCOMES

There is a range of legislation in place to tackle all aspects of violence against women and girls and provide protection to victims of these crimes. It is important that we understand how it is being used to protect and obtain justice outcomes for victims before deciding whether change or new legislation is required.

We have legislation in place and we need to make sure it is having the impact we want it to and that any new legislation we may introduce will also have the impact we want it to. Section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 will bring into law a requirement on local areas to hold a multi-agency review following a case of adult domestic homicide. Such reviews are an effective learning and prevention tool for local areas and we are working through the implications of this with our partners before implementing the power.

We have implemented the Equality Act 2010 from October this year. As part of the Act, we will be introducing a new public sector Equality Duty which requires public bodies to consider how their policies meet the needs of all those who use their services. Public bodies will be required to publish data on the impact of their work. This will include relevant data on how they are tackling violence against women and girls and will mean that the public is able to hold them to account.

The Act also makes it clear that complying with the Equality Duty may involve a public body delivering services which are specifically targeted

at particular groups⁴¹. As with the existing Gender Equality Duty (which will remain in place until April 2011), there is nothing in the Act that prevents a public body from delivering tailored services for particular groups, where there is evidence of the need for them. It is important that local areas understand that this means they can develop services to support victims of violence against women and girls where such a need is established.

Victims of domestic violence may need immediate protection from the perpetrator while they consider their options for longer term protection. Protection orders and injunctions may help them in this and we need to ensure the civil powers we have in place are providing this support.

We recognise that victims of domestic violence should have financial support when an abusive relationship ends. Women in this position may need to ensure their own financial support and possibly that of their children. We are considering what measures we can put in place to help them do this.

It is important that our work on domestic violence should cover all those who need to be supported. We recognise that the current definition of domestic violence⁴² might exclude some younger

⁴¹ Page 106 of the Explanatory Notes to the Equality Act give the following example: 'The duty could lead a local authority to provide funding for a black women's refuge for victims of domestic violence, with the aim of advancing equality of opportunity for women, and in particular meeting the needs of women from different racial groups'.

⁴² Currently: 'Any threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between adults who are or have been in a relationship, or between family members. It can affect anybody regardless of their gender or sexuality. The violence can be psychological, physical, sexual or emotional. It can include 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation and forced marriage'.

victims and need to understand how revising it might impact on the current practice of the police and other authorities.

Cases involving stalking and harassment can be difficult to prosecute and, because of their nature, are likely to require sensitive handling especially with regard to victim care. It is important that all agencies work closely to ensure that the best evidence is gathered and presented to the court. We have published new guidance for prosecutors and are working to ensure victims who are referred from the national stalking helpline receive appropriate guidance and support from specialist police officers.

Across the Criminal Justice System we are committed to improving communication with victims of violence against women and girls to strengthen the level of trust in the system and reduce repeat victimisation. For example, following recommendations by Baroness Stern, we are working across the criminal justice system to identify ways to improve communication with victims of rape⁴³.

There are currently 141 Specialist Domestic Violence Court Systems (SDVCs) nationally. These represent a partnership approach to domestic violence by the criminal justice agencies, magistrates and specialist support services for victims to provide a specialised way of dealing with domestic violence cases in magistrates' courts. The aim is to work together to identify, track and risk assess domestic violence cases and support victims of domestic violence through the justice process.

We will:

- monitor relevant legislative provisions, such as those covering offences of harassment, and the use of restraining and non-molestation orders to ensure they are working effectively;

⁴³ Recommendation 15: Baroness Stern's Review into how rape complaints are handled by public authorities in England and Wales (2010) available at www.equalities.gov.uk/PDF/Stern_Review_acc_FINAL.pdf

- implement section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 in spring 2011;
- bring the public sector Equality Duty into force in April 2011⁴⁴;
- pilot and fully evaluate domestic violence protection orders (DVPOs)⁴⁵ in Wiltshire, West Mercia and Manchester for 12 months from June 2011;
- explore with experts and practitioners how best to introduce the provisions of the Welfare Reform Act 2009 which allows victims of domestic violence claiming Jobseekers Allowance an automatic 13 week deferral of job-seeking activity to allow them to get into a stable situation before seeking work;
- consider the case for the implementation of Section 60 of the Family Law Act 1996 to enable third parties to allow for a 'prescribed person' to apply to the civil court for a domestic violence injunction on someone else's behalf;
- consult on revising the current definition of domestic violence to include younger victims;
- work closely with Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to ensure that effective practice in relation to stalking is shared between all police forces and CPS regional areas;

⁴⁴ The general duty will require public bodies to have due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation; advance of equality of opportunity; and foster good relations. Underpinning the general duty, public bodies will be bound by various specific duties, including a requirement to set one or more specific equality-related objective, and to publish (a) data and other information relevant to their performance against the general duty; (b) details of any assessments they made of the impact of their policies on equality issues; and (c) details of engagement they undertook with relevant parties about their equality data and objectives.

⁴⁵ In certain defined circumstances the police will be able to apply to the courts for a Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO) to exclude a perpetrator from the family home for up to 28 days. DVPOs were a recommendation in Chief Constable Brian Moore's review *Tackling Perpetrators of Violence Against Women and Girls* published in 2009 (currently no web link available).

- take steps to validate how violence against women and girls prosecutions are conducted. Through this, we will encourage effective practice and access to support to ensure all victims who report this form of violence are treated with dignity and respect; and
- review the existing guidance for SDVCs to ensure it meets the needs of local areas who wish to set up or maintain one of these courts.

CASE STUDY – WEST MERCIA, NORTH WALES AND CUMBRIA: CROWN PROSECUTION SERVICE (CPS) - VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN SCRUTINY PANELS

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has set up Violence Against Women Scrutiny Panels in West Mercia, North Wales and Cumbria. The panels bring members of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) into the CPS, together with CPS lawyers and independent legal advisors to jointly review and scrutinise a random selection of completed violence against women cases (including domestic violence, rape and sexual assault).

The purpose of these Panel meetings is to ask the voluntary and community sector what the CPS could be doing better to improve the handling and outcome of such cases. The Panels also raise awareness of the Criminal Justice System (CJS) and improve confidence in the decisions it makes thereby encouraging victims and witnesses to report incidents. Working closely with the voluntary and community sector in this scrutiny has assisted the CPS in working towards local priorities.

In a survey last year 98% of community members indicated that they felt the CPS listened to their views and 78% were confident that recommendations made by the Panel would be implemented by the CPS in the near future. The Panels also provide the CPS with a valuable insight into the issues faced by victims as they proceed through the criminal justice system. This has enabled prosecutors and witness care officers to be more sensitive to their needs and provide better support to enable them to give better quality evidence and enhance the prospects of bringing offenders to justice.

4.2 REDUCING THE RISK FOR VICTIMS AND SUPPORTING WOMEN OFFENDERS

We will also review our risk management and other protection processes, specifically around multi-agency risk assessment conferences, to ensure they protect high risk victims of domestic violence. We will also consider how we can better support women offenders who have suffered violence to move out of a cycle of offending.

We have seen a sharp rise over recent years in the female prison population. Underlying causes of women’s offending most commonly involve drug and alcohol addiction, high levels of mental health problems and histories of violent and sexual abuse. Almost half of women prisoners report having suffered from violence at home and about one third report having suffered sexual abuse.

Alternatives to custody are one means of supporting women offenders. For example, Women’s Community Projects or ‘One-Stop-Shops’ are a central hub where women who are in the criminal justice system can access support at any point. Support is provided in a number of areas including: accommodation, health, children and families, finance, benefit and debt. Support is also provided to women who have been abused, raped or experienced domestic violence⁴⁶.

We have developed multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) to assess the needs of high risk victims of domestic violence and to put actions in place to reduce that risk. There are now over 240 MARACs in England and Wales. We need to understand better how effective this process is in protecting victims of violence against women and girls and whether there are areas in which we can improve our approach.

⁴⁶ 29 projects funded by the Ministry of Justice with the addition of a further seven through the Women’s Diversionary Fund jointly funded by the Ministry of Justice and the Corston Independent Funders Coalition.

We will:

- continue provision of over £10 million in funding until March 2011 to develop a network of effective community based alternatives to custody with the aim of tackling the underlying reasons of offending and meeting the needs of vulnerable women;
- To conduct a review of MARACs and the MARAC process to improve our understanding of how they are working and potential areas of development;
- consider, as part of the review process, the case for putting MARACs on a statutory basis; and
- look at how a multi-agency approach like the MARAC structure might be applied in cases of sexual violence.

