

Home Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: Tackling Violence against Women and Girls: Funding, HC 741

Tuesday 17 June 2025

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 17 June 2025.

Watch the meeting

Members present: Dame Karen Bradley (Chair); Mr Paul Kohler; Ben Maguire; Robbie Moore; Chris Murray; Joani Reid; Bell Ribeiro-Addy; Jake Richards.

Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee member present: Florence Eshalomi.

Justice Committee member present: Mrs Sarah Russell.

Questions 48 - 146

Witnesses

[I](#): Alison Lowe OBE, Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, West Yorkshire Combined Authority; Councillor Sue Woolley, Deputy Chairman of Safer and Stronger Communities Board, Local Government Association; Clare Moody, Police and Crime Commissioner for Avon and Somerset, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners.

[II](#): Jess Phillips MP, Minister for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls; Gisela Carr, Deputy Director, Interpersonal Abuse Unit, Home Office.

Written evidence from witnesses:

– [Add names of witnesses and hyperlink to submissions]

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Alison Lowe, Councillor Sue Woolley and Clare Moody.

Q48 **Chair:** Welcome to our witnesses, thank you very much for coming in. These are our final two panels on the very short inquiry we have been conducting on the way that VAWG services are funded across the United Kingdom. This is in light of the NAO's report, which set out some concerns around funding of VAWG services and we are very keen to be able to feed in some recommendations prior to the new VAWG strategy; which we believe—I see a nod so I take that as a yes—is going to be released before the summer recess.

I am delighted today that as well as members of the Home Affairs Committee, we have two guesting members; Sarah Russell from the Justice Committee and Florence Eshalomi from the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee. Clearly the issues that we are discussing are ones that affect a number of Government Departments and it is very good that the guesting system allows members of other committees to come and be part of our inquiry.

My final point before we go into introductions is just to say that while we are keen to get information to help in terms of the specific inquiry we are working on, in light of the evidence we took earlier from Baroness Casey, there will be questions around her work and we would appreciate reflections from the three of you on that matter. But if I can now ask the panel to introduce themselves, perhaps starting with you, Councillor Woolley.

Councillor Woolley: Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. I am actually from Lincolnshire, but today I am representing the Local Government Association.

Clare Moody: I am the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner, but here representing the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners as the lead on victims and VAWG.

Alison Lowe: I am the deputy mayor for policing and crime in West Yorkshire. I am also representing the PCC.

Q49 **Paul Kohler:** Can I ask you about how you prioritise VAWG funding, particularly in light of the Government's target to halve it over the next period?

Alison Lowe: In West Yorkshire we have a police and crime plan—as do all PCCs and deputy mayors—which clearly outlines your priorities for the term of office of the mayor or PCC. Violence against women and girls is one of the key work streams that is identified in our plan and we have set a budget around the activity that we want to undertake; whether that is from the recurring funding we are getting from the MOJ, Home Office, or funding that the mayor gets through ARIS funding, for example, the Police Proceeds of Crime Act funding, or—in our case—the mayor has



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access to other funding through the devolved powers that she has. For example, BSIP, the Bus Service Improvement Plan, she was able to use £1 million of that funding to deliver some her VAWG ambitions. So it starts with the plan and it is then identified through that process, but because we are a mayoral combined authority there are other areas of spending that we are able to enjoy that other areas might not be able to benefit from.

Q50 **Mr Kohler:** When was that plan established?

Alison Lowe: It has to be established within 12 months of the mayor or the PCC being elected.

Q51 **Mr Kohler:** In your case, what would that be?

Alison Lowe: We published our plan in February of this year and the elections were May of last year.

Q52 **Mr Kohler:** Was the Government target all incorporated into the plan?

Alison Lowe: Yes, it is in the introduction to the plan. But the targets that we have in the plan are all around delivering that 50% reduction, alongside our delivery partners because obviously we can have the ambition, we can have some money, but it is a partnership approach and we do rely on our key stakeholder partners and Government themselves to help to deliver that ambition.

Q53 **Mr Kohler:** Are there conditions attached to your funding from Government?

Alison Lowe: Lots of conditions.

Mr Kohler: I thought so, yes.

Alison Lowe: Obviously any Government targets might link some activity to the funding; there are always copious and often burdensome reporting requirements. There might be any number of things that the Government ask us to do with that money. We often have to do a business case, so for the Violence Reduction Partnership, for example, we have to do a needs assessment; we have to evidence the need for that money and what we are going to do with it in a really detailed plan that goes to the Home Office and then it makes a decision about the level of funding that we are going to receive.

Q54 **Mr Kohler:** Are you bidding for a bigger pot?

Alison Lowe: Yes, there is lots of bidding.

Mr Kohler: Lots of bidding?

Alison Lowe: Yes.

Q55 **Mr Kohler:** Is that difficult, administratively?



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Alison Lowe: Yes, hugely administrative and not always successful. So there were only 27 force areas funded for the domestic abuse perpetrator funding round that came out about two and a half years ago under the previous Government; West Yorkshire was not successful. The CARA project, which is the low to medium level risk Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme that we were funding through government funding, was ceased and we have to now pay for that—if you believe it—using underspend from our staffing costs. If we get staff leaving we try to keep that gap to create a little pot of money and then that funding is paying for CARA. So if staff do not leave, we do not pay for CARA.

Q56 **Mr Kohler:** I know this is a length of a piece of string question, but how much effort and time does it take to bid on these things? What are we talking about?

Alison Lowe: Sometimes bidding is quite short: for example, we were asked to bid for £1 million from the Home Office on Immediate Justice a couple of years ago; it was a very short bidding round and quite a short process. But when we bid for the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme that was quite long winded: about six weeks, lots and lots of evidence that had to be delivered as part of that bid, and then we were not successful.

Q57 **Mr Kohler:** Do you think there a better way of distributing funds?

Councillor Woolley: Personally I think there is, yes. From a council point of view—as Alison has articulated beautifully—it is all over the place and it would be so much better if it was streamlined. It is not just at a council level but at national government level, that we have all these various pots of money and yet everybody's competing for different bids and more often than not it is short-term funding, so it is only about 12 months max. There is no opportunity to really bed in with various programmes because everybody is on to the next bidding round and that then weakens it completely. As an example, both the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice have a funding stream for victims: why not have one route to go through? As councils, we would very much like to do the same through our community safety partnerships.

Clare Moody: The key point that you would hear from all three of us is that point around longevity of funding: that gives us predictability, it gives us a chance to work with the providers and it gives the providers in areas stability of funding. For example, you can have a permanent staff around that rather than project funded staff. So that would be the one really important thing.

Alison Lowe: On that point, I think it is important to add that ISVAs and IDVAs—Independent Sexual Violence Advocates and Independent Domestic Violence Advocates—are actually accredited qualifications that they have to go through. You are only getting funded for 12 months so if anyone leaves, you are not able to recruit staff because they do not have that qualification; no one wants to do a long qualification to have no job



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at the end of it. It is very difficult to always have enough staff to do those ISVA and IDVA roles, which we know are essential in keeping victims in the criminal justice system. The Victims' Commissioner did a report last year linking the success of the reduction in attrition to having an ISVA or an IDVA on that journey through the court system.

Q58 Mr Kohler: Is all your specific VAWG funding short term and bid for from a pot?

Clare Moody: We do at-risk funding as well. So for example, we have done a seven-year commissioning of our victim services in Avon and Somerset: that includes the ISVA support services and we have done that without the certainty. We have some predictability around the funding but it is precisely because we understood that unmet need, if you like, in the sector and of being able to work with our partners who provide the victim services, to be able to have some innovation in that, to have some dedicated specialist support in that, so that we could ensure that there is that support for the sector as well.

Q59 Mr Kohler: How did you feel confident for a seven-year plan?

Clare Moody: Like I say, it is at-risk. There has been a certain level of consistency around the MOJ funding for victim services through police and crime commissioners. We do not have absolute certainty, but we know if the victims are going to get the support that they need then it is important to have that stability in the sector.

Q60 Chair: So you do have some discretion about the length of funding that you can offer?

Clare Moody: Like I say, it is at-risk. It is not—

Chair: Basically you are bidding for funding from different pots and then you have to distribute it. We will move on to some questions about funding distribution. Robbie Moore?

Q61 Robbie Moore: Thank you, Chair. To start, I am just going to focus on Baroness Casey's report that came out this morning and we had her in front of us this morning. Alison, I will direct these questions to you, if that would be okay?

Baroness Casey has now called for a national inquiry into grooming gangs: specifically one that investigates failings at a local level. Yet for years, both the Mayor of West Yorkshire and yourself as the deputy mayor for policing, have consistently pushed back on an inquiry that specifically focuses on the Bradford district. As recently as 13 days ago, your office was still briefing the press that a national inquiry was not necessary. Do you accept that you were wrong in your role as deputy mayor for policing to oppose a national inquiry into grooming gangs?

What message do you have to victims and survivors like Fiona Goddard—who I was with last night and who focused on Newsnight—who are absolutely infuriated by the position that local leaders like yourself across



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West Yorkshire have been taking?

Alison Lowe: Hello Robbie; I did expect that question. First and foremost, can I say that as a survivor of child rape, as you know, I have been very clear that I wanted to ensure the voices of the victims that I was speaking to were reflected in my decision making and my thinking around a national inquiry. The many hundreds of victims that I was speaking to—I shared this view as a survivor myself—believed that an inquiry would not lead to the outcomes that they were seeking, which were a cessation of the abuse; prevention of future abuse for other victims; justice and the police to catch those perpetrators; and finally they wanted the right funding for services in their local area so that they could move on with their lives and get the support and the counselling that they needed.

Based on that feedback and that victim-led approach, plus my own lived experience, I felt that I wanted to validate the views of local victims and I did not want another inquiry that would take resources, time and energy away from what the victims were wanting in West Yorkshire. The fact that there had been a seven-year, nearly £200 million national inquiry—the IICSA review which submitted its report in 2022— and none of the recommendations had been implemented at that time also played a part in my decision.

Furthermore, in West Yorkshire we have some outstanding police practice, which I know has been commented on this morning by Dame Casey but also by the Home Secretary yesterday in Parliament; we have not only brought lots of perpetrators to justice—210 perpetrators sent to prison for over 2,300 years—we are doing better than any other force in terms of outcomes for victims. This is all part of my decision-making Robbie, so you need to let me answer the question in full.

Tracey and I have violence against women and girls at the heart of our plan: we both have lived experience that we are bringing to our challenge and accountability piece with policing, and we are listening to victims who are sceptical about national inquiries. I therefore believed that a national inquiry would be a distraction from the work that we were doing together. However, having seen the case review—I have not quite finished it, I have been reading it on the train this morning—I welcome the findings of that review and the recommendations that have been made.

I have to say, I wept yesterday when I was watching the Home Secretary talk about the changes that she is going to be implementing, especially around decriminalising those children who were made to be perpetrators through no actions of their own and I was proud of the Labour Government at that moment; that they had listened to victims and were acting. So I stand by my comments before the Casey Review was published: I believe that I listened to victims, I am still listening to victims, but I accept the findings of the Casey Review. I personally would love to meet Fiona—I am very happy to meet her because I have met so



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many victims—to understand what she would like to see out of this review.

And just to say, we have now written to our 45 third sector providers across West Yorkshire to ask them specifically what they would like us to be saying to the Home Secretary—who is commissioning the inquiry—so that we get their voices embedded into those terms of reference to make sure that the voices of West Yorkshire are clearly there.

Q62 Robbie Moore: It is frustrating that it has taken a national embarrassment to get you and the Mayor of West Yorkshire to change position on this. At a local level, given the level of concern that has consistently been raised about the Bradford district in particular, do you accept that there should be a spotlight on Bradford as part of this national inquiry?

Alison Lowe: I understand that Dame Casey has said this morning that Bradford is likely to be one of the areas chosen. As I say, I read her audit, I believe that she is a woman who knows what she is talking about and if she says that that is going to happen then I am happy to support that.

Q63 Robbie Moore: Finally on ethnicity: do you believe that men of Pakistani heritage are overrepresented in cases of grooming in West Yorkshire? And if so, why?

Alison Lowe: I believe that and I believe that because I have seen the data. I have not always seen the data; it has been patchy, as you know, and the Home Secretary herself said that yesterday. In West Yorkshire we have about 60%, 65% of the data and about a third is missing. In West Yorkshire, according to Dame Casey's report, about a third of our data is showing that men of Pakistani heritage have been perpetrators. I do not know what period that data is from, I presume it is from when the unit—we have a dedicated CSEA unit in West Yorkshire—was set up in 2015 to the current day, but it could be a shorter period than that.

In fact about five or six months ago I was interviewed by Rob Parsons; you may know him. I did a podcast so it is there for the world to see and I talked about the data then and in fact said at that point—because it changes and it is very fluid as you know—about 80% of the cases that have been looked at in that period were Pakistani heritage. So I have always been open about the reality of group-based childhood sexual abuse and exploitation in the years that we have been talking about, from 2015 when our unit was set up to the current day, having a disproportionality in favour of Pakistani heritage men.

Chair: The West Yorkshire data, according to Page 84, is between 2020 and 2024.

Alison Lowe: Yes, but from '25 is the 80%.

Q64 Robbie Moore: Finally on this point: there has been so much pushback



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at a local level within the district by the leader of Bradford Council and, dare I say, by yourself and by the Mayor of West Yorkshire as recently as a couple of weeks ago, that there should be no focus on the Bradford district because there will be no new lessons learned and it would cost the taxpayer too much, even in the knowledge that money was going to be allocated nationally. Just for the record, do you now believe that actually it is right to welcome more openness, more transparency and more accountability, and have a spotlight shone across the Bradford district on this issue?

Alison Lowe: You are making two points there. The first point is that I—

Q65 **Robbie Moore:** Yes or no would be really helpful.

Alison Lowe: But it is not a yes or no answer, is it?

Robbie Moore: I am not sure why.

Alison Lowe: You talked about me pushing back in Bradford. I made the point that Bradford had had 74 reviews, including an independent—

Q66 **Robbie Moore:** Again, we had this point with Baroness Casey this morning: the response back from you and the leader of Bradford Council is that this is relying on serious case reviews. Baroness Casey has been critical of that, even in the recommendations that she has put forward to the Home Office. So I am afraid I do not accept the 74 figure.

Alison Lowe: You might not accept that, but my narrative was that there had been many reviews, 74, or less, you decide, and that the work that we were doing in West Yorkshire collectively, and the voices that I had heard, the voices of survivors and victims, was that I do not want a review anywhere in West Yorkshire. And Bradford is obviously in West Yorkshire. Secondly, the point—

Q67 **Robbie Moore:** So has your position changed? That is all I want to know. Do you support a review?

Alison Lowe: I have already responded to that question. You asked earlier if Bradford should be included. I have said that Baroness Casey has already intimated that Bradford will be one of those chosen and I 100% accept Baroness Casey's review; if she thinks Bradford is going to be included, then Bradford will be included.

Q68 **Robbie Moore:** Thank you Chair, that is all I wanted to ask. It is just frustrating for all the Committee to see that we have the deputy mayor of policing in front of us who is not getting behind calls for an inquiry at a national level.

Alison Lowe: But I did not say that at all; please do not put words in my mouth.

Q69 **Mr Kohler:** Just to be clear, what does Baroness Casey know that you do not know? Why has her view made you change your mind?



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Alison Lowe: If you remember, Baroness Casey started off as I did, feeling that a national inquiry was not going to be required. She has obviously seen a lot of information that I have not—not just from Bradford—actually, Bradford Council—

Q70 **Mr Kohler:** Why Bradford though? You know an awful lot about Bradford.

Alison Lowe: Yes.

Q71 **Mr Kohler:** What does she know that you do not know, so that you are agreeing with her view now that there should be an inquiry in Bradford?

Alison Lowe: What I am saying is that I hold her in high esteem and she has seen a lot of information. In the bit of the report that I have read—I have not concluded reading the report—she has said warm words about some of the partnership working that has happened in Bradford and the evolution of the partnership over a period of time. The data for Bradford is actually not the worst in West Yorkshire, but—

Mr Kohler: That is not my question though.

Alison Lowe: No, but I do not think she knows anything more than I do about Bradford. I think—

Q72 **Mr Kohler:** Then why are you therefore agreeing with what she is saying? She said that there will probably be a review into Bradford and you are saying you will agree with that.

Alison Lowe: No, I am agreeing with the whole of her recommendations. If she is saying to me that Bradford needs to be one of the local authorities that is included, I am not going to argue with that because she—

Mr Kohler: If you know more about it, why are you not going to argue?

Alison Lowe: Because it is not—

Q73 **Mr Kohler:** You said it should not be included, did you not?

Alison Lowe: She said that it should not be, and now she is saying there should be an inquiry.

Q74 **Mr Kohler:** Yes, but what does she know that you do not know?

Alison Lowe: I said there should not be, and now I am agreeing that there should be an inquiry. If there is an inquiry that is based on some local areas, then why not Bradford? Why not Bedford? Why not Carlisle? Baroness Casey has been to Bradford, Bradford council leader invited her to Bradford and we shared a lot of the good work that is happening, not just there but across West Yorkshire. So I do not know, maybe she thinks there is some good learning as well as some things that we need to have lessons for the future.

I am open because what she said first and centre was that there has been a lot of defensiveness and a lack of transparency. If she is saying



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she wants to come to Bradford, I am saying the door is open. Tracey and I will support anyone to come into any part of West Yorkshire: we will make it as easy as possible because we want to be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

Mr Kohler: The door is unlocked, okay.

Q75 **Chair:** Let us move on. Can we go back to the more general questions around distributing funding? I am interested in the data you collect: clearly data is something we have been talking about a lot today. But what data do you collect, and how does it determine and help you to decide where to direct funds to tackle violence against women and girls?

Clare Moody: I will give Alison a chance to breathe and get some water. Quite often the data we collect is as a consequence of the grant. There are requirements around reporting with the grant so we will collect the relevant data in relation to that.

We also collect data from our own service providers: the data that we are asked for centrally, but through our quarterly contract meetings with organisations we collect our own data from them as well. That will often be qualitative as well as quantitative data that we are getting from our service providers around what the experience of victims is. What you want is a longitudinal picture, not just a snapshot; you want to know that there has been change, that the experience of VAWG survivors has gone through a process and it will not be a straightforward process. So we collect a range of data, some grant-based, some reporting-based, and some is what we ourselves require from that contract process.

Councillor Woolley: First, what information is going to be asked for depends an awful lot on who the funder is. There is no single way of doing things, and I would plead that that is given some thought: that there is a corporate way of collecting the evidence and it is fed out in a sensible way. Unfortunately, because there is not this great corporate way of doing things, more often than not it means that the bigger providers are the only ones that can flex themselves quickly enough to be able to get the information. So you are probably getting information in a very narrow line.

A lot of work and trying to get some way of helping victims needs doing at a very local level and those very local level charities are tiny. Yes, they will jump and provide us with information, but then it is not quite the same as the grant funding might be producing for other pieces of information. So, to cut a long story short, it is all over the place and it would really benefit from some concentrated work.

Clare Moody: Following up on that point, one thing we need to work on in future as well is the sort of data that we need to collect in terms of prevention and prevention impact. I was going to say it is in its infancy; I would suggest that there is more that we can do to work out what useful measures we can put in place for ensuring prevention practice is working.



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Alison Lowe: Yes, and we need some consistent data sets around ethnicity, gender and so on because we need to understand who is utilising our services and where the gaps are.

Q76 **Joani Reid:** Can you just be more specific about what quantitative data you collect or are given on perpetrators and victims specifically? Can you give me a sense of how you collect that data and how you understand what is happening at a local level?

Clare Moody: We have a range of sources for the data. As I say, some comes from the victims' providers. As a police and crime commissioner I can have access to the policing data around crime recording, that aspect of things. So there is a kind of complexity of the landscape around the data that we can get from different sources, there is not one consistent theme. As Alison said, having those benchmarks around the consistency of data would be really helpful. But we pull in as much data as we can from whichever sources we can get around this work.

Alison Lowe: As a former chief exec in a third sector organisation I am very interested in that data set. For CARA, for example, we collect details of the perpetrator gender, age, the postcodes they come from across West Yorkshire, and whether they have re-offended. We get that data in lots of different ways. We go to the police, but also to the victim, because we know that not all applications of the CARA programme are equal in terms of getting that triangulation of whether or not the perpetrator has re-offended, for example. We want to know about ethnicity and a whole series of information about individuals using something that we are funding. Then we have the distance travel tools in terms of whether people are improving in terms of their offending, or if it is an ISVA or IDVA service in terms of moving forward with their lives and recovery, for example. So, there are lots of different metrics that we use, some qualitative, some quantitative.

Q77 **Joani Reid:** Are you confident that you have an understanding of who the victims and perpetrators are in your communities?

Alison Lowe: I do not think you could ever be 100% confident because we know many—

Q78 **Joani Reid:** I am not asking for 100% confidence, but are you are you relatively confident that you know where these people are?

Clare Moody: We know there is massive under-reporting. We do not know where all those victims and survivors are because they have not told anyone, in that sense.

Q79 **Joani Reid:** So how robust do you think the data is, in and of itself?

Clare Moody: It is clearly reflecting those people who have interacted in some way in our systems. There is a lot of work being done to try to increase the confidence of victim-survivors in the criminal justice system,



for example, so that we increase the numbers of people who come forward.

In Avon and Somerset, for example, we have had a 54% increase in rape survivors coming forward. But that does not mean to say that 54% increase means that all the women who have gone through that kind of experience are now somehow involved in the system and we know about them because of course that is not the case.

Councillor Woolley: The thing that I would probably emphasise is again going back to where the information is coming from: within councils, housing responsibilities, CAB and children's centres are each going to have a certain amount of that information. As my colleague has just said, there is massive under-reporting because there is no mechanism for pulling it all together, other than if you have a good community safety partnership, and that takes a lot of work.

Q80 Florence Eshalomi: Good afternoon. The average council taxpayer would be quite perplexed to know that violence against women and girls services are not classed as statutory services, and that is the reality across the country. The reality also across the country is that, according to the LGAs—as you know, Councillor Woolley—we have a situation where a number of councils are facing near bankruptcy. Forty-two councils have received exceptional financial support; 30 of them received that support to ensure that they did not declare bankruptcy.

The pressures facing councils include temporary accommodation, children's services and adult social care. In the midst of all this we know that violence against women and girls is a really important area, but yet it is not given that statutory requirement. What emphasis do you feel should be given to those areas which we know are vital, but yet they are not classed as a statutory requirement?

Councillor Woolley: It goes without saying that councils would love it to be a statutory requirement, but the costs involved are almost prohibitive. You have already said that, because the service is not statutory, councils are putting what money they do have into those children's and adult services. It is a case of, "Please, Government, we need more money. If you want us to do that job properly and make sure we capture all of those victims, then we have to have more funding and more opportunities in place just to actually do the job properly."

Alison Lowe: It is also about the Government utilising the resources they already have in a better way. For example, the National Audit Office said that the Home Office was spending about £149 million a year on VAWG, and there was always something around 15% underspend each year: that is a disgrace. That money should not be underspent; it should come straight to the sector so we can spend it.

There is also something like £979 million—I have the figure here—spent across other Government Departments all tackling VAWG. Why do you



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not pool that money? When we get the National Government VAWG Strategy, why do we not identify all the money currently being spent on VAWG and use it to sit behind the delivery of that strategy? Hopefully the delivery will be in our local authorities, in the third sector and in our offices, so we can give you that assurance about how that money is being spent and the metrics that you need and want. But currently, with lots of different Departments spending money on VAWG, who knows who it is benefiting and where it is going? I am not saying it is being wasted, but it is not delivering against the Government objectives, is it?

Clare Moody: I would just add on that it is not just going, "Right, here is a pot of funding for VAWG," it is actually also recognising that violence against women and girls is an underlying theme to other areas. So when you look at counterterrorism funding, it is not just the approach to counterterrorism, which is intelligence-led, but also the fact that whatever the type of terrorism you are looking at, you will find there is a theme of misogyny underneath it somewhere as well. In prevention, for example, whether you are looking at far right or Islamist-based terrorism, the perpetrators will have misogynistic attitudes almost as their starting point. So there are other ways that we can look at using funding from other areas as well and bringing that into VAWG funding.

Q81 **Florence Eshalomi:** Do you think that there should be more emphasis on funding for preventative services? In a sense, the very same vulnerable women who are struggling to get suitable housing and whose children may be at risk of going into adult and children's social care, may also have care responsibilities and have older family members in adult social care. That is really three areas that come under the council's responsibility, but yet we know that even trying to get councils to adequately fund accommodation for women who are survivors of domestic abuse is quite challenging.

A number of those accommodations are frankly inadequate, and we are seeing women who have been subjected to horrific abuse having to share facilities with men, in some cases men who have come out of prison. Do you not feel that there should be more priority across local government for preventative services? What more do you think Government should be doing to make sure that there is more interdepartmental working on this really vital agenda?

Councillor Woolley: That is an easy one to answer in as much as, yes, I completely agree with you. What I would say is that all councils are sweating that pound that they get to the maximum. But you are absolutely right as far as children and housing responsibilities are concerned, you have articulated beautifully all those areas where the common denominator is councils. So why on earth do we not just lift and shift all of that funding, pool it and put it in a council area so that they can then spend it to best effect? Going back to the original point, what use is short-term, one-year funding?



Alison Lowe: If you look at some potential savings that will come from a prevention approach, in 2019 the Home Office reported the cost to society of domestic abuse to be £66 billion. In 2024 the DA Commissioner upped that figure to allow for inflation—not including children—to £84 billion. If we were able to generate that efficiency and give that to local authorities, can you just imagine the benefits it could bring for women, families, children and men fleeing domestic abuse? It would be enormous.

So we need to look at prevention, which was not part of the last Government's agenda at all and there was no investment in prevention. As PCCs, deputy mayors and mayors, we have sought to bring some prevention money in through different pots of money, but it is very small fry compared to what the Government could achieve if things were done differently.

Clare Moody: There is always this challenge around prevention, in that you have to respond to the need. As I was saying to Joani earlier on, we are trying to identify more survivors and bring more cases forward, but at the same time we are trying to up that prevention provision as well because you are saving money in the longer term if you work on that area.

But prevention work requires focus and attention. Some is around housing provision, but actually a lot is around focusing on the perpetrator and working across the criminal justice system. Some is around rehabilitation and some is around perpetrators before they get into the criminal justice system. Some is around working with perpetrators of other crimes but then recognising there is a DA flag on that as well, and that actually you can do work in that sphere. But all of that requires resourcing at the same time as you are trying to actually increase the numbers of cases that you deal with.

Q82 **Mrs Russell:** I am particularly addressing this question to Councillor Woolley, but obviously we would be pleased to hear from the other witnesses as well on a related point around housing. When women flee domestic abuse they very commonly go into social housing of some sort. Typically 98% of social housing is provided with no furnishing, which does not just mean no white goods, it means literally no carpets and no curtains. The End Furniture Poverty campaign is very clear that it feels that this leads to victim-survivors returning to their abusers because they cannot keep their children safe, warm and comfortable in that environment and may then feel pressure to return, just to give their children something that in some respects looks physically like domestic normality.

Do you think that having more council housing or registered provider housing—I am not too worried about the specifics of that—that comes furnished as standard, particularly for survivors of domestic abuse, would be likely to improve that situation and prevent the recurrence problems that we see?



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Councillor Woolley: Obviously, particularly if children are involved, you want them to go into a safe, warm environment, and yes absolutely, it would be great if it was furnished. But I feel that the community as a whole, all communities, are incredibly kind a lot of the time and when a request goes out for white goods, furniture or curtains and so on, particularly on social media, not mentioning why they are needed, people turn around very quickly. The voluntary sector in particular are so very good at being able to get those bits and pieces all together.

Because the problem is, of course, that when somebody decides that they need to go, they need to go and are literally going in the clothes they stand up in. So yes, any opportunity to make sure that they are moving into a property that has all those basic goods. Of course, it does not matter that the property is being used for someone fleeing domestic abuse, it can then be used for somebody else for something completely different. White goods and furniture do not come with a tag that can only be used for certain events.

Alison Lowe: As I said, I used to work in the third sector, with a lot of women fleeing domestic abuse, as I once was. We need to be looking at the refuge sector, really expanding its offer, and obviously we need to fund that. Lots of refuge spaces have closed over the last 10, 15 years, and the refuge sector is amazing—Women's Aid nationally, for example—single units that are furnished as a trainer flat kind of thing, so that families, women with children or men with children can start again. Then, when they get to the top of the housing list, which can take two or three years in places like West Yorkshire—obviously 200 or 300 here in London—then hopefully they have been able to collect a few bits and bobs. With the help of the charity and the very well-developed third sector that we enjoy in West Yorkshire, we can help give that wraparound support. But we need to invest in the refuge sector, the third sector, that has that expertise. Please let us fund them to provide single units for families to move into while they are waiting for the next part of their lives to start.

Q83 **Mrs Russell:** Just to clarify, I was not suggesting this as an either/or situation.

Alison Lowe: No, that is just my passion!

Clare Moody: I would only add two very quick points to that. First, it is also having the furniture, having the ability to move into a home, if you like, albeit temporary, but also being able to bring pets because of the difference that makes to whether people stay or do not stay in the abusive situation. Secondly, can we just try to normalise a little more the idea that the victim-survivor stays in their home and it is the perpetrator that has to leave, rather than having to go into a refuge, furnished or unfurnished?

Alison Lowe: Where that is possible.



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Clare Moody: Where it is possible, exactly. But it is just that we do not need to just assume they themselves have to move.

Q84 **Chair:** Thank you, I am very pleased to hear you say that because that was going to be my next point; that there are alternatives. I realise that is not possible in every situation.

Clare Moody: Of course it is not.

Q85 **Chair:** But wherever possible we need to make sure the victim can stay where they are. Time and again we are hearing—today has been a constant theme—of agencies and organisations simply not joining up, not working together. Given that in 2015 the VAWG strategy was very clear that there had to be work on prevention, your comments are really quite disappointing.

One of the issues that has not been covered yet, and we have had evidence on this, is the by and for services. I just wonder if you have any comments on that before we move on?

Clare Moody: I would just start with the point that we keep looping back to: that longer-term funding. Where there is a by and for sector, the organisations are often quite small so being able to access funding for them perhaps needs to be an explicit part of commissioning. For us, as police and crime commissioners, where we are able to do longer-term funding we are then able to help build capacity, and work with some of the larger organisations to ensure that there is an alliance provision that includes by and for services, and there is that commissioning in place as well. As I said earlier on, it is so important we provide some provision around the significance of specialist services and recognising—I was going to say individual needs—the intersectionality of experience as well. Fundamentally you have to have by and for service provision in that to recognise and respond to those needs.

Alison Lowe: One of the opportunities of devolving monies to PCCs, mayors and deputy mayors is that we do have those relationships with those by and for sectors. With our restorative justice contract that we let late last year, we embedded some service users into delivery of that contract—they helped to co-design the contracts, judge the different participants and were part of the decision-making at the end—so the people who were commissioned were 100% the choice of people who would use that service, which was brilliant. We would like to do that more, but sometimes because we do not know whether we are going to get funding or the level of the funding, or we are told to commission things very quickly or not told to commission at all, just to give contracts, that can prove problematic. But we would love to do it more, and as a former chief exec in the third sector, it is in my heart.

Q86 **Joani Reid:** Do you think there is sufficient work on prevention of high risk perpetrators? Do you think we are doing enough in that area currently, and if not, why not?



Clare Moody: There is so clearly more we can do; a lot of this is almost in its infancy in terms of what works and what is effective, going back to the early point I made. We have the Drive project, for example, which is specifically aimed at high-risk perpetrators. Again, we are starting to collect the evidence about which bits of that are working and how we can expand that provision. But to a certain extent this is how long is a piece of string, because we have a lot of response to do. As I said earlier, the numbers of cases in Avon and Somerset are increasing, and we are just expanding.

The principles of what is called Operation Soteria—the way that rape and serious sexual offences are investigated—have been the driver behind that increasing number of cases we have seen because those six pillars that lay underneath Operation Soteria have brought that change.

We are now in the first stages of a project to carry that over to domestic abuse cases, which is a so much wider case type. Consequently, we are going to have a lot more perpetrators to deal with. It is about how we use an evidence base so we know that what we are going to do with those perpetrators is going to have an impact; so there is going to be an expanding need. Even if I thought we were meeting the need to address the perpetrator behaviour right now, we are absolutely going to need bigger programmes around that too.

But actually we do not need to lose sight of interventions at an earlier age and at a population level as well. So this cannot just be about responding to those high-risk offenders, it is high-harm offenders and how we get ahead of this curve because we are seeing something evolve in front of our eyes right now that we have to get ahead of as well.

Alison Lowe: I am desperate to come in because I am so excited to tell you about some innovation that we are doing in West Yorkshire. For six years the West Yorkshire Police, alongside a university partner—Cambridge I think—have been working on a new DA analytical tool called the DART, to be used in conjunction with police officers. It is not only to be used on its own, it is a tool that helps to identify those high-harm perpetrators. The indications are incredibly exciting. Using the DASH risk assessment form, the evidence is that it is right about 26% of the time; the DART is looking to be there or thereabouts in 89% of the time. So this is transformative and amazing, if it works in the real world.

It is just now being moved from the discussions and all the work that is being done on the algorithm and the AI that is sitting underneath it because it is fast. It is going to be applied in Bradford and the DA team there are incredibly up for it, and we hope to be able to report some fantastic success to the Home Office. I was telling the Home Secretary about it only last week, so watch this space, West Yorkshire, we are doing it.

Q87 **Joani Reid:** I would love to come and see it in action once you have set it up, it will be interesting.



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Alison Lowe: You are very welcome, anyone can come. I am really excited about the possibility of this tool.

Chair: We always like a school trip, so thank you. We are just going to conclude this session now with Bell Ribeiro-Addy.

Q88 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** I want to find out about what mapping of VAWG funding is undertaken by your organisations to make sure that you are avoiding any duplication of services? Who would like to go first?

Councillor Woolley: That is a can of worms, is it not? Certainly from a council point of view, this is our frustration. At the beginning of my evidence I gave an example of the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice both providing monies to the victim support organisations. Why is it separate, and not just one? To be quite frank with you the same applies for councils: we do not have a clear sightline on it. There are so many pots and so much short-term funding that those bigger organisations will go straight off and write up a bit themselves; smaller organisations will come through a different route. So no, we do not have a good sightline of what offers there are out there that we can tap into. But we would very much welcome the opportunity of being able to say, and I repeat, "Put it all in one place, and allow us to work with all of those organisations at a local level, be they large or small, to provide that continuity".

Q89 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** Does that mean you do not really have a good way in which to share information about what works with all the groups that distribute funding?

Councillor Woolley: I may be wrong, but I do not think so. I will give an example that our local police force took part in a perpetrator programme, and as Chief Superintendent said, when we are getting 30 reports of domestic violence in a day, which ones do you choose, which ones do you go to? You are wanting to stop anything more serious happening, but how do you go about it? So there is not that clarity and opportunity to say, "Right, well, with this programme we will really concentrate that money in this particular area."

Clare Moody: The Home Office funding that Councillor Woolley was talking about comes through PCCs, we have those relationships. As PCCs we do a lot of work with our partners, and I can speak to this for Avon and Somerset. We work closely with local authorities, also with ICBs and other agencies in the area, where appropriate. As a PCC, I chair the local criminal justice board as well. We hold a lot of information and do what we can to map the picture, if you like, and ensure that we co-ordinate our funding; some is around other areas like mental health provision and working across different agencies around that.

It becomes easier if you have longer-term funding because then you have a more stable funding picture to map across. You want to avoid duplication and that fragmentation, as has been said, around the Home Office and that come through PCCs and the MoJ funding. I already talked



about the work that we all do, as PCCs, in Avon and Somerset, with bringing agencies together. The duty to collaborate that will be coming in will help to build that picture as well. But yes, the consistency and having that kind of streamlined focus will be useful.

Alison Lowe: In West Yorkshire, when Tracy and I first came into office in 2021, we actually asked for an audit: a mapping of funding that we and our partners were doing in the local authorities because we wanted to understand what funding was already happening so that we did not duplicate. Having said that, there can never be enough money in VAWG as we know, and the potential savings are massive; so let us not forget that. But we wanted to understand what we were funding: not just in the VAWG world, but also in drugs and alcohol and everything that was co-terminus with our police and crime plan and responsibilities.

Obviously that piece of work was undertaken in the first six months. We obtained a really good idea, but it is only as good as the period of time that you have that because local authorities are commissioning or decommissioning all the time. Even though the mayors have convening powers there was not the same ability to do that with health. Yes, we have a great relationship with the ICB and it can give us information, but each of the NHS trusts and different places commission things separately, and that was very disjointed. So we do not have one picture of West Yorkshire today. We nearly had one picture of policing and crime about three years ago, so it is a piece of work we can do again. I have actually asked for a piece work to be done on all our domestic abuse provision because I am aware that some local authorities are going their own way and buying in their own perpetrator schemes, for example. I am very interested in that because we might have to stop funding ours imminently.

But it is a good question, and it would be great if, under some law or other, or duty to collaborate, we all had to share that information on a regular basis so that all of us as commissioners could look and see where the gaps were, where the overlaps were and where the need is, and commission accordingly and not waste public money.

Q90 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** It sounds like the problem seems to be the length of funding and programmes. What is the shortest period for funding a VAWG programme?

Alison Lowe: It is normally about 12 months, but obviously everyone starts to decommission at nine months. If you have a job coming to an end in 12 months, at nine months you are off, are you not?

Councillor Woolley: I would ask you to consider the one area we can all agree on, if funding should sit anywhere, and that has the tentacles, if you like, to go to the various agencies, it is public health. Public health sits under local government and councils and works with the police and, believe it or not, health and councils. It is an area that everybody has a lot of faith in as well, so I would very much ask you to consider that, if



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you are going to put funding anywhere put it there because of its longevity of working with partner organisations

Clare Moody: Can I just shift that around a little because, as Alison said, it is not necessarily ring-fenced, but the other thing is the actual specialist knowledge and focus that you need on this. It is pretty much our job to get this right, and we are accountable for that in our sphere as well.

Alison Lowe: I agree with what she said.

Q91 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** What information are you asked to share with central Government about how VAWG funds are distributed, and does that differ depending on which Department is giving you the budget?

Clare Moody: Any grant we get has different accountability within it, so you have different metrics up and responses to that. One thing I would say, as well, is it is not just about data going up; it is really important that we get a data flow back down as well, so that when we have fed in information, that kind of collation point that we then know, right, okay—

Alison Lowe: It is about intelligence, is it not? What that is telling us.

Clare Moody: What has it generated at that whole population level? What is having impact? What is and what is not working? So that we have a two-way conversation around the success or otherwise.

Chair: Thank you very much for your contributions today, we have just about come in on time with an hour of evidence from you. It is incredibly helpful, and if there is anything that occurs to you afterwards that you think the Committee needs to be aware of please get in touch.

But we take from this longer-term funding, more certainty about a single pot of funding, and more consistent data on things that are coming across from all of you, and around prevention. So thank you very much again. I am going to suspend the sitting for five minutes while we change things over and the Committee can get in place, but thank you again.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Jess Phillips and Gisela Carr.

Q92 **Chair:** We now move on to our second panel in this final evidence session that we are taking on our short inquiry about funding for services tackling violence against women and girls. We are delighted to have the Minister with us today; thank you very much for coming, Minister. You are with Ms Carr, the Deputy Director from the Interpersonal Abuse Unit at the Home Office. I do not think you need to be introduced because you are well-known. Unless you have anything you would like to say up front, we will start with questioning.



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Jess Phillips: No. I was chomping at the bit when the previous panel was speaking.

- Q93 **Chair:** I could see that. We will focus initially on questions around this specific inquiry but if you will forgive us, if time permits, we will want to cover some things that we went through this morning when Baroness Casey gave us evidence.

Jess Phillips: That is totally fine.

Chair: We are going to start on co-ordination of funding and strategy, and I will start with Ben Maguire.

- Q94 **Ben Maguire:** Thanks, Minister and Gisela, for coming in to see us today. How has the ambition from the Labour Government to halve violence against women and girls in a decade altered your and your team's approach to funding decisions and how have you done things differently?

Jess Phillips: I am not normally an evasive sort but as the Chair referred to in the previous evidence session—and bearing in mind our CSR was last week, although it seems like years ago—we are due to publish our violence against women and girls strategy before the summer, and I find myself in the uncomfortable position of potentially not being able to give full answers. I am more than happy to come back at the point at which some decisions have been made.

But to the fundamental of your question, and I suppose to follow up on some evidence that you just heard, as somebody who has worked in this field for many, many, many years, actually if you look at the data around increases in funding over the last two decades in this space—both increases and decreases across different areas—what I have to grapple with is the idea that what worked to support people is a completely legitimate thing for Governments to look into. But the approach I have to take is what will work to reduce it? What will actually work in the space of prevention?

As you just heard, while everybody writes prevention into their models—no doubt about it, and everybody knows that it is a thing that you have to work on—actual investment and strategies for prevention, both here and around the world, are not necessarily well-trodden. When I think about the future and the things that I want to fund and that we need to fund across many different Government Departments, what the mission and the number does is make a steely focus on how are we going to bring the number down. My own assessment, which is completely well-meaning and people like me fought for a lot of this, is that we just started to put slightly more comfortable plasters on slightly bigger saws rather than stopping the plasters being needed to be put on in the first place.

- Q95 **Chair:** We appreciate you will not be able to answer everything about it.

Jess Phillips: Yes, sorry. I do not want to lie.



Chair: We are hoping to give you recommendations to help improve this sort of thing.

Jess Phillips: That is good. I do not like to be evasive. My main problem in this role is always, am I allowed to say something?

Q96 **Ben Maguire:** Thanks for that answer. We are going to come on to prevention later, but there has been quite a well-reported underspend by the Home Office on VAWG services in previous years. I would be quite interested to hear your thoughts on how that could be avoided in future; when you are given a pot of money, how can it be ensured that it is put to the best use? As you touched upon, prevention is obviously a very important part of it.

Jess Phillips: I feel like I might say this quite a lot. Obviously, much of what you are undertaking is based on the work of the NAO, and obviously it is very easy for me to say, "Because this is not under my watch," which is the first thing I would say. It is quite difficult for me to comment on the underspend that you are referring to because it was that of a previous Government. But as somebody who has expected that funding and been given unspent money by Government Departments on around 25 March each year—I remember working in service and there being a dash round often in March to get money out of the door— what I can say is that that should not happen.

There is always a need. What I would absolutely recognise, especially now, working in the Home Office—events, dear boy—is that there always needs to be a manner of some flexibility for events. However, all the evidence that you have heard around when funding is decided is what leads to an underspend; delays lead to questions on whether a project can get started quickly enough, and then it is actually only run for nine months because they did not have a staff member in place. What we have tried to do immediately with this year's allocation is I made sure that organisations were told about it before the end of the previous calendar year so there was still a three-month lead-in.

As somebody who has received government funding from the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice, I was usually being told in May what funding had started in April, and I was absolutely determined that that would not happen now. There will always be points across the year where you say, "In this area, we need to quickly put some money into that;" that is a different thing. But on the general programming, what we have sought to do is ensure that that never happens again. Is there anything you want to say on that, being as I was not there?

Gisela Carr: Yes, I can say a little more about what we have done over the past year. I want to be really clear that we really recognise the NAO recommendation and we have put things in place to reduce that underspend as much as possible. As the Minister said, it is important to recognise that due to the nature of some projects that we fund, and where we are trying to fund services on a year-on-year basis when we



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have had a number of single-year spending reviews, that has made it difficult.

Drawing on what the Minister said, I would note that our underspend last year was 1% of our total budget, which is a real improvement given some changes over the year. Obviously, we would aim for that to be zero. We have confirmed our grants for this financial year earlier than we ever have before to give organisation certainty and to maintain continuity of those services. Just from a process perspective, we have built in much more focused in-year forecasting so that we can quickly identify issues because sometimes projects that we fund will have an underspend through no fault of their own and circumstances, and we want to be able to repurpose that really quickly against other priorities.

Jess Phillips: We are not talking about G4S; we are talking about organisations that sometimes have 20 people who work there, and the person who was doing the role might go on maternity leave. The spending of money in this particular space will have some flex in it. Personally, I would always seek to have as little underspend as is humanly possible, which was what I said when I came to office, and as you can see, it is now at 1%.

Q97 **Chair:** How much oversight do you have of spending? How often do officials report to you on what is being spent and what is left?

Jess Phillips: Probably more than they would like. I am only joking. Quite a lot. Gisela's phrasing was that there was a lot of change last year. Obviously, the big change was there was an election, and so getting to grips over the last year of exactly what money goes out of the door and the detail of doing zero-based reviews as required by the Treasury and things like that means a huge amount of detail. I suspect I am relatively irritating as somebody who has been funded by the Home Office in that I know it from the other side as well. And so the level of detail about exactly what outcomes—not just outputs—have come from money that we have spent, I would say has become an obsession of both myself and the Home Secretary.

Q98 **Chair:** Do you get regular updates on what money is in the pot and what has been spent and not spent?

Jess Phillips: Yes. I get regular updates, and obviously in the writing of the violence against women and girls strategy, that detail is for ever present in my mind.

Q99 **Chris Murray:** You touched on the spending review there, Minister, and I just wanted to press you a little more on that. Obviously, money for a border security unit went up, but there was quite a lot of comment on money for policing and violence against women and girls. I just wanted to ask what you think the implications of the spending review are for your objectives, and how it will affect violence against women and girls?



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Jess Phillips: Nobody would deny that I will always want more money. Every single Government Department will always want more money than it gets. Maybe Defence is having a good week, but I am sure it would say the same. What effect do I think it will have? Fundamentally, I would say the Home Office has a focus on violence against women and girls much more fiercely than it has for some time. How our budget gets allocated is yet to be determined. I wish that I could sit here and say to you, "We're going to have X amount for this and X amount for that." I just do not even have that detail to give you. I do not have it myself; it is not being evasive. We have a clear ambition on violence against women and girls and the negotiations around how that money gets spent—both from our Government Department and others—is currently ongoing.

Q100 **Chris Murray:** Can I ask a question about this target of having violence against women and girls, which I obviously completely support? Is there not a paradox where as you put more effort into this, actually reporting will go up and more things will come? Do you accept that?

Jess Phillips: Yes, I totally accept that.

Q101 **Chris Murray:** How do you plan to deal with that because it could have implications on public trust?

Jess Phillips: I totally accept that, and if you take the example of Operation Soteria, which was being spoken about in the previous evidence session, Clare is saying that it has increased by 43%. The incidences of rape in that community has not increased; we have just found it. Of course, in any data, I expect to see increases in referrals into services. What you then have to do is look at metrics—as the people had already said—around how you monitor prevention and how you have metrics around that.

I imagine referral data and putting more energy into things brings more people out, so you are not going to get a graph that goes straight down. I am not talking about falling waiting times in A&E; it is going to be more complicated and that is why we gave it a decade-long trajectory. But there are some things that have been committed to in the Labour Party's manifesto that we all know and think need to happen, for example, around schools interventions. This Committee and many others over the years have asked for compulsory healthy relationship education in schools. I will not even see that in 10 years in some cases, so I do not get the benefit of that on the graph, but the best measure that we have is, I have literally forgotten—

Gisela Carr: Crime Survey for England & Wales.

Jess Phillips: I literally forgot the name of it; I am all menopausal. We will have submetrics that sit underneath that for monitoring so that we can test progress along the way because that is quite an overarching measure.

Q102 **Chris Murray:** Is there any metric or submetric that you have identified



now where you think, "The data here is robust enough that this is one I'm using as a proxy," that you want to see going on that downward trajectory?

Jess Phillips: I want to see them all going in a downward trajectory.

Q103 **Chris Murray:** But is there one specifically that you think is robust?

Jess Phillips: When the violence against women and girls strategy is published, exactly how it will be monitored and what tests will be put against it will be made clear. I do not just want to write a document; I want you good people to be able to scrutinise me on it. In actual fact, what you would want to see going up—like we have seen in Avon and Somerset—is both charging and convictions. These are solid, definite articles of prevention, and we do not often see the criminal justice system as prevention because frankly, it has not seemed like one in the space of violence against women and girls for some time. There is an example of a very clear metric that you can look at and see if you are going in the right direction.

Q104 **Robbie Moore:** Just to follow on this line of questioning, in terms of the base level of metrics, you said that they are going to roll out when the reports and recommendations come out in summer. At the moment, do you feel that all organisations and police forces where those metrics are feeding in have a good enough understanding of being able to do the collection of that?

Jess Phillips: The Home Office will collect the data and some will be based on data that can already be collected. What we have been doing in the last 10 months is an analytical sprint on exactly what data already exists and what data might need to be collected without treading on the toes of the strategy. It is work that has gone into making sure that certain Government Departments can collect the kind of data that we might want to see. These things will always be tested in practice, as all data collection often is. It will be the Home Office's and mission board's responsibility to monitor that data. We will ask for data that either already exists and/or we have negotiated can be collected.

Q105 **Robbie Moore:** Just quickly on the timeframe, so the ambition is to get that reduction of 50% put in place over a 10-year period. You have recognised that obviously there will be increased reporting. Within that 10-year period, at what point do you feel that you will then start to see the reduction coming in? Are you talking two or three years in?

Jess Phillips: There is evaluation of some prevention programmes, for example, that we have undertaken that show reductions in violence perpetrated much more quickly, for example, in perpetrator programmes. I do not think that there is a sense where I am just going to be able to go, "Oh, you know, don't worry. We all said it was going to go up." I am not trying to get myself off the hook; there will be other interventions that will be happening that will show signs of prevention.



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In fact, hearing Alison talking about the DART in West Yorkshire—the Metropolitan Police has a similar package of programmes called the V100—looking at exactly how that is identifying the most dangerous perpetrators in those areas and then taking action is a much shorter-term view where you would be able to measure and monitor reductions. Literally, this man has abused 20 women in the past five years, and these interventions mean he has not done it to anybody else in the following five, whatever those interventions are, sometimes prison or others. I do not want to say that we will not have any positives to report on in that time, but we said 10 years for the exact reason of allowing a period of increased reporting and reduction.

Q106 Florence Eshalomi: Obviously, one of the issues is around the fact that planning for long term can only happen if you have long-term funding. Essentially, planning for year-on-year funding is causing a number of organisations quite a lot of problems, including in local government. In many areas, the Government are looking to move to a multi-year settlement. As it currently stands, do you feel that there are still barriers in the way where you cannot identify a three to five-year funding settlement for VAWG services? What would you say are the main blockers?

Jess Phillips: I was interested to hear about the at-risk seven-year funding that was being undertaken in Avon and Somerset, and it is very easy for me to ask others to take a risk-based approach on that level. We have a multi-year, three-year spending review, and I very much expect to pay that forward in what is funded through the Home Office. Having strategies around how long-term commissioning can be done better is also a piece of work that not just myself but different Government Departments are seeing as being a very important issue.

It would be difficult for me to commit to five years. For a start-off, there is going to be an election before five years, is there not, so it would be quite arrogant if nothing else. But it would be quite difficult of me to say more than three years. However, I recognise and am always annoyed by the 12-month settlement, which often does not start until you are nine months into it. We will seek to do everything to avoid that.

But there are some things about local commissioning that you have just heard, for example, Clare can take that risk in Avon and Somerset because pretty much the Ministry of Justice funding that goes to police and crime commissioners on victims since police and crime commissioners have existed has gone up over those years, no doubt about it; it is not not coming. It seems to be the case.

I would say the same of children's services in local councils, which is a statutory service. We can all argue about whether it is enough or not, like I will always make pleas for more money, no doubt. Children's services and public health grants are not going to not be funded.



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I have to say I sometimes find it a bit galling when people say, “We just need more money.” The fundamental is that actually, in your children’s services, violence against women and girls is a completely and utterly fundamental thing that you should be funding in your local community as part of your children’s services. As somebody who ran many Freedom Programmes, for example, almost all the referrals came from a local children’s services, and not a penny of funding came from that same line. There is a huge amount of expecting somebody else to fund violence against women and girls services so you can use it.

When I was a public health commissioner, every single part of public health money that I commissioned had ISVAs and IDVAs in it, whether it was drug services or the sexual health service. But most commissioning of sexual health services across the country being done in local areas will not have anything about sexual violence. That is unforgivable, and it is nothing to do with having more money; that is about prioritisation.

Q107 Florence Eshalomi: Going back to the issue of short-term funding, obviously you will be aware that the PAC report on tackling violence against women and girls published earlier this year in May noted the issue of short-term funding settlements. Evidence that the Committee has received has highlighted that. A number of women’s organisations—including Women’s Aid—are saying that instead of a flat cash settlement they should be having funding based on inflation, looking at the increases in inflation. We have a series of smaller organisations that effectively cannot compete because chasing after small funding pots year in, year out is making it a barrier.

The data shows a shortfall of £284 million over the period of three years from ‘21 to ‘24. Going back to what you just outlined there in terms of statutory versus non-statutory, which is an ongoing discussion in local government, do you think ring-fencing would be an area to actually protect some funding?

Jess Phillips: I can only really speak for the Home Office. Contrary to what was just said, we do not fund victim services in local communities; we fund national victim services. For example, we fund the helplines, some are by and for services. What I would say is that from the money that the Home Office has announced for the victim services that it funds, all did not get flat cash; they all had an uplift.

Q108 Florence Eshalomi: But should that national funding from the Home Office be ring-fenced for and by services?

Jess Phillips: The national funding that the Home Office gives to victim services is—

Q109 Florence Eshalomi: It is already ring-fenced?

Jess Phillips: It goes directly to the provider. The money that I fund for the forced marriage helpline goes directly to the forced marriage helpline. The money we fund for Domestic Abuse National Helpline goes directly to



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Refuge. So it is ring-fenced in the sense that they have a funding model that means they have to only do that thing, although they obviously do lots of other things. I suppose the questioning is more around the Ministry of Justice funding that goes to police and crime commissioners or the MHCLG funding that goes to local councils with regard to their part of the Domestic Abuse Act. I would genuinely say that your Committees—it is good to see other Committees here—should take a real interest in this and other Government Departments. But I believe the violence against women and girls bit is ring-fenced from the Ministry of Justice, is it not?

Q110 Florence Eshalomi: You will be aware then that there have been calls from the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for ring-fenced national funding. At the moment, it is fair to say there is not parity across the board; some areas do not receive that funding. My understanding is that the Domestic Abuse Commissioner has called for that pot to be ring-fenced so that there is funding right across the board.

Jess Phillips: That is the Ministry of Justice, is it not?

Gisela Carr: I can pick that up and I am happy to come back on this in writing if we are not answering your question. But the Domestic Abuse Commissioner report and statement that you are referring to was in the context of the spending review around ring-fencing funding for VAWG specifically.

Jess Phillips: It is about the VAWG strategy.

Gisela Carr: It is around our budget allocations in the Home Office rather than ring-fencing at local level. That is the DAC report I am thinking of.

Q111 Chair: Could you check that and report back?

Jess Phillips: Yes.

Q112 Chair: Did you put in a joint spending bid?

Jess Phillips: No, we did not put in joint spending bids. There was a process certainly on the Violence Against Women and Girls Board—the cross-government board, which has 14 different Departments—where we all put together the bids that we would put in that would go towards the Violence Against Women and Girls strategy within our own Departments. There was then a process led by the Cabinet Office of cluster meetings where we went along and either supported or spoke to other people's bids in other areas. For example, I went to the Department for Education one and spoke up around children's services issues and the importance of how police forces and children's services work together, as Baroness Casey has talked about. That was the process that we went through, but essentially what we did in the Violence Against Women and Girls cross-government Board was we agreed what each one would go for in order to build the strategy.



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Chair: I am very conscious of time. It is Sarah Russell next. Sarah, if you want to ask your question, it might give the Minister thinking time.

Jess Phillips: We can talk about it in the lobby, assuming we are in the same one. I am not assuming anything today.

Q113 **Mrs Russell:** I think you can. I am obviously specifically interested in how prisons are helping to tackle violence against women and girls: both people who are in prison for offences related to violence against women and girls, but also people who may be in prison for other offences and may still have problems with having committed acts of violence against women and girls. There are a multitude of things I could ask you about that and I am sure we will enjoy a conversation later. Do you know how many prisoners per year are in prison because of violence against women and girls offences and how many of those are engaging in courses that are not just general rehabilitation courses or work skills but are specifically on courses around not committing acts of violence?

Jess Phillips: It is lovely to see you here from the Justice Committee. Obviously, this is in the remit of the Ministry of Justice, but the answer to your first question is no, we do not know the data on how many people are in prison or are charged with specific domestic abuse. We have a number of different data sources that we could look at, certainly from the police charging perspective.

It was identified in the recent *Independent Sentencing Review* undertaken by David Gauke that there is a problem. In my experience—this was borne out in David Gauke’s analysis—most domestic abuse crimes are not charged as domestic abuse. There is no crime of domestic abuse. There is a flagging system in policing, and so some data will sit there, but most are common assault. I am afraid to say one of the best ways we used to get people sent down was for criminal damage because we care more about doors than women, and there is quite a lot of evidence you have kicked a door in. It is very difficult to tell what is a pub fight and what is a domestic abuse incident. What David Gauke has suggested in the *Independent Sentencing Review* is essentially a flagging and mapping system for domestic abuse-related cases.

To the question about how many people in prison and/or probation who are on courses, I will be completely honest, I have absolutely no idea of the answer of that data, but I am sure that the Ministry of Justice can provide you with that and I will make sure that I write to it and ask it to write to you.

Chair: I will suspend the sitting for 15 minutes for voting.

Sitting suspended for a Division in the House.

On resuming—

Chair: Welcome back from that extensive round of voting. I realise we have not got everybody here but we are quorate so we are going to kick



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off because I realise we have a limited amount of time. I am going to move to Bell Ribeiro-Addy.

Q114 Bell Ribeiro-Addy: What measures are you taking to identify and reduce duplication of services and gaps in funding?

Jess Phillips: What we have set up to feed both into the mission to halve violence against women and girls and what runs on from that—the violence against women and girls strategy—is a series of groups. There is the mission board, which is chaired by the Home Secretary and leads across Government with the Cabinet Office on the mission to halve violence against women and girls, which is part of the Safer Streets mission.

There is then the vehicle that myself and Alex Davies-Jones from the Ministry of Justice jointly chair, which is the Violence Against Women and Girls Board. On that sit 14 different Government Departments and we work collectively to build a violence against women and girls strategy. We look at what we are funding in our Departments and who is doing what to make sure that that does not happen across Government Departments and that actually health is looking at the things health should be looking at and the Ministry of Justice is looking at the things the Ministry of Justice should be looking at. I have to say that has not always been the case. Too often, because it sits as a strategic lead for the Home Office, the Home Office ends up picking up the slack for the responsibility of violence against women and girls. So making sure that other Government Departments are there and are part of that strategy has been really important.

But with regard to what happens in local communities and the duplication, that is for both the elected representatives—whether that is police and crime commissioners or local councils that are given the commissioning funding—to ensure that they have a plan, as was spoken about by Alison in West Yorkshire, and to make sure that they are commissioning those services. It is not for us to tell local areas what they fund in their local area within the remit of the funding that we give to them; it is for them to decide. It was recently passed that there was the duty to collaborate, which will come into force around now.

Gisela Carr: It was set out in the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024.

Jess Phillips: And it commences now. The point of putting that into the legislation—which was actually fought for by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, as somebody was on all those Bill Committees—is exactly that: to make people pool their resources locally and make sure that duplication does not happen.

Q115 Chair: Will the Home Office piece of work be published?

Jess Phillips: Sorry, the fan that I have on me is very noisy.

Q116 Chair: You talked about how you are working together to make sure



there is no duplication across departments. Will you be publishing anything on that?

Jess Phillips: We will publish the violence against women and girls strategy, which as I have said will be published before the summer recess. What the violence against women and girls strategy will have within it is a monitoring and how we will test against it, and that is not just for my Government Department but for them all.

Q117 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** Just thinking of your work with other Government Departments, I know that Crisis—a homelessness charity—has expressed concern about a lack of women-only homeless support accommodation, and it is leading women to be placed in mixed accommodation, which you touched on before. There is also a lot of concern about those who are on welfare support, and I found just 2.5% of homes across England are actually even affordable for people on housing benefit. Could you tell us a bit more about what you are doing with other colleagues in Cabinet to address the issues of homelessness and housing support as part of the Government's overall VAWG strategy?

Jess Phillips: The Minister for Homelessness sits on the VAWG Board, and I do not want to play favourites, but she is an active member. It is often considered much more so with regard to domestic abuse, but there is a fundamental link across the board between violence against women and girls and issues around homelessness. There is absolutely no two ways about that. Again, I cannot reveal what will finally be in the violence against women and girls strategy while those conversations are still ongoing and you are seeking to influence.

But the issue of homelessness is one that we discuss very regularly, and how housing and homelessness form a fundamental part of the solution in violence against women and girls. When the new Government came into office, they immediately increased the funding for the statutory duty on emergency accommodation as part of Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, and they increased that by £30 million last year. In the Department that leads on homelessness, I would say there is no shortage of understanding the link between not just the vulnerabilities of violence against women and girls but all the vulnerabilities that lead to somebody ending up homeless.

Q118 **Chair:** Something we have heard about and keeps being repeated is small charities. Of course, there is a risk with small charities that they are spending all their time getting the funding, but there is also a risk of duplication and cracks appearing. What are you doing to support small charities in this to make sure that they are able to function and deliver what they need to deliver, which they do brilliantly?

Jess Phillips: There is absolutely no doubt about that. From a Home Office perspective, we fund so little in the space of victim services and the vast majority of funding in victim services comes from the Ministry of Justice. I very much expect to see some of this issue around



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commissioning and timeframes in the violence against women and girls strategy and standards in that that need to be undertaken by commissioners, funnily enough.

Because the Home Office tends to only give out the big contracts, for example, the helplines, it is less of an issue within the funding streams that we manage; however it is definitely recognisable. I suppose it is a bit of a double-edged sword though always because you want to see innovation and you also want to see evaluation of what actually works. I am not going to give someone a £10,000 grant to do a Freedom Programme for 100 people in a year and expect them to have a university-level evaluation that comes out of it, but I know in my bones that is a good thing to do. So it is managing how we give out government money, for example, grants.

In the good old days, when I ran services, there was a series of local community grants that used to be given out with a lighter touch to deal with things like this, for example, neighbourhood renewal funds, and other such issues. There is a balancing act when you are trying to achieve a strategic goal as a Government and trying to find innovation with making sure that you are spending money on the right things. In the future, the different models of how money gets given out by local areas is one that is up for debate and change.

Chair: Sarah, you are back. Do you have anything else you wanted to cover?

Q119 **Mrs Russell:** If you do not mind; I am aware that time is limited. The question that I was going to ask specifically was about prisoners who are on remand. We have a significant number of prisoners who are remanded into custody, they then have a trial and even though they are found guilty, they have been held on remand for so long because there are such big backlogs in the courts that they are released directly from prison. The result is because remand prisoners do not conventionally engage in any rehabilitation—because they have not accepted any guilt—they have no rehabilitation.

So I was wondering what steps might be made to make courses available to those on remand in such a way that there would be no presumption of guilt, but that if people did recognise that they might benefit from improvements in their relationships and those not being violent, that they could do that without that becoming a trial issue?

Jess Phillips: It not being a trial issue is for greater legal minds and the Department that leads on it to answer. However, what I would say is that is a huge amount of what we have been seeking to do in the first year of being in office and will seek to do going forward. The Domestic Abuse Protection Orders that we deliver in concert with the Ministry of Justice, in some cases, have acts of compulsion to go on drug and alcohol training or perpetrator schemes as part of it and have heavy compliance when breached, which has always been a problem in cases of domestic abuse.



There does not need to be a trial to say that that person is guilty to get that order in place and for those people to be put into programmes for the benefit of the community. There should not be a barrier. HMP Birmingham is a remand prison, so I am only too aware of the frequent issues of the lack of services within the remand estate. But in and of itself, it is not a not admitting guilt; in our strategy going forward, that is not a reason why somebody could not access a scheme because that will be the case in lots of the order regime, which is a civil regime.

Q120 Jake Richards: I just want to follow up on some questions about the link between the Ministry of Justice and the courts. What dialogue are you and the Department having with the Ministry of Justice in terms of family courts generally? Clearly the catalyst for a lot of domestic violence is parental conflict, sometimes involving children. There is a massive backlog in the family courts and a big debate about how we can reform family courts to make them more effective, proactive and problem-solving.

Jess Phillips: Obviously the Ministry of Justice leads on it, and the problem-solving courts and their successes have been monitored and seen, I would say, and some problem-solving criminal courts as well; there is one in Birmingham and it is brilliant. Obviously, again, you would not expect us to have a violence against women and girls cross-government strategy that did not include issues and changes potentially with the family court.

There is no issue greater to victims. If you were to interview every domestic violence victim in the country, you would get two issues that they would pull forward more so than any. The first would be the family courts, and the second would be access to support for their children. Funnily enough, they are very rarely thinking about themselves. Looking at how our family courts interact with violence against women and girls—whether it is classic domestic abuse or, for example, in cases of people who have been raped and made pregnant; we have all seen those cases—there are fundamental issues that need to be addressed.

Q121 Jake Richards: I completely agree with everything you said, but I just mean in terms of their role in preventative measures, as part of the Government's ambition.

Jess Phillips: The family court is part of the DAPO—Domestic Abuse Protection Order—pilot that is currently running; that is why I say we do it in concert with the Ministry of Justice. Obviously, the Home Office manages it from a policing perspective and the Ministry of Justice manages the application of those orders within the family court. That was completely and utterly done and designed in concert. I suppose to answer your question, how many conversations do we have about it, a lot would be the simple answer.

Q122 Mr Kohler: Can I return to your answer to the Chair's last question? How do you evaluate the effectiveness of the services the Home Office funds?



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Jess Phillips: As you heard from those who are funded by the Home Office earlier, there is the general monitoring of both outputs and outcomes with any funding grant that is given down to any institution, but there also needs to be broader learning. If I were to be perfectly honest with you, there is not huge amounts of evidence that exist in the field, here and all around the world—I would say Australia is currently doing some work as well—to know exactly what works both in prevention and attrition in court. There are lots of brilliant academics who work in this field, and in working towards the mission and the violence against women and girls strategy, we have worked with lots of academics and taken evidence from other countries.

Q123 **Mr Kohler:** Are you funding academic research?

Jess Phillips: Yes. The Domestic Abuse Protection Orders is a really good example where, alongside the rollout of the pilot, we are funding a specific evaluation of how well that has gone. What I suppose I am coming on to say is we need to fund more research actually because there is not a huge amount. Gisela, do you want to say something?

Gisela Carr: Of course. Just to add to what the Minister has said, we are always keen to build our understanding of what works and to evaluate wherever we can. It is really important to be transparent that there are some challenges around evaluating some kinds of interventions that we fund. For example, ethical concerns around doing randomised control trials, which would obviously be the gold standard for evaluation, are not appropriate for lots of victim services.

We have funded evaluations in the past, for example, around the Children Affected by Domestic Abuse fund and Support for Migrant Victims Fund. PCC Moody mentioned earlier The Drive Partnership and the programme there for high-risk, high-harm perpetrators. That is an independent evaluation that was done by the University of Bristol, which we will draw on. So as well as evaluation that we fund ourselves from the Home Office, we are always looking for that academic and wider learning, and as the Minister said, we are starting to build that into new interventions. The DAPO will be an evaluation by both [IICSA.] and the University of Central Lancashire, so bringing in that academic evaluation over a two-year period as well. We are always keen to do more.

Jess Phillips: You cannot do a randomised trial on support, can you? Because I am not going to say, "You can't have support so I can test if you die." It is a tricky one on the support front.

Q124 **Mr Kohler:** Does the evaluation of preventative measures produce particular problems for you?

Jess Phillips: Yes. Regarding the prevention models around perpetrators, as Gisela says, there has been a piece of research into specifically the Drive model, which is high risk and high harm. Some other people this morning were talking about the standard and medium-



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risk—I will not say low—perpetrators. Obviously, risk is dynamic. Again, there has been some research into that. On prevention, actually, longitudinal studies into what works in the prevention with children is at the foothills, I would say, but there is some evidence, not necessarily from the UK but elsewhere in the world.

Q125 Mr Kohler: Lastly, do you recognise the concerns and difficulties that providers had in providing those metrics and bidding for funds for that? Do you understand the huge pressure that puts on particularly the smaller providers of services?

Jess Phillips: I absolutely understand it because I did it for 10 years and it is fundamentally irritating. Actually, having money from the Ministry of Justice, the Home Office and different metrics, I wish I could sit here and say that there is one single metric but different pots of funding are for different things. If I were to assess an output in a perpetrator programme, that is going to be different to outputs in support for victims. I feel their pain and have felt it for many years. When we first did the modern slavery contract, we had to allocate our time in 15-minute periods as if we were lawyers. I have to say that we have to have a constant learning about what light touch is and then what helps with evaluation, and you have to find the appropriate balance in between.

Q126 Mr Kohler: Is there any possibility of bringing these pots of money together, as was suggested in the earlier session? Are you talking with Justice to do that?

Jess Phillips: We have pots of money that work together, for example, the DAPOs, where we run something together. Other than Government Departments giving part of their budget to somebody else to get it out of the door, which I will take; if any Government Departments want to give me any of their money, I will have it.

Q127 Mr Kohler: But these silos are unhelpful all the time.

Jess Phillips: If Health is saying to me that it is going to be funding let us say IRIS—which is a system around domestic abuse counselling in GP surgeries—I have to make sure from a strategic perspective that that is working in concert with something else we are doing. Actually, it is not that I am the better person to go out and fund GPs; what do I know about the GP funding model? Absolutely nothing. If I am going to find more victims because we have funded—or Wes Streetering has funded—X in GP surgeries, where does that go? Because for too long what I have felt is that what we do is open an enormous door into an empty room. You then have to look at it and say, “Okay. Well, if we’re going to do that, that’s going to find people. Where are they going to go and then how do they flow through the system?” Rather than just Wes gives me his money and I give it out to GP surgeries on some formula I probably do not understand.

Q128 Mr Kohler: Are those conversations and things happening, and it is effective?



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Jess Phillips: Yes, but that is the point of the ministerial board: for us all to look at what our Government Departments do and how we should do it in concert with each other for an ultimate goal.

Joani Read: Sorry, I am very hot.

Chair: We are all very hot.

Jess Phillips: It is so hot in here.

Joani Read: I am dying. I cannot believe it.

Chair: This building has no air conditioning and no heating, and when it gets hot it is impossible to cool it down.

Q129 **Joani Read:** I do not need to tell you that violence against women and girls crosses borders. I was just wondering really what work you have done with the Scottish Government in informing the strategy, and do you anticipate priorities and programmes to be aligned so that we can tackle it across the UK?

Jess Phillips: As you know, it is a devolved issue in Scotland, and the Scottish Government lead their own violence against women and girls strategy, as do the Welsh Government. However, because of the manner in which police forces are different across the board, much of the interactions of the Home Office are England and Wales by that very nature.

It is not for me to be spending violence against women and girls funding in Scotland, which I suppose is fundamentally what this is about, but making sure that there are synergies, and currently, there are big differences both to the detriment and benefit of Scotland in approaches. For example, domestic homicide reviews—which is something that has existed here for at least 10 years—do not exist in Scotland now. So much of what we are writing in our strategies and so much of the policy is driven from learning from something like the many domestic homicide reviews and the breadcrumbs that they have left. So there will always be a difference, and it is for Scottish elected representatives.

That said, we work with the devolved Governments on official levels all the time and I have spoken to counterparts in Scotland and certainly to women's organisations across Scotland, and will continue to engage with them. I visited to speak to counterparts in Northern Ireland to look at exactly what their violence against women and girls strategy was because so often our legislation ports over into Northern Ireland, domestic abuse orders being an example. But fundamentally, the strategy is for England and Wales and I would be lying if I said anything else. I do not want to lie.

Q130 **Joani Reid:** Can I ask one more question on a totally different topic? There has been a lot of discussion about online grooming, and we all know about the surge in misogyny online. Are you confident that DSIT is



doing everything that it can to tackle the pipeline of abuse of women, and are you working closely with it?

Jess Phillips: Yes. DSIT sits on the Violence Against Women and Girls Board, and I have to say, there is really good attendance from its Secretary of State on that. It is an issue he takes very seriously personally, and he and I worked for many years, for example, on changing the family courts together. So yes, we work with DSIT all the time.

I would say there are a few Departments I have more bilaterals with because, quite rightly, not only have you identified a one-time home office issue on crime on the streets has a completely different face now, and working with that Department becomes more and more keenly appropriate over the years, but we are also in the foothills of the Online Safety Act 2023. We do not know how it is going to play out yet and the child abuse elements do not come in for another month or so. We work together all the time and what I would say is the very strong message that comes from the work that the Home Office does with DSIT is on the case of child abuse and violence against women and girls where the OSA might need additions.

So far we have put a number of additions to do with unwanted images and revenge porn. We have already made legislative changes and those are going through right now—literally on this day—around AI child abuse images. We are always looking for ways that we might need to bolster and improve that, but I suppose at the moment we work very closely together with them on how that is currently rolling out and what we might need to do more.

Q131 **Robbie Moore:** I would like to just take my focus on to some responses to Baroness Casey, if that is all right, Minister, and just on the IICSA recommendations as well, while we have you in front of us. Are you able to provide an update on the recommendations from the IICSA report in terms of the timeframe when they are going to be implemented? Because at the moment my understanding is that we are not quite sure.

Jess Phillips: I gave a statement to Parliament and published a plan, if you will, of some timelines that are really specifically on the IICSA recommendations. Once again, the Home Office is actually only responsible for four of the 20 IICSA recommendations; they are largely the responsibility of other Government Departments. But there is a published timeline on some of those things. Some are waiting and reliant on what happened last week, the comprehensive spending review, and so Government Departments are currently going away and looking at their obligations in light of the spending review. I would say there will be more updates on timelines of exactly how that will come in the coming months when those conversations are had.

Q132 **Robbie Moore:** Are you able to give any better indication on timeframe? I am just conscious we are almost a year in.



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Jess Phillips: Do you have a particular recommendation?

Robbie Moore: Just for example, a public awareness campaign, as far as I am aware, there are no plans yet. Power for courts to intervene in council exercise of parental responsibility, no plans yet.

Jess Phillips: Say the first one and I will answer

Robbie Moore: I will pick a random one. I will pick power for a court to intervene in a council exercise of parental responsibility. My understanding is there has been no indication set out by Government on that, or indeed about 14 of the 20 yet.

Jess Phillips: Say it again, sorry. I am genuinely going deaf.

Robbie Moore: Power for court to intervene in councils to exercise parental responsibility. My understanding is that there has been no indication on timings associated with that. The point I am making is there are about 14 of the recommendations that we do not have a proper understanding of timeframe yet.

Jess Phillips: Like I say, I stood and made a statement in Parliament about the update on the IICSA recommendations, published a plan with timelines in it, and that still stands. I expect an update to that, like I say, which is what I said during the statement, following Government Departments having their settlement.

Q133 **Robbie Moore:** Can I just ask what conversations you have had with the Secretary of State for Education on the IICSA recommendations?

Jess Phillips: Personally, I have met with the Secretary of State for Education alongside Alexis Jay and others who were involved in IICSA when we were leading up to what our response to the recommendations would be. Obviously the Home Secretary has bilaterals with the Secretary of State for Education, I do not have the exact data in front of me but I am going to say regularly.

Q134 **Robbie Moore:** When was the last conversation you had with the Secretary of State for Education with IICSA? You personally as a safeguarding Minister.

Jess Phillips: Me personally, when was the last conversation? I met with the Secretary of State for Education—

Q135 **Robbie Moore:** The reason I ask is I did a written question to the Home Office asking when the recommendation for a Cabinet Minister for children was going to be implemented, and the response that I had was, "Oh, well, that's the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Education."

Jess Phillips: No. The response is the same response that the previous Government gave to that recommendation: the Secretary of State for Education is the Cabinet Minister for Children.



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Q136 **Robbie Moore:** Yes, which is what I have just said. So my question is just how much dialogue is the Home Office having with the—

Jess Phillips: With the Department for Education on IICSA?

Robbie Moore: And for you as the—

Jess Phillips: A lot.

Q137 **Robbie Moore:** When was the last meeting you had?

Jess Phillips: Me personally meeting with the Secretary of State for Education on IICSA was just before we announced our plans. The meeting was really specifically around a child protection authority, and I took along Alexis Jay to that meeting with me. Janet Daby—the Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing—is on the Violence Against Women and Girls Board. We have also had a cross-government board specifically on the IICSA recommendations and how they pass over. Obviously, at an official level we are speaking to the Department for Education week in, week out on the issue of IICSA, not just ICSA but child abuse more broadly and our interventions in it. But the Secretary of State has met with the Home Secretary on a number of occasions. Like I say, I am more than happy to find out although I believe when they meet is available on the government website, which is something I did not know until recently. So you can look to see how many times they have met.

Q138 **Robbie Moore:** Can you just provide any indication—if you are aware at the moment—on whether the structure following the announcement of the national inquiry is going to focus on more areas beyond the five that have already been indicated?

Jess Phillips: What you will know is that that is independent of me, and so it would be wrong for me to tell an independent inquiry what and where it has to look at.

Q139 **Robbie Moore:** Just following on the session that we had earlier on, which I know you were kindly listening into—

Jess Phillips: I also watched half of Louise.

Robbie Moore: I will mention City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council again, and I know that you were kind enough to meet with me and indeed David Greenwood who I brought along to the meeting as an expert and child abuse lawyer. That is an area where there has been an element of concern that has been consistently raised and you have a mayor for West Yorkshire who literally said 12 days ago, I believe, that, “We do not want a national inquiry” and is now effectively accepting the recommendations. Do you feel it should be just and right that actually it would be helpful to have a spotlight shone on the Bradford district as part of this process?

Jess Phillips: Again, far be it from me to tell an independent inquiry where to go. What I will say is that I dislike—as I have for a number of



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years, and I am sure these places dislike it as well—that the issue of grooming gangs becomes synonymous with basically three or four places that, to be fair to them, have been the places that have done the better work. So your Rotherham, Rochdale and Oxford, which had one of the big cases.

In my own work experience, what I have seen is lots of people abused outside those areas and what I would not want is just to be another look at Rotherham and Rochdale. As Louise Casey's audit quite clearly lays out, there have been huge amounts of work. Am I keen to see areas that have previously not had that? Am I keen? Of course I am. However, I am not the chair yet. I am not—nor will I ever be—the chair of that independent panel. So it is not for me; they have to look at the evidence. I believe the evidence will take them to places where they need to look.

You are absolutely right: you did come and see me about this and you absolutely deserve some credit for that because I will say you are the only one who ever has. And I knew David—who you brought with you—from work on IICSA and have met him with Alexis Jay. In fact, he might have been in the meeting with the Secretary of State, and what I would say is that he is a man I respect. Your pleas, and certainly the pleas of Fiona Goddard—who I know you mentioned earlier and I have met—are very convincing; I would not say anything else. But it is absolutely not for me to say where things should go.

Q140 Chris Murray: The initial position was that we did not want a national inquiry. Then Louise Casey published her report yesterday and the position has changed to having a national inquiry. When you look at the timeline in this report of how many supposed interventions we have had in this country that have not led to action, my concern is that this will be another step of delay. The Home Secretary said this inquiry should take about three years. How will you ensure that this is not something that diverts attention from the actual work that has to happen?

Jess Phillips: I do not need to wait for an inquiry. Louise tried to express this earlier: if she had only been offered one rather than all 12 recommendations, she would have taken the national police one. That is her clear line from the evidence she gave to yourselves earlier, from what I watched. There is absolutely no reason why any of that has to wait and actually, like she said, she envisages them working together. I will not wait—I have to say the Department has not waited—for findings of an inquiry to be getting on with the work that needs doing, whether that is TOEX—the task force that leads on this—or other interventions that we fund in the policing space or the support space; those things all go on.

I suppose it is the same with the Angiolini Inquiry. The Angiolini Inquiry into the death of Sarah Everard is not a statutory inquiry or one that has struggled to get access to any data, but it runs alongside the violence against women and girls strategy being written. I am not holding anything back waiting for Angiolini to say something on police vetting,



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which she has specifically looked into for example, before police vetting needs to change. So that is the guarantee that I can give you.

We work alongside inquiries going on all the time. I have to say a criticism that I would certainly have of IICSA while it was running is that for many years people such as the Home Secretary were asking for something like mandatory reporting and were being told by Ministers in my position and others that the reason we will not put mandatory reporting in to law is we have to wait for IICSA. I am never going to say we have to wait for that if there is a good plan that could be delivered and that I can deliver.

Q141 **Chris Murray:** When we had Louise Casey in this morning, I asked her which of those 12 recommendations she thinks can be implemented swiftly, and when we bring Ministers back in six months' time, they will be able to say, "Yes, we have implemented those." She said all 12. Do you accept that?

Jess Phillips: Yes.

Q142 **Chris Murray:** Will you commit to coming back in six months and telling us that all 12 have been implemented?

Jess Phillips: On the legislative ones, I wish I could sit here and say yes to you. You know the signs for cars as you drive around Parliament that say, "Dead slow?" I always think, "You're not wrong; Parliament moves quite slowly." Legislation has barriers that I sometimes cannot foresee. However, one of them we will put immediately into the Bill that is currently passing through today. I do not want to hang about. I seek to put all these recommendations into place. I literally had a meeting this morning where I said, "Right, let's have a next steps conversation immediately."

Q143 **Chris Murray:** Thank you. The issue is, as we move slowly, there are still victims out there being abused. It is not about survivors actually; it is about current victims.

Jess Phillips: That is absolutely true.

Chris Murray: My final question is going back to the very beginning point about the spending review. There is a lot of new work for the Home Office here. Are you confident you have the resources to deliver on what we are committing to?

Jess Phillips: Again, I reiterate my point that I would always like more. Baroness Casey's recommendation 12, which was agreed to by the Government, fulsomely by the Prime Minister, is that this work will be fully funded. Obviously, that is part of all the work that has gone on last week, but I will be making keen representations, as you can imagine.

Chris Murray: I can imagine, thank you.

Q144 **Ben Maguire:** Just switching back to the recommendations made by



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Professor Jay and IICAS, when I asked Baroness Casey this morning, “Which one of those recommendations are you most worried about not being implemented as quickly as it needs to be?” She pointed me to the Child Protection Authority. I know that you made an announcement in April on this and you have said that there will be a consultation at some point later this year on its make-up and remit. But as has been highlighted already, it needs to make a difference to the victims and we need that as soon as possible. Are you able to give us an update?

Jess Phillips: Obviously, it is led by the Department for Education; it sits within its purview, and plans are in place to use existing systems and then change them. I will not apologise for making an enormous change in child protection and seeking to consult with experts—including Alexis Jay—to ensure that that happens and is done properly. I spoke to Alexis yesterday.

What I do not want to do and actually refuse to do is just do something speedy that delivers something that does not do the job. Like Louise, I have spent years on every multi-agency group there is; I have been on a MASH, the MARAC, and all these groups in local areas that are meant to share information and stop people falling through the gaps. You will excuse me if I do not find that it sometimes just utterly feels like words written down on pieces of paper.

How do we monitor whether that is actually working? How do we make a body that makes it actually work when so many have tried before and failed? Which to your timeline question is a real one, and in fact we have seen a massive decline in the number of child sex abuse cases of all types being raised in child protection issues and serious case reviews. That is utterly alarming to me. I bet every single one of your local areas has a thing called a MASH: a multi-agency safeguarding hub. So how do we make sure that this works properly? I do not want to just say we will be able to have an all singing, all dancing, brand new thing by the end of the year because I am feeling pressured to do it; I want it to be right, and I know that that is how Alexis Jay feels as well, and Louise Casey I should imagine; I would not want to put words in her mouth

Q145 **Ben Maguire:** Is there an approximate timeline on the consultation period?

Jess Phillips: It will start by the end of the year, but I believe it is afoot currently. Again, I would say the Department for Education would be better suited to answer your questions.

Q146 **Chair:** One final question. You said all the Casey recommendations would be fully funded. Do you know how much?

Jess Phillips: You can decide whether it is helpful or unhelpful, but Louise did not write a figure into the document. Obviously some of the work around working up exactly what that looks like and the form of inquiry is currently under way. I suppose I will revert to what Louise quite helpfully said, “We were given the report 10 days ago.” It would be at



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best a fag packet if I were to tell you how much it was right now, and I do not think I am in the business of that.

Chair: Thank you very much. You have been very generous with your time.

Jess Phillips: My pleasure.

Chair: I appreciate we were disrupted by votes but you have been very generous in staying on. That concludes the evidence that we are taking on this inquiry.