HOUSE OF COMMONS

Women and Equalities Committee

Oral evidence: Changing cultures underpinning male violence against women, HC 1335

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Watch the meeting

Members present: Caroline Nokes (Chair); Elliot Colburn; Angela Crawley; Alex Davies-Jones; Kim Johnson; Kate Osborne; Bell Ribeiro-Addy.

Questions 1 – 31

Witnesses

I: Dr Stephen Burrell, Co-author, *Changing Gender Norms: Engaging with Men and Boys*; John Carr OBE, Online Safety Expert, UK Council for Child Internet Safety; Dr Helen Mott, Research Consultant; Dr Purna Sen, Former Executive Co-ordinator and Spokesperson on Addressing Sexual Harassment and Other Forms of Discrimination, UN Women.

Written evidence from witnesses:

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Dr Stephen Burrell, John Carr, Dr Helen Mott and Dr Purna Sen.

Q1 **Chair:** Welcome to this afternoon's meeting of the Women and Equalities Committee. It is the first evidence session in our inquiry on challenging the cultures underpinning male violence against women. Thank you to all four of our witnesses for joining us this afternoon: Dr Stephen Burrell, John Carr, Dr Helen Mott and Dr Purna Sen. Can I start off with a question first to Stephen and then to Helen, please? What evidence can you provide the Committee of the role that social norms might play in underpinning male violence against women?

Dr Burrell: To highlight, I have conducted some research on this with colleagues from Durham University for the Government Equalities Office, looking specifically at the role of gender norms in different aspects of men's and boys' lives, including the perpetration of violence and abuse. In society as a whole, that is of course predominantly perpetrated by men. In terms of understanding why that is, it is important to recognise first that it is men, as I said, who are doing most of this violence. That is very much connected to social norms and power relations in society. In other words, in particular there are the ideas that we have around gender, around what it means to be a man and about masculinity.

A lot of those ideas still very much hold up the idea that men should be powerful, men should be in control and men should have power over other people, perhaps especially women and children in their lives. Violence and abuse can often be a way for men to try to achieve and assert this power, to prove their masculinity, gain respect from other people and perhaps prove that to themselves and other people. If we look across society, from the media to sports, films, books and TV shows, society tells men and boys a lot of the time that using violence to solve problems, to try to get what they want, is actually something that, in some circumstances, is seen as acceptable, expected or even constructed as being desirable in some ways.

Research shows that men who are more invested in these rigid and restrictive ideas about what it means to be a man, such as being tough, self-reliant and unemotional are more likely to perpetrate violence against women and girls. Addressing those norms is really crucial to preventing this.

If we address some of these harmful ideas and norms about masculinity, we can address other forms of violence as well, because those ideas are often also at the heart of men's violence towards other men, for example. Again, they are rooted in these masculine expectations a lot of the time, seeking to gain power and status over other men. For me, and from a lot of the research evidence, addressing and trying to change these social norms around gender and masculinity is key to tackling this problem.

Dr Mott: As somebody who has worked all my life on trying to understand why men are violent and sexist towards women and what can be done

about it, my very strong view is that social norms are absolutely key to understanding men's perpetration of violence against women. They are absolutely central. That is also reflected in the research. You will know that, not necessarily in this country but actually in other countries internationally, the UK Government have an excellent reputation for doing extremely good, detailed, evidence-based work on what works to prevent violence against women. That is men's violence against women. It comes down, time and time again, to changing and shifting social norms around gender.

Stephen talked about those cultural norms of masculinity that are so important and so closely correlated with men's propensity to commit violence and their actual description of whether they have committed violence against women. You see very close correlations between men's ideas about masculinity, but also their ideas about what is right for women. Sexist gender norms and gender norms that tell men that they are entitled to women's bodies, that they have rights over women, are very closely related to men's perpetration of violence against women. Of course, those cultural social norms also affect how women experience violence and how the justice system, for example, treats people who are victims of violence. To me, social, cultural and, specifically, gender norms are absolutely the key to addressing violence against women.

Q2 **Chair:** Picking up on that point about cultural norms, are there different groups of women that might be impacted by different social norms, for example, perhaps disabled women or BAME women? Will they have different experiences?

Dr Mott: We need to differentiate between social norms and stereotypes. Both of those things play a role. Probably the overarching thing about women and their experience of men's violence might be put down to what might be called vulnerability, vulnerability in different ways, so, for example, black women, disabled women and young women. We know that, in the workplace, women who are in precarious working relationships, women on zero-hours contracts, are far more likely to be victimised by men.

There is an issue about who does the victimising and whether they perceive that the people they are victimising are more easily victimised or have less recourse to justice when they are victimised. We also have harmful stereotypes that are specifically about different kinds of women. For example, disabled women might be viewed as particularly vulnerable. It might be thought that they will not be believed if they came forward for some reason. They might be in a difficult position with a carer, for example.

We know from research and the experience of women, as groups such as Imkaan have shared with us, that there are very particular issues around the way that men will perpetrate violence against black women, sometimes related to how they are culturally perceived in society. Stereotypes have a lot to answer for when it comes to addressing violence against particular

groups of women. Particular groups of women are more vulnerable to violence.

Q3 **Chair:** Can I turn to John and ask a question about any evidence you can give us for the role the media and pornography might have in male violence against women?

John Carr: There are obviously ethical and methodological challenges associated with researching exactly how pornography will impact on people. For example, it would be tricky to expose somebody to a great deal of pornography over a prolonged period of time and then come back several years later to see how much effect or impact it has had on them. That gets us to the question of causation on so on. Nevertheless, having said that, there are at the moment six different studies that I am aware of—I can happily send links to you after this meeting—which seem to show that there is a link between the consumption of pornography and sexual violence, principally perpetrated by men against women.

Children are my main interest group or my main professional area of concern. On the point about norms, it is a well-established norm now that it is wrong to allow children to have access to tobacco, alcohol, gambling and so on. If you go on the internet and try to obtain any of those things, you will be met with a number of practical obstacles and difficulties to you obtaining them.

However, in the case of porn, it appears as if society has not yet reached a similar view. We have not yet said, as a normative statement, that it is not okay to publish porn and make it accessible to children. It is massively accessible to anyone and everyone who has a connection to the internet, which essentially covers all children. If you think about how that will appear to a child, whatever we may say to them about pornography, the simple truth is, when they look at gambling, tobacco, alcohol and so on, they see practical obstacles placed in their way. That underpins the norms that we project in relation to those items, but they do not see the same thing in respect of pornography.

Q4 **Chair:** I wanted to turn this on its head somewhat and ask whether we know very much at all about the factors contributing to sexual and domestic violence against men. Are there any links between male violence against other men and male violence against women?

Dr Sen: I want to come back to some of the content that was raised earlier, particularly around issues of how particular groups of people are seen and targeted. The language used was around vulnerability of particular groups. I would like to place at the core of our discussions issues around inequality and discrimination. Given the remit of this particular committee, issues of inequality are obviously at the forefront of our minds.

In this context, the issues around cultural and social norms ask us to think about how they underpin, promote or seek to address issues of inequality between men and women. We know that cultural norms and stereotypes

either perpetuate, reproduce or in other ways can challenge those norms of inequality. Violence captures and solidifies those particular approaches and understandings of who should have power, who should be the recipient of power and who should be wielding power. That power is sexualised through violence, particularly through sexual violence and the pornography that has just been discussed.

It is also about not only which groups are seen as vulnerable and good targets for abuse; it is about who is seen as credible when they deny it or speak about it. Attitudes about who is making things up, who is making a false allegation just to get at somebody, and an immediate assumption of disbelief and credibility in somebody who is a more powerful, respected member of a specific group all feed into the cultural basis and the underpinnings of the continuance, acceptance and tolerance of violence against women.

There are issues about those people who live with disabilities—about if they can be believed, if they remember properly, or if they are not making up what is happening because they want some attention. As Helen mentioned, there is Imkaan's work about the racialised nature of sexual harassment. It is a challenge for most of us to see how those different dimensions come into play together. Our cultural attitudes and the beliefs we bring, often unknowingly, to these conversations completely feed into whether we see them as acceptable or trivial, whether we can see the harm and damage done and, for this Committee, whether they feed or undo relationships of inequality.

I do not have information to hand around how men's use of violence against men and women, in this particular issue, plays out, so perhaps I will defer to the others on that.

Dr Burrell: To address the different aspects of your question, as I mentioned before, of course men and boys experience a lot of violence and abuse in society. That is typically at the hands of other men. Addressing the causes of that is very much linked, in my view and according to a lot of research, to addressing the causes of men's violence against women and girls. That is in the sense of addressing those norms around masculinity, the power inequalities that Purna has already mentioned just now, whereby violence is often used as a way of trying to assert power over others, including over other men in different settings.

We should change those norms and challenge the idea that violence should be a part of masculinity, where boys grow up learning to be expected to and prepared to use violence to assert their masculinity or gain some kind of status. Challenging those norms can actually solve lots of different problems at once. It connects as well to men's experiences of violence, for example domestic abuse. I have done research with colleagues on male victims of domestic abuse. Of course, the majority of victims of domestic abuse are women, but men can experience it as well, at the hands of women or in same-sex relationships.

These gender norms were often a big part of the problem there as well, first in creating the idea that one person should be the one who wears the trousers or has the power in a relationship. Usually that manifests itself in society as it being the man who has the majority of power in a relationship, but it can manifest itself in other ways as well. Often, when men were victims of this, there would be ideas about, "You are not a real man. You are really weak. Why are you just taking this?" Also, a lot of male victims might be deterred from seeking help or speaking out about their experiences because of the fear that they would not be seen as a real man.

Just the idea of showing weakness is something that is not seen as very masculine a lot of the time. That can create a lot of issues for men around reporting different harmful experiences that they might have had, such as this. Addressing these gender norms is really crucial in terms of preventing men's violence against women, but actually addressing lots of issues that men and boys experience as well.

Dr Mott: Can I come back to your question about pornography? I want to underline the importance of this issue and how it seems to be continually sidestepped when it comes to Government action.

Chair: There is going to be a section on pornography later. If you want to give us a brief trailer, I am sure you can expand later on.

Dr Mott: What comes to mind is the research that was done around this Committee's investigations into sexual harassment of women and girls in public places, back in 2017 and 2018. That revealed some linkages between ideas about masculinity, the acceptability of pornography and the acceptability of sexual harassment of women and girls in public spaces. There is so much evidence now.

I wanted to reflect very briefly on the idea about social norms in pornography and those norms of violence that have been shown in recent really important research, by colleagues of Stephen's in Durham. That is around the fact that a startlingly large number of the freely, readily available and more frequently viewed porn on our mainstream sites is violent, depicts criminal acts and normalises that violence in sexual relationships, but also in terms of the relationships between men and women.

I wanted to say how very important that is and how glad I am that you are talking about that in today's evidence session. With where we are culturally at the moment, we cannot afford to shy away from the important place that porn has in shaping norms for behaviour.

Q5 **Angela Crawley:** Can I ask each of the panellists what they feel are the key international or domestic laws that they require the Government to address, in terms of cultures of underpinning male violence against women?

Dr Burrell: There is a range of different things that could be looked at in this regard. One thing that comes to my mind, which I know the

Government are a signatory to but have not yet ratified, is the Istanbul convention from the Council of Europe. That is quite an interesting and important piece of legislation for us to look at. It provides a structure that countries across Europe can look to about what we can do to seriously address this problem and adopt a whole societal approach to tackling it, and what the different elements of that would need to look like. In the convention, it emphasises that prevention is one of its cornerstones. It has a section in there as well about engaging with men and boys in tackling this problem.

Ratifying that convention is something we should be working towards in this country with some urgency. Lots of other countries in Europe have already done that, so that is something we could be looking at with some urgency.

Q6 **Angela Crawley:** I know my former colleague Eilidh Whiteford, for Banff and Buchan, was keen to progress a Bill on that matter, and I absolutely support that. Can we come to Helen now? Can I ask you the same question?

Dr Mott: You could go to Purna next, because she has a real expert overview of the international picture. I could come back later and talk about the domestic legislative framework.

Q7 **Angela Crawley:** Purna, on top of that question, can I also ask how are different groups of women protected in the law, i.e. girls and young women, or women from minority groups? Perhaps you could expand on that in your answer, please.

Dr Sen: I am freshly back from five years in New York, so I will not say I am up to date with what is happening in the UK. Beyond the Istanbul convention, there are other international standards and obligations to which the UK has committed, and it has been so committed for decades.

If we go first to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, to which the UK has been signed up for quite a long time, it has a very clear obligation. This is a law, so it is an international legal obligation—I will read you the text—"to take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women". The committee that monitors the convention and looks at its interpretations has very clearly said in two key subsequent recommendations it has provided that it sees violence against women as a form of discrimination, and therefore inequality.

I want to keep coming back to this issue of inequality and discrimination. It goes on to say, in its interpretative texts 19 and 35, that "traditional attitudes by which women are regarded as subordinate to men or as having stereotyped roles perpetuate widespread practices involving violence or coercion, such as family violence and abuse". The effect of these various forms of violence and abuse is to deprive women of equal enjoyment,

exercise and knowledge of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. They include the right to equality between men and women.

Given the conversation we have just had, it also goes on to say that "these attitudes also contribute to the propagation of pornography and the depiction and other commercial exploitation of women as sexual objects". It goes on to talk about employment, so it is quite comprehensive in the way that it sees the obligations of states—we call them states parties—to uphold the commitment to inequality and non-discrimination. It is very clear that it sees violence as part of that inequality. The interpretive texts, to which the UK is a substantive party, require states to take every possible action they can against that.

The UK has reported, in its periodic reporting to the committee, on the importance of this work. As Helen said earlier, the UK has committed to doing a lot of work internationally to looking at what works around ending violence against women. If we have time, I would like to mention a particularly new framework around prevention. It would be really good for the Committee to consider the amount of time, energy and resources that have gone into that work internationally.

Evidence has been accruing, particularly in low and middle-income countries and not so much in higher-income countries, where I think the assumption is, because a lot of the gender equality indicators look good, that we do not need to do this work. That needs revisiting. Perhaps the Committee can be an engine behind looking at that spotlight being shone on us here in the UK. I think that £65 million was put by DFID into the What Works programme and it acknowledges that most of that work has not been in high-income countries. While there is a very substantive body of evidence around that bigger global programme, we need to give some more attention to what is happening here.

There are those international standards to look at. There is a lot of work around pornography and rights. We might want to come back to this, but we ought not to get side-tracked into a conflict discussion about which is more important: freedom of expression or protection from violence. If you use the yardstick of inequality, you have to understand that access to speech, access to expression and access to image creation, which is what pornography does, based on abuse, coercion and absence of consent, is greater if there are no limits on access for those who already have the power and money to produce this.

It reinforces those pre-existing conditions of inequality and makes sure that those who feel they can express themselves as they wish without restraint continue to consolidate the power to do that. The nature of the pornography that we see, and the violence we see becoming much more normalised, is an expression of the lack of intervention and the lack of understanding the right to freedom from abuse being primary as an equality objective, over the inequality of access to image creation.

Q8 **Angela Crawley:** We will come back specifically to a question on

pornography. Could I perhaps bring you back, because you made some very pertinent points regarding CEDAW and, as Stephen highlighted, ratifying the Istanbul convention? You alluded to this specifically, so can I bring you back to whether we can learn some lessons from other countries about how international laws requiring action on cultural factors have been put into practice? Perhaps you could say a bit more on that.

Dr Sen: Often states parties to these international laws report their progress by virtue of reporting on their treaty obligations. Often, states talk about what they have done and what they feel has been effective. In their review internationally of these various interventions, there have been summaries written that talk about what sorts of things have been useful and what has been less useful. I want to put a caveat on it that most of this work has been done in low and middle-income countries, so the absolute transferability to high-income countries and to us is not necessarily clear, but it helps us to look at what is needed. I am just trying to find the right page; I am sorry.

Q9 **Angela Crawley:** Perhaps, if you want, I will come back to you in a minute.

Dr Sen: I have a lovely little table I have ready for you to answer this. Yes, if you do not mind coming back to me, I will have it ready.

Q10 **Angela Crawley:** Helen, you might have something to add on the domestic UK level at this point, if you want to add anything.

Dr Mott: It is very clear that we have a whole range of really important, absolutely critical international and national legislative policy frameworks, all of which say that violence against women is a cause and a consequence of gender inequality. There are absolute requirements upon states to tackle gender inequality and violence against women and to prevent violence against women. There is CEDAW, the Istanbul convention and then, at the domestic level, we have all our legislation, including the Equality Act and the obligations to prevent harassment and discrimination, as well as the state obligation around violence against women. Some might argue that those obligations are not really being met at the moment.

We are ramping up support for victims of violence. I am not at all convinced that what we are doing is ramping up a preventative approach. I fail to see much evidence for that at the moment. That is a terrible missed opportunity. There is so much good that could be being done, so many lives that could be saved and so many lives that could be made happier and more worthwhile if we took a preventative approach and took it seriously, systematically and had an evidence-led approach. I do not see that happening at the moment in this country.

Q11 **Angela Crawley:** You are absolutely right. We have heard from a range of women from different backgrounds about the perception of violence against women. This is very real for so many women, who want to be reassured that, in law, there are not only methods to protect them but to ensure the prevention of violence. In this inquiry, we want to do everything we can to make it safer for women across the UK and globally. Purna, is

now a good time to come back to you?

Dr Sen: I realise, if I may add, that I forgot to mention the sustainable development goals when you were talking about international obligations. There are obviously the laws, but there are also those commitments we have made, in only another nine years, under SDG 5.2 to eliminate all forms of violence and under SDG 16.2 to eliminate all forms of violence against children.

There are also other measures that the UK might want to contribute to and bring home. SDG 11.7.2 talks about measuring more systematically and internationally incidents of sexual harassment, for example in public and all spaces. That measure has not progressed. It is a rather belated piece of work that we need to do to have a fully comprehensive approach, which is lacking if we do not know the state of play. There is the whole range. It could be pulled together in a number of ways for you, in terms of the international obligations, but there are very many.

You asked about some examples of prevention work and cultural change. There is the framework that I mentioned earlier around prevention. A new one has been launched internationally called RESPECT. Let me tell you what the letters stand for; I will not go into detail but I can give you that later if it is helpful. R is "relationship skills strengthened"; E is "empowerment of women"; S is "ensuring the provision of services"; P is "reducing poverty", and I would add to that other forms of inequality; E is "environments made safe", so safe public spaces, schools and work environments; C is "child and adolescent abuse prevented"; and T, which is the one that we are particularly focused on today, is "transformed attitudes, beliefs and norms".

Under that, the RESPECT framework offers a number of different avenues through which to progress that work. They look at community activism and mobilisation. They look at, again, promising evidence, they say, around community mobilisation, particularly in lower-income countries. They talk about group-based workshops with men and women to promote changes in attitudes and norms. They look at how effective they have been in their evaluations, so some are promising, some are very effective, some are very impactful and some are more evidence needed.

They say group-based workshops are promising and evidence suggests these approaches work best when they combine work with men, women, boys and girls, etc. They talk about group education with men and boys to change attitudes and norms. Interestingly, they found in lower-income countries that has not been that effective. Mixed group work has been more effective, which we might want to think about a little bit. They have said social marketing campaigns, or what they call edutainment approaches in group education, are quite effective, but there is not enough evidence from more industrialised and richer countries.

Interestingly, they say standalone awareness-raising campaigns have not been that effective. They need to be part of joined-up efforts that not all

countries and states have engaged in. Then there are examples of each of those. If you would like them, I can put them together for you.

Q12 **Angela Crawley:** That was incredibly helpful. It is great to have the RESPECT programme highlighted and the work you have been doing. There is one final question from me. Ultimately, legislation is one form of ensuring that women and girls feel safer. As we have heard from Stephen and John, who may want to come in shortly, there is much work to be done in terms of working with men and boys and women and girls to make legislation better. It is not just legislation. There is a range of tools that can be employed to simply make life safer for women and girls. I do not know if any of the panellists have anything to add.

John Carr: This is following on from the previous point about international initiatives and action. We have heard about the SDGs. We have heard about the Istanbul convention. Two months ago—it might have been slightly less—the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child adopted a general comment. This is not something that happens very often. By the way, a British parliamentarian played a major part in the drafting of that general comment.

It essentially seeks to update the 1998 original version of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which, for all practical purposes, was a pre-internet document. In there, there are several references to the types of things we are discussing here, from the point of view of helping young boys and young men avoid developing unhealthy attitudes towards women, but also about protecting and enhancing the rights of young girls and women to equal treatment.

Last year, with the help of the Reward Foundation, I organised an international conference. Sadly, it was held entirely online. That was not part of the original plan. We had representatives participating from over 30 countries. People from every continent were present. It was a mixture of Ministers, civil servants, community activists, women's rights activists and child protection activists, all of whom had a shared interest specifically around the impacts of porn on the development of healthy sexual relationships and on young boys and girls.

I went to Sweden pre-Covid and met a Government Minister there, who was extremely interested in what we had been developing in the United Kingdom by way of legal frameworks. I have been consulted and advised on the legislation in South Africa, the Philippines and Poland. Poland has been extremely energetic in this area. I am not completely clear on what France has been doing; I am simply aware that they are doing something. President Macron has made various statements about it.

I attended hearings in the Canadian Parliament virtually on Tuesday of this week. Even in the United States of America, which is perhaps the last place you would expect change to happen in this area, it is in fact happening. There was a legislative change agreed last year to what is called section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. That also plays very directly to

this space. It was highly contested by the way, but nevertheless it was passed, agreed and adopted by Congress and signed by the last President, whose name, thankfully, I can no longer remember. While we were on the international side, I thought I had better jump in with that stuff.

Angela Crawley: That is very helpful. Each of you has set out very clearly the international priorities that we should be looking at, as well as the UK priorities. There are really positive examples of where domestically we have seen advances. Wales, Scotland and other places are enshrining in law the same protections that we can uphold at the wider UK level.

Q13 **Kate Osborne:** Good afternoon to everyone on the panel. I am also going to be touching on some international questions. First, Helen and Stephen, do you believe there is sufficient evidence about why some men choose to be violent against women and others do not? Where are the gaps?

Dr Mott: If it was so simple, we could live in a world where we could identify at birth the men who were likely to be violent towards women and separate and hive them off from the men who are not likely to be violent against women. There are many issues with that approach, not least that violence against women, as Liz Kelly has said, is a continuum of behaviours that women are subjected to throughout their life course, some of which are illegal, some of which are physical, some of which are coercive, and some of which are the drip, drip, drip of everyday expressions of dominance, power and control that are closely related to inequality.

Do we have evidence? Yes, we do. We are overwhelmingly very clear. Yes, it is complicated. We have individual factors, family factors, community-level factors and society-level factors. All those factors interact to create a context that makes it more likely that one person on one day might express violence towards women, for sure. To me, it is very much a cultural issue. Much more work has perhaps been done at the level of the individual criminalised perpetrator. My interest is very much more in what those conditions that facilitate this behaviour are.

We are talking about staggering numbers of young women who are sexually harassed as they go about their day-to-day lives in public spaces, on public transport or what-have-you. This is not an issue of picking out individual people and their individual bad behaviours. It is very much more around culture. As far as I am concerned, the evidence is very clear, both in terms of what the causes are, but also in terms of what does and does not work. It is really important that we get it right when we look at what will work.

As Purna has already said, it is overwhelmingly clear in all the reviews that you read about what works to prevent violence that one-off—*[Inaudible]*—last for a little period of time and then disappear again are unlikely to be successful. You need sustained action and that means you need a joined-up strategic approach. That means, in my opinion, Government need to be leading on this and directing that joined-up strategic approach.

Dr Burrell: One thing I would add is that we have tended to, perhaps at the policy level, focus primarily on victims and survivors. That is partly for totally understandable reasons, like they should be at the centre of our approach to this. There is still a bit of discomfort around looking at perpetrators, at who is doing this. As Helen was saying, it is easy to focus on the worst cases of the most prolific offenders or people who are in the criminal justice system, and to look at it on a very individualised level. We need to look much more broadly and, as Helen said, look at the cultural factors and norms.

We need more attention from research, policy and practice towards perpetrators. There is a call for a perpetrator strategy, which a number of organisations have been calling for in the UK. I know the Government have said they are going to take that up. I would like to see some really concrete action there in developing much more in the area of working with perpetrators.

I would also re-emphasise what Helen said. On the one hand, of course there is a need for more research. There is need for more research about delivering effective primary prevention work, in terms of stopping it from happening in the first place. There is a need for more evidence of effective work with perpetrators, like how to really create change in people's behaviour, by doing that work and seeing what works from that.

As Helen said, we have a lot of evidence already about what works and how we can do this effectively. Of course there is a need for more research and more evidence but, at the same time, we should not be letting that stop us from getting out there and doing so much more of this work. That is the only way in which we are going to be able to start preventing this happening in the first place. As Helen said, we need much more leadership and action from Government on that.

Dr Sen: I am sorry if I am going to repeat what was said; I lost connection for a while. I want to underline what Helen was saying and add to it. It would be so wonderful if we could say, "This man is a potential abuser and this man is a potential good man." It is not going to do any harm and it would make our lives so much easier. The problem is of course that it is not only individually predicated as to who will be abusive and who will not. No woman knows who is going to abuse her and who is not, who is dangerous and who is not. There is no red light flashing on a man as he walks down the street to tell you he is dangerous.

The definitive answer about who is going to abuse and what that abuse looks like, whether they will get away with it, etc., does not lie bounded in that individual. It is about patterns of excusal and patterns of beliefs. It is about what we call structural inequality between men and women. While we never know who is going to be abusive, we know that any man can be abusive. Every woman is constantly on her guard in a way that restricts her freedoms, denies her equality and compounds discrimination.

It is those bigger patterns of the ease or difficultly with which you are believed, with which your future and your wellbeing is weighed up against somebody else. It is those longer-term pieces of work that need a lot more attention. One message I would really like to put to the Committee is that cultural change work, social norms work, is not low-hanging fruit. This is about being in it for the long haul, being brave and stepping outside the political boundaries of immediate results and often donor rush to immediate results. This is long-term hard work about how we fundamentally view each other and our roles as men and women with each other. It is about how our lives are valued, how inequality plays out on a daily level in often very unseen, quiet ways but that cause trauma, damage, harm and absolute violations of rights.

I hope the Committee will step up, be amazing leaders and say, "We understand that we can do all this work around response to violence. We understand that services must be there. The constant thread that runs through it is that women's organisations are always on the front line and activists are always shouting out loud, it often feels like into a void. We are listening, we are here, we are going to be in it for the long haul and listen to those who have lived through this and been on the front lines, and hear from them about what will make a substantive, lasting difference in the direction of equality.

Q14 **Kate Osborne:** I am going to go back to the international picture. John, you touched on some of this, so I will come to you first. The UK has been credited for its global work on preventing violence against women. Do you think it takes a different approach to prevention in other countries than it does domestically? If so, can you tell us why?

John Carr: One example of where the UK is definitely in a leadership position globally is the fact that, from, I think, September of this year, there will be sex education provided within schools as a compulsory subject. This is something that many of us have been campaigning for for a good many years. Nevertheless, it is now happening. It is something that the British Government advocate themselves for other countries to do. You cannot rely on certainly the internet or many other traditional sources of information about sex and relationships. Schools are the best place for these things to be addressed in an age-appropriate way.

Lots and lots of resources are now available to teachers, parents and community workers of different types to help with those difficult conversations. We should not kid ourselves about how difficult some of these conversations can be, particularly for certain types of parents. Other countries have been watching very closely what we have been doing in this area and are copying it. There are a number of NGO groups and voluntary organisations that, as I said earlier, are developing materials that are being widely adopted. They were pioneered, if not in the UK itself, certainly in other Commonwealth countries that have been working closely with groups in the UK.

Dr Mott: Could I just riff off something that John said there about evidence? I want to come back to the central importance of this, the necessity that has been shown in all the evidence. Remarkably, the UK Government have funded so much excellent work overseas, as Purna and all of us have said, but so much less in our own nations. It is absolutely known that, in order for preventative work to have impact, it needs to be rooted in a rights framework. That is the rights of women and girls. It has to identify gender inequality as an issue.

I was reminded about something I worry about when John was talking about relationships and the introduction of sex education, which is, by far and away, as far as I am concerned, the most exciting and important thing to happen, in terms of scalable ability to make change, in terms of violence against women and girls. I am worried that there may be creep towards a kind of gender-free approach to that, which would undo the point of all the research that tells us that we absolutely must have a focus on gender inequality and the rights of women and girls.

That inequality that Purna was talking about is absolutely central to how we should be moving forward with this. It is very important that that is taken into consideration. I am so glad it is happening, but I am a bit more hesitant about whether enough work has been done about what that should look like and how it is going to be evaluated.

Dr Sen: There is a lot of material, a lot of ideas and a lot of evidence about interventions that might be impactful. People have talked about materials available for teachers. I would go back to the need to be brave and reflective. I do not think it is enough to say to judges, lawyers and teachers, "Here is your material. Go and do this work in school," even if we have a lot of things that are useful.

When I was at the Commonwealth, I remember sitting with a group—I think we had all the magistrates in a particular country gathered to look at human rights work and what they do in their courts. Given space to look at their beliefs and attitudes, we did a little exercise around what should happen if a pupil becomes pregnant while they are at school. The way in which you can bring up their own assumptions and cultural beliefs is really important as the context in which those materials that you are offering are used and disseminated.

My point is about the need to be reflective and do the difficult work of understanding that the cultural norms we are trying to undo seep quite clearly into those professions and areas that we are expecting to deliver the change. It is hard work. It is sticky work. It is going to be resisted, because people find it hard to think about their own behaviour and their own relationships, which is what this inevitably makes them do.

Angela, you asked me before about different groups. I think you said BAME women and minority women earlier and I did not come back to you on that. May I quickly say a word about that? I have been involved with Southall Black Sisters and other groups. Historically in the UK, there has been a

slowness, a tardiness, about understanding the point I have just made about different professions and areas themselves holding the beliefs and attitudes that we find problematic. There has been a lot of energy spent on trying to name and out those particular problematics in the sector.

Not only has there been a great deal of development within the sector addressing violence against women, to understand, respond and meet the different needs and circumstances, there has been a wider growth in awareness of how intersectional inequalities play out within and beyond the sector. There is an oversimplification of what is needed on the responsive side to escape from violence and live free from it, but also on the prevention side.

That requires understanding how, for example, sexual violence is racialised, how people with disabilities are seen as either asexual or oversexualised and therefore have different responses to sexual harassment. If you have a mental health disability or issue, it is very difficult to find belief and credibility: "How can she remember properly? She cannot. Is she qualified to give evidence in court? Is her word reliable?" Those sorts of complexities have been much more explicit recently, but we have a hell of a long way to go to capture what that means and what it requires of us in changes in policy and practice.

Q15 **Kate Osborne:** The problem of male violence against women carries a huge cost for both individuals and society. What evidence do you see for this being a political priority for the Government? We have already touched on sex education being introduced in law. Is there anything else that you might want to highlight?

Dr Burrell: I totally agree that the relationships and sex education is a really important step forward. That in itself, just making it compulsory, is not enough. There is evidence that already some schools are getting out of it in various ways. They do not actually have to deliver all parts of it. We need to make sure it includes content addressing the things we are talking about. As Helen said, we need to make sure it is addressing gender, gender norms and gender inequalities. We need to make sure it is treated as a real priority in schools. PSHE and RSE have traditionally been quite far down the pecking order in schools, in terms of priority, but this is something that is so important.

It needs to be treated much more seriously from Government downwards, and schools given more resources to be able to do it, perhaps bringing in expert organisations from the outside to help them deliver it, making sure that staff across the school have training on this, as Purna was alluding to. It should not just be left to one member of staff so whoever gets the short straw has to deliver it. There is a real need. Many organisations and research have called for a whole-school approach in that regard, which perhaps we can talk about a little bit more later.

Another thing I would highlight is that of the course the Government have in recent years had a few different prevention campaigns, public health

campaigns of their own, most recently Disrespect NoBody. I think that finished a few years ago. Before that, there was the This is Abuse campaign. I actually did some research with young men, talking to them about these campaigns and what they thought of them. They said that they found the This is Abuse campaign, in particular, really impactful. They remembered that years afterwards, so that shows what these public health campaigns can do if they are across multiple different platforms: TV, cinema and social media, of course.

As was mentioned already though, they can only be one part of the picture. A public health campaign on its own is not going to be able to do enough. It is really important to engage with experts about the design of these campaigns, to make sure you are getting the messages right. Some of the young men I spoke to were quite critical of the Disrespect NoBody campaign. They found it quite patronising, a bit trivialising and a bit simplistic. That is something that it is important to be careful about.

Somewhere I would like to see the Government doing more is instigating a new nationwide public health campaign about this. It is a really urgent and important time to be doing that, in the wake of the pandemic, when we have seen different forms of violence against women and girls getting worse, for example domestic abuse. There are all the conversations taking place in the wake of Sarah Everard's horrific death. This would be a really important time for the Government to send out a really clear preventative message. I would definitely like to see that being done.

Dr Sen: I wondered if you were asking a little bit more about the political context of doing prevention work, not just in schools, through school initiatives. There is a particular reckoning going on for us here in the UK at the moment about how we are dealing with and what we are going to do about violence against women and girls. There is a great hunger for change. There is great political potential in addressing that. We have our legal obligations that we have talked about and a commitment to rights that should mean everybody should be able to enjoy them equally, on a basis of equality, and violence against women absolutely denies that.

There is hunger for everybody to know that their daughters, the women in their lives, their colleagues, perhaps even people they do not know, if our humanity stretches that far—hopefully it does—are safe and that not every man is seen as a potential rapist. That is something that people would want to work towards. The political work is about ensuring that that is an agenda that everybody shares and that we are all invested in those changes that would take us towards a society without abuse.

Returning to the original point of this discussion, it cannot be done without looking at the beliefs and attitudes that we bring to that conversation. Can you still be a man without being dominant over a woman? Can you still be a woman who is not submissive? There are stereotypes about Caribbean or African women being particularly hypersexualised and therefore being welcoming of certain violent sexual behaviour, or of Asian women being

docile and not wanting to speak of their abuse. These are things that will need a long time to be unpicked. It is slightly adjacent to the point we are making, but that political work is something that could become a national political common cause that we could all make.

Dr Mott: Your question was about what evidence there is of what the Government are doing. Stephen got to come in first and talk about the only evidence there is around what the Government are doing that strikes us all, which is this prevention piece in schools, problematic as it may be. Would it not be great to be able to google, "What are the Government doing on violence against women and girls?" You would expect them to have a presence. You would expect there to be a violence against women and girls hub that explains all the different areas in the different areas of reach of Government and policy areas where important work was taking place. I am afraid that that is not the case.

It is great that we are having a refresh of the violence against women and girls strategy across Government; it really is. It might sit technically in one place, but it is not very clear to me where the specialists are going to be. Who is going to be driving this? If you think about the response we have had to the pandemic or the response the Government have to the threat of global heating, you have a joined-up approach; you have subject specialists; you have experts; you are reaching into every corner of what Government do and doing it in a joined-up way.

We simply do not have that. Again, Wales and Scotland are ahead in terms of the strategies they have and particularly the prevention work they are doing. Take an example: think about transport. What exactly is happening about violence against women in transport? Not an awful lot is happening, to be honest with you. We addressed this in the inquiry back in 2017 and 2018. We looked at women's experiences in public places. The Government said that they would remind local authorities of their obligations under the public sector equality duty. That is not a huge, singing commitment of what Government are going to be doing to tackle sexual harassment of women and girls, which is such an important part of their lives, when they talk about getting from A to B, going to school, getting to work, or deciding not ever to go out because they do not know how they can get home safely, for example.

There are all these different areas across Government. It is really not clear what the different Departments are doing. Government would really benefit from having a much stronger joined-up approach, a hub and sector specialists who worked in each Government Department. It would be wonderful to see that, and I do not see it at the moment.

Q16 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** Thank you, panel. I am going to ask all of you this question, but you have covered a bit of it already. Earlier, we were discussing the role of social norms in male violence against women. You have touched a bit on practical measures the Government can take. I want to know if there was anything else that you would like to touch on in that

area, in terms of practical measures the Government can take there, and any evidence you have seen of the Government taking action to shift such gender norms.

Dr Mott: The one campaign that springs to mind, which Stephen has already mentioned, was the really good, fantastic campaign, led by the Home Office but which used connections in all kinds of other areas, to address, in particular, problems with young people and their attitudes towards violence and control in relationships. It was a brilliant campaign. It worked with "Hollyoaks", the soap opera. It worked across social media. It did all the things that all the evidence tells us you should do if you want to have a campaign that has good impact and reach. There was an evaluation of it and indeed it did have really good impact and reach.

That campaign stopped, as though the problem of violence in our young people stopped. The review said that, every year, there are 700,000 new young people moving into this age group that we know has some problems with how they look at relationships between boys and girls in particular, coercive control and consent. Every year, those 700,000 young people are coming in. There was a campaign that finished five years ago and then it morphed into the Disrespect NoBody campaign. From my perspective, that lacked a gendered analysis and was the poorer for it.

I am sorry; your question was about what the Government are doing. That is something fantastic that the Government did but are not doing now, and should be doing on an ongoing basis.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: That was it. It was mainly if there was anything else the Government were doing and anything else you think they should do.

Dr Burrell: In terms of some of the evidence and research we have been talking about, so much of that, including that excellent What Works programme that DFID funded, highlights and emphasises the need for a gender transformative approach. In other words, it is first recognising the role that gender norms and gender inequalities play in this violence and abuse, but then actively seeking to change them as well. That should be at the heart of these different aspects of prevention.

One thing I would like to highlight as well, which is what a lot of my research has focused on, is trying to engage more men and boys in this conversation and getting men and boys to reflect on their own attitudes, behaviours and attachments to these kinds of masculine norms. It is seeking to change those and become agents of change, be allies in their own communities, organisations that they are part of and different settings in which they live their lives. That is an area where I would like to see more of a focus.

Work with young people from an early age is a really important part of that, but actually this is something that can happen and is needed across the life course. There are moments across our lives that could be really valuable opportunities to engage with around these issues, for example

becoming a parent. When men become a father, how can they be encouraged to play an active role in caring for their children? We know that that is a really important aspect of trying to achieve gender equality in society. Also, it can help to prevent violence and abuse if men are more engaged in caregiving behaviours. Can we engage with men about these issues when they are engaging with healthcare services, retiring or getting a new job?

There are different spaces across the life course where we could be doing this. It is really important to focus on young people, but I do not think we should only focus on them. Adults, older people, actually have more power to create change. The other thing I would highlight there is that there are fantastic organisations out there doing this work already. There are specialist organisations. There are groups working with men and boys: the White Ribbon Campaign, Beyond Equality. There are organisations working around gender norms, such as Lifting Limits and Zero Tolerance in Scotland.

A lot of the prevention work that is being done is being done by the specialist women's sector organisations, such as Rape Crisis centres and domestic abuse refuges. They are also delivering a lot of the really important prevention work. Of course, that work is not getting anywhere near enough funding. If the front-line services are really struggling, what message does that send about how seriously we treat this as a problem, if a lot of victims and survivors cannot get the help they need? How are organisations going to also be able to work on prevention if they are not even able to do that kind of front-line work? That would be another thing that I would highlight in relation to this.

Dr Sen: There is so much to say about what Governments can do, could be doing and perhaps should do. I have tried to distil a few thoughts. I have five points for you. First, Government need to have a joined-up approach, joining the dots together across different Departments, not understanding violence as confined to a criminal justice or a justice Department-type framing only. It is much bigger than that. They also need to join the dots between international and domestic work. We have all referred to the work DFID has done internationally. You can find its evaluations. You can find where that work is. You can find where the evidence is centrally placed, but you cannot do that for the UK. Bringing that degree of commitment, consolidation and coherence to what we are doing here, of itself but also joining between international and domestic work and what we learn from each other, would be very helpful.

Secondly, it needs to be led by experts. By experts, I do not just mean people like me, Helen, Stephen and John; I mean experts including victims and survivors, from whom we learn a lot from their experiences. We also need to ensure that they, their advocates and their allies are adequately funded, as has already been mentioned by the women's sector particularly. We also need to think about having a standing consultation group of those

in the know, who could be a constant frame of reference for work as Government take it forward.

Thirdly, please give up the one-in-three figure for prevalence. It is a figure that came from the United Nations. The global figure is that one in three women experience violence across their lifetimes. What it does is it reflects only specific measures of intimate partner violence and sexual violence. I mentioned SDG 11.7.2; sexual harassment is not even there. All of the work we have seen, which is mostly separately funded, not always by Government, consistently shows unbelievably high levels of sexual harassment. If we were serious about understanding sexual harassment and the continuum of violence that Helen mentioned earlier, we would have figures way higher than a third.

It would be good for Government to be able to say, "We understand this is a much more prevalent, much more encroaching, ubiquitous experience for most of the women around us. It is more than every third person on the bus you get on. It is more than every third person you pass on the street. It is probably all of us, in one way or another." To recognise and to have known that this is a really huge problem that affects equality between men and women for all of us would be a very strong message.

Fourthly is to commit to the long haul. I have already made this point. We are not going to get quick wins if we are doing proper prevention work and if we are doing proper cultural change work. Prevention is part of the work, not just response to violence. Of course, some forms of response feed prevention, but we want to be able to do both.

Lastly, we need to recognise and centre gender and sex inequality as part of the work on ending violence. That is the core theme that runs through all the work, but it cannot be at the expense of other intersecting forms of inequality. Placing gender and sex inequality at the core is crucial, but we have to recognise, understand, learn from and address how issues of age, race, immigration status and disability shape those experience and shape what happens to people who want to speak up from those different positionings.

In terms of progressing on some of those, Government are well placed to do all of those. There is a lot they could do. There is a lot more, but I just wanted to pick out those five points as perhaps a core approach.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: Thank you; that is very helpful.

Dr Mott: I have a couple of points. First, I just wanted to inject some positivity into this. We have such good resources at our fingertips now about what can work, what does work and what we could be doing. Leadership is incredibly important for that. We have seen over the recent months a certain momentum, in terms of issues to do with the reality of violence against women suddenly being much more in the public gaze. Women are coming forward with their stories. That is probably the reason that you are having this inquiry now.

Part of that is hearing from people in leadership positions; I include politicians in that. It might be the first time they have heard a politician say, "This really matters. We will not tolerate the idea that women do not feel safe in the streets and in their own homes, as they go about their work, as they are in their educational setting." That is a really important message for people to hear, and it is wonderful to have heard it. How great it would be if we could sustain that political leadership on this issue and see it replicated across all of Government. I just wanted to add in about positivity and how we could really grasp this moment and be really positive about what we are doing in Government.

I also wanted to talk very briefly about the importance of data. We have a really serious issue with lack of data, particularly, as Purna says, around some issues. We have femicide data, so we know how many women are killed, because dead women do get counted, even if only by the Counting Dead Women project rather than led by Government, as perhaps it ought to have been for all these years. We have police records and crime survey data for England and Wales, but there is so much that we do not have.

Government committed several years ago to ensuring that data was being collected around sexual harassment on public transport. It is not, except in London. The Department for Transport and local government commissioned surveys on public transport, and there is nothing in there about women's safety or fears of sexual violence and sexual harassment, because they are not obliged to ask the question and they do not know they need to be asking the question. Because the data is not there, nothing gets done about it, not just in public transport but also in the night-time economy and in public spaces.

We must have Government mandating and perhaps Government collecting data, because if we do not have benchmarks, how will we know that what we are doing is making an improvement in the lives of women and girls? Something that Government could be doing right away, before they even get started on this programme of social norms change, would be to be collecting data so that we know we have baselines to work from.

Q17 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** Helen and Stephen, you both touched on the Disrespect NoBody campaign. I just want to ask both of you if you think there are any risks, with public campaigns, of victim-blaming or any unintended consequences that might come with that?

Dr Burrell: As I have said, it is important to think carefully when designing these campaigns and, as others have said, to engage with experts, specialist organisations and victims and survivors. I do not know if people have been following Australia, but they have actually just put out a Government-funded campaign. It has got a lot of criticism because it is just not done very well; it actually overcomplicates the issue. Yes, it is something that it is important to be careful with. As you say, in particular, we need to be sure that we are thinking about who we are actually asking to reflect on it. Who are we putting responsibility on?

As we have said, in the past we have perhaps seen some campaigns, not necessarily Government campaigns but perhaps more localised campaigns, that have actually put responsibility on victims to change their behaviour, when actually that is never going to address the roots of the problem. We have to look at who is doing this, who is perpetrating this, which is overwhelmingly men, and look also at the gender norms and inequalities that are at the root of the problem, and work on changing those. There are lots of ways in which a public health campaign could do that.

There was something else I was going to say, but I have forgotten what it was now. Perhaps I can come back to it if I remember.

Q18 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** Helen, do you think there are any risks with victim-blaming?

Dr Mott: Undoubtedly there are very significant risks, yes. In the field of addressing violence against women, in particular, whether you are talking about a public health campaign or whether you are talking about an educational programme or a training programme in a workplace, what we know from the literature is that there is a very significant and serious risk of backlash, or what some people call the boomerang effect.

If you go about things in the wrong way, for example if men get the sense from what they are being told that they are being demonised and held responsible for violence against women, if that is the first thought that men have when they see a campaign, that puts them into a hostile mindset, which then pretty much means it is very unlikely that they are going to be listening to anything else you say after that.

What that does not mean is, "Let us de-gender everything that we are saying". We must have a gendered approach, because that is the only way we get change, but a gendered approach that does not instil backlash and boomerang effects. Lots is known about how to do that. Colleagues of Stephen's and people in Australia have done lots of work in this field, in public health research.

If you have the voices of victims and survivors, and if you have the sector who deal, day in and day out, with violence against women advising and leading on your campaigns, you probably are not going to make those mistakes. Where things tend to go wrong is if you have people who are not familiar with the terrain, are not familiar with the particular risks around the way we talk about violence against women, and people who have different motivations.

Police, for example, in years gone by might have run campaigns that were trying to drive down the numbers of vulnerable victims by telling women not to go out except in pairs or not to drink too much. At the same time that they are doing that, they are reinforcing the idea that we have, which is prevalent in our society, that what men do is attack women. It is just really important to work with specialists in the sector if you are designing those campaigns. Done right, they are incredibly powerful and effective.

Dr Burrell: I just remembered what I was going to say. Just to add to what Helen said, yes, absolutely it is really important to try to adopt a positive approach to the role that men and boys can play in all of this. We all can play a positive role in creating change. As I said, men and boys also have a lot to gain from changing some of these ideas about masculinity.

Another thing that I have come across sometimes is the risk of perhaps inadvertently reinforcing gender stereotypes in some campaigns. For example, reinforcing the idea that men should be protectors or saviours, or the white knight idea that men should be coming in and rescuing women from other men. That is not what this is about at all. That actually reinforces some of these quite unequal and unhealthy ideas about masculinity. For me, it is about emphasising the positive role men can play as allies to women in building a more equal and violence-free society.

Q19 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** Purna, global studies indicate that a key factor in the perpetration of sexual violence is men's sense of sexual entitlement. Where does this sense of sexual entitlement come from?

Dr Sen: That brings us back to the original point of this discussion. Those notions of entitlements and expectation of sexual access to women's bodies are ingrained in most places, in the messages we get right from the moment we are born, which is about our cultural norms of who is sexual, who is not, who is sexually active, who is a sexual recipient, who is dominant and who is submissive and a receiver.

It might make some people uncomfortable, but you can go back through what the whole institution of marriage is about. We learn that this is about men's ownership of women and men's sexual access to women. Before we had rape-in-marriage provisions, this was about male sexual access in perpetuity to this person, no matter what they say, once they have got married. It was that sort of directional understanding as well. These are the messages that we hear in our homes. We hear them in our schools. We hear them in the media. We read them in the books, where men come to woo, court and find their sexual partner for ever, and women are swept along in these things.

In different places, in some parts of central Asia, a man can come along on horseback, pick up a woman off the ground and then go and marry her. In many countries, if a man rapes a woman, he is excused criminal consequences if he marries her. This notion of sexual ownership and sexual entitlement may take a number of different forms in different places, but it is an uncannily common factor in most—it is possibly all, but I will say "most" to be safe—cultures that anybody has every looked at. That is what makes it very difficult to unpick, because a lot of this is unthought of; it is automatic. We do not always consciously reproduce or think about it. That makes it extremely challenging to undo, but absolutely not impossible.

Look at the fact that we do have rape-in-marriage provisions now. In my mother's lifetime, that was inconceivable. I was with my mother-in-law yesterday. We were talking about some of these things. These were just

impossible. She was talking about what she could and could not do as a single and a married woman. These were all tied up in notions of appropriate sexual behaviour. While men are seen as inevitably, in some ways, sexually active and dominant, it is a particularly difficult job to undo that. Those things are changing or have the potential to change. The notion of entitlement has greater recognition than it did before, in terms of the sexual entitlement of, "You will accept this from me".

Sexual harassment, for example, is about embodying sexual entitlement. This is just something you put up with in your life. Most of us have lived with it, because this is just what work is like and this is what transport is like. You just have to put up with it. I want again to credit mostly women across the world who have challenged this in a very fundamental way, particularly in the last few years, to say, "This is not your entitlement. My entitlement is to a life free of this. We will name it, we see it and we are not going to put up with it anymore".

There are those sorts of linkages with that messaging from women and girls. Look at the girls at school and at university who are doing such strong, amazing leadership work around this. It is very clear. What we talked about earlier, in this moment of reckoning here for us in the UK, is that there is a chance for them to meld, to come together and be extremely powerful as an engine for change around those norms and expectations of sexual entitlement.

I would argue that one of the greatest social prizes in most cultures is the ownership of sexual access to women. Whether that is restricted rules of marriage, whether it is forced marriage, whether it is about pornography, which is about opening up access via commercial routes, or whether it is about closing them down through marriage rules in different places, that is one of the things over which there is a lot of social and political warfare and conflict, because it is such a valuable thing to own. Women's bodies have to be taken out of that equation with a greater degree of equality between men and women.

Q20 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** I know we are going to go into a section talking quite specifically about pornography, but I want to ask about some of those things that some people believe is almost pornography. That would be the sexual images and explicit sexual content that we see now that is not just limited to pornography, such as in TV shows, music videos and even song lyrics with explicit sexual content—for example, an artist singing about having sex with women in quite crude terms and quite sexually overt music videos. What impact do you think this has on male attitudes towards sex and women?

Dr Mott: It is absolutely key, but we have to be really careful how we conceptualise these things. The reality is that our culture has become increasingly sexualised and pornified. In Victorian times, it was a flash of an ankle that was sexy, and now there is a lot more fully body display going on. As far as I am concerned, the important thing is coming exactly back

to what Purna said, which is the sexual entitlement that is portrayed in so much of what we see.

The sexualisation of women's bodies is certainly a problem. Technically, what we know from psychological research is that, as a society in our culture, when we see women's bodies with not many clothes on, we literally treat them in our brains in the same way that we treat objects. When we view men without much on, our brains do not do that. They still see men as human, but women get sexualised in a particular way that makes them less human. That is really important. We could argue about what the causes of that are, but we have to accept that sexual objectification of women very specifically is absolutely related to violence against women. It is a really big concern.

When you talk about music videos and things like that, it is also really important that we think about the particular ways in which black women's bodies are hyper-sexualised, differently to the way that white women's bodies are, and again Asian women's bodies. There are links with pornography and the way that Asian women are portrayed in pornography and the way that black women are portrayed in pornography. All of these things are really important. It is very easy to sound censorial about it. My intention is not to sound censorial about it, but we have to look at the evidence and we have to understand that the sexual objectification of women dehumanises women in the context of structural inequality between women and men, and we need to do something about it.

For example, at a local level, in the city where I live we have programmes that are trying to encourage young men to understand that they should not have attitudes of entitlement to women's bodies and that they should not treat women like sex objects. At the same time, our local authority is giving a licence to sexual entertainment venues on the high street, where the same young men can pay to have women expose their naked bodies to them while they are remaining fully dressed. That is deeply unhelpful, it is definitely related to violence against women and it definitely needs joined-up action.

John Carr: I agree with everything that has just been said. Bearing in mind my principal brief is in relation to young girls and young boys—children—I am reminded of that famous question, "How do you eat an elephant?" The answer is, "One small bit at a time." It is possible to make a line of demarcation between the kinds of stuff that we see on pornography sites and on places that are specifically engaged and exclusively intended to publish and distribute pornography, and the wider question of what we see in advertisements, TV and movies before the watershed. To be absolutely honest, we have focused on the former rather than the latter. That does not mean to say that we do not recognise the importance of that second dimension.

Q21 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Thank you to all of our witnesses this afternoon. It has been a really fascinating and interesting session. Before I start, I

should probably declare my interest as the chair of the all-party parliamentary group on perpetrators of domestic abuse, just so that is on the record.

One of the campaigns that I am leading on at the moment is the media reporting and these sensationalised headlines around domestic abuse and violence against women and girls. I actually have a meeting with the Independent Press Standards Organisation tomorrow to discuss this further, but some of the headlines that we have had in the past few weeks, which I have in front of me here, include a "lovestruck lecturer" attacking a woman and men being described with words such as "jealous ex guilty of murder", "crazed husband" and "crime of passion from husband". The way that the media reports on this feeds into the culture. I would love to get your thoughts on this. Stephen, you touched upon some of this earlier, so I will come to you first.

Dr Burrell: I wholeheartedly agree with you, to be honest. The media has a lot of work to do in looking at how it reports on different aspects of violence against women and girls.

In a way, this connects to some of the conversation we were just having. So much of our culture is still taking men as the norm, basically. It is coming from the male perspective, often having a male gaze on different things, partly because men are still dominating in many of these different organisations, but also because culturally we are very much shaped in particular by these ideas about masculinity and things. You can see that as well in the reporting of these cases. For example, when it comes to domestic homicides, often the stories are being told from the perpetrator's perspective, to some extent, or from a very sympathetic angle.

For example, Luke and Ryan Hart speak out about the murder of their mother and sister and what it was like for them in the days afterwards when their mother and sister were murdered. Seeing the ways in which newspapers were covering what had happened, they said it was like they were telling the story that their dad wanted them to tell. There is a lot that the media needs to look at in that regard. There are standards and guidelines. The NUJ has come up with some, as has Zero Tolerance in Scotland, for example. Yes, that is something really important for different media organisations to look at.

I would just re-emphasise the points that are already made about thinking about what role the media plays in potentially reinforcing quite harmful norms and stereotypes about gender. How can it be different? How can it be a positive force for change in that regard? I know that the Committee of Advertising Practice introduced a ban on gender stereotypes in advertising a few years ago. That kind of thing is really positive, because the different aspects of our culture have a huge impact on the way that we understand these things. These kinds of organisations need to look a lot more critically at themselves and the role that they are playing in this regard.

Alex Davies-Jones: I agree. I do not know if anybody else wanted to come in on that point.

Dr Mott: I will very briefly to say exactly what Stephen said. Interestingly, I was going to say exactly the same things. When the Advertising Standards Agency did its review of gender stereotypes and the impact in ads, for me that was an absolutely game-changing moment; it was an absolute recognition that of course we are all made up by the culture we are surrounded by, which is so heavily influenced by what we see in advertisements but also in the media more generally. It is incredibly important, and it did a very brave thing when it brought in regulations around gender stereotyping. That is very important.

To me this is all about himpathy. In the last couple of years Kate Manne wrote a book in which she nailed the definition of this. It is called himpathy. We all do it. We take the side of men when there is a situation of male violence against women. It is something that we are drawn to do in our culture. It is very hard to get away from that instinct to want to take the man's point of view and to want to empathise with him, to want to think about his feelings and what was going on in his life. We do not give the same respect to the woman. That is just a massively important cultural phenomenon that it is also massively important to challenge.

Q22 **Alex Davies-Jones:** I agree. Thank you. You have given me a lot of content to raise tomorrow with IPSO. Purna, you wanted to come in on this point.

Dr Sen: It is worth thinking a little about why we do that and why we automatically and instinctively ally with the abuser in these cases and instances.

Part of that is about the cultural basis and context that we are talking about. It is less costly to us to take sides with somebody with whom everybody else is sympathising than it is to contest that by saying, "Why? What did she do? What happened to her? What is her experience?" If we are constantly against the grain, it is very wearing. If you are constantly at odds with what you are reading in the paper, what you are seeing on the TV, what your colleagues and neighbours are saying, then you pay a price. You pay a price in your own exhaustion. You pay a price in your friendships and your conversations.

That is part of why we need to look at the patterns in which inequality plays out and why women's lives are valued much less highly than those of men. Women's potential is valued much less highly than that of men, as are their careers, their prospects and their wellbeing. That structural inequality is quietly fed through the fabric of media reporting and how their stories are framed. There needs to be time to pause to think about how we make it less costly to contest those dominant narratives of woman-blaming, victim-blaming and almost unthinking sympathy for perpetrators, as if they have been wronged.

Q23 **Alex Davies-Jones:** I agree. Just moving on now to come back to the pornography and the impact that has, we have discussed this already but, John, I will come to you first. Should the Government be taking more steps to address the impact of pornography? What could those steps be?

John Carr: 100%, yes. Britain was the first country in the world to adopt legislation specifically requiring commercial publishers of pornography to introduce age verification. The express purpose of that was to keep kids away from MindGeek, PornHub, Xhamster, particularly these very well-known hardcore porn sites. That legislation was enshrined in part 3 of the Digital Economy Act 2017. It arose from a commitment in the Conservative party manifesto at the 2015 general election, which in turn had arisen from work done by a group of parliamentarians from both Houses and all parties, led principally by Claire Perry, that gathered in evidence about the harm of pornography to children and young people.

Parliament passed the legislation and designated the BBFC as the regulator. They then drafted all of the statutory instruments that were brought to Parliament and approved by Parliament. Everything was ready to go. The only step that remained to be taken was for the Secretary of State to name a commencement date. Then on 16 October—it was my wife's birthday, which was singularly unfair—the then Secretary of State, who is now Baroness Morgan, stood up in the House of Commons and said, "We do not intend to proceed to implement what is already the law." That is a very unusual thing to happen.

The companies that had invested a great deal of money preparing for the implementation of the law sued the Government for judicial review and they made considerable headway. I am not sure of the exact outcome of that, but all of the legislation was there. I was mentioning earlier the countries around the world that were doing stuff. They were essentially copying what the British Parliament had already done. That is why that conference I convened last year was so focused on learning from the British experience.

The Government have said that in the Queen's Speech, the week after next, there will be an announcement of an online harms Bill, in which they intend essentially to replicate and extend—the "extending" bit is important, good and welcome—what was already decided by part 3 of the Digital Economy Act and designate Ofcom as the regulator to implement it.

That is very welcome and we are very pleased about that. My only point would be that, with a very fair wind, it will be at least another three or four years, possibly more, before that new legislation hits the ground and starts operating. It is such a shame, because three or four years is a very long time in the life of a child, and it could have been avoided. I am hoping that this time we will get it done.

Q24 **Alex Davies-Jones:** I completely agree. The delay in the online harms Bill is completely unacceptable. Like you said, even another three to four years would have a huge societal impact on everyone in terms of pornography

and how social media and the internet is changing constantly. It needs to come now. You mentioned the introduction of age verification for pornography online. Should that be addressed and included in the online harms Bill?

John Carr: Yes, absolutely, and I am very pleased to say that the Government have said that it will be included. They are using the term "age assurance", which they make clear embraces age verification. There could be different levels of certainty attaching to the age of the user. The highest level of certainty would be where age verification was used. That would be for products like pornography, where 18 is the legal minimum age.

Just to go back to the point I made earlier, on alcohol, tobacco, knives—every other area where there is a legal age limit of 18—we see quite good implementation of those laws. You cannot buy knives online, you cannot buy alcohol online and you cannot buy tobacco online without proving that you are an adult. It has taken this much longer for it to be done in relation to pornography.

Q25 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Why do you think that is? Why do you think the Government are reluctant to act on prevention and culture change? We know that their own research on pornography and engaging men and boys in gender norms was not published for over a year. Why are they so reluctant on this?

John Carr: I do not want to sound too political, but on 16 October 2019 there was only one issue that the Government were concerned with. That was securing a vote in Parliament to allow a general election to take place, so that they could deliver on Brexit. I am afraid the view that many people reached was that there was a worry in certain circles that, if they suddenly introduced a law that might require men to stop what they were doing three or four times a night and have to go through a process to age-verify themselves, it might upset a key demographic of voters in a number of seats that they wanted to win in order to secure Brexit.

That is a very political interpretation of what happened but, given the alacrity with which the Government subsequently said, "We are going to do it in the future", a lot of people were left wondering why they did not bother going ahead with it in the first place, when all of the laws were there, all of the regulations were there and everything was ready to go. It only needed the Secretary of State to lay a statutory instrument before Parliament to name a commencement date, and they did not do it.

Q26 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Beyond pornography that features consenting adults, there has been a report, which I know John has been heavily involved in, looking at the huge amount of content that features children and sexual violence that is available on platforms such as PornHub. This content is easily available for download but, even when the platforms delete the original post, it is then reuploaded constantly. What should the Government be doing to address this?

John Carr: What we hope will appear in the online harms Bill is a mandatory thing. Companies should have no discretion; it should not be a matter of choice. They should be obliged to deploy tools, which exist and are very efficient and very effective, to stop images that have already been identified, in the way that you have said, as being illegal child sex abuse material or abusive material from being reuploaded and recirculated. There is heartrending evidence that is available from a very great group of strong young women in Canada about the effects of this material being constantly viewed and constantly reseen. The crime of it is that does not have to be like that. We have the means available now to stop it, but companies do not do it unless they are obliged to. We want the Bill to make it compulsory and not a voluntary matter.

Dr Sen: This is not something I have worked a great deal on, but I am very aware that there are some initiatives in different countries to try to put some power back into the hands of those who feel they have been abused by pornographic imagery and its distribution. I wonder if it is worth thinking about provisions. I have seen one draft of a law that gives those who do not want their images distributed the right to claim damages for those images being distributed, to claim an amount of money, for that money to be significant, as these companies are there for commercial reasons, and for those amounts to be increased at quite significant rates over the duration for which they are online; the amount could double every two hours it is online after an objection has been made.

All violence in pornography, much of pornography included, is about power being taken away from those who are abused. We need to think more imaginatively about giving the power back to them and, in terms of the harms and inequality that these images have brought into their lives, giving them some control over what happens and to hit the companies financially.

John Carr: By the way, it should not just be the companies. It is also the men who are downloading it. There is a fantastic case that went to the US Supreme Court because, oddly enough, in the United States they have a law very much along the lines that you have just described, which gives the victim the right to claim damages from anybody found downloading an image of them being sexually abused.

A young woman called Amy, not her real name, sued Mr Paroline, because he was rich. In the Supreme Court, the agreed quantum of damages that she was entitled to was $3 million, which is not an insignificant sum. Unfortunately, the case did not end quite as one might have hoped, because the justices could not agree exactly what proportion of the $3 million Mr Paroline personally could be expected to pay. They have subsequently amended that with further legislation.

Victims should have rights against the companies if they do not take steps to stop it, but they should also have rights to claim against individuals who are found to download it.

Dr Sen: The draft that I have seen for one of the states in the US talks about damages in the amount of $100,000 awarded for every two hours of electronic distribution after notice of claimed infringement of the section.

John Carr: It sounds good.

Dr Sen: It needs to be significant and meaningful, both to the person having to pay and the person who has been abused. It is just thinking about whether we could be creative around these sorts of steps.

Q27 **Alex Davies-Jones:** For my final question, John, I will probably come back to you again. I recently had a meeting with all of my head teachers in the constituency. One of the things that they raised with me was the increase that they are seeing in young people, a lot of them under the age of 16, sending inappropriate images of themselves to each other, and then them sharing that content via AirDrop or on Snapchat. They are really struggling with what to do and how to address this amongst the pupils. They feel like the social media companies need to step up more, particularly Snapchat. What do you think about this? What can we do to stop this from happening?

John Carr: I have spoken to many teachers who have said very similar things. In fact, some of them have said that, since the easy availability of porn has become what it is now, it has completely changed the culture in the playground. I have heard one very graphic memory of a teacher in a co-educational school, who was describing a situation where a line of boys were walking down the corridor on the left, a line of girls were walking down the corridor on the right, and every one of the boys got out their mobile phones and flashed a hardcore porn image at all of the girls as they walked past. That would not have been possible. Nothing like that was possible not that many years ago, and it has had a very corrosive impact within schools.

Some of the things that you were just mentioning, in terms of AirDrop, using Bluetooth and things of that kind to exchange images, there is very little that legislation can do about that, but there are better tools becoming available. Once they are proven to be of use, they should become, in my view, obligatory within all of the networks. The mobile phone companies are very open to doing stuff like this. They are in the consumer space. They worry about their image and their brand. They are very open to it, but everybody needs pushing. Very few people voluntarily act in this area.

Q28 **Kim Johnson:** Good afternoon, panel. Helen, you developed a bystander programme for universities to tackle domestic and sexual violence. Can you tell us what the evidence is for changing cultures in this way? How widely is it being delivered in universities?

Dr Mott: Yes, that is right. When I was working at the University of the West of England, we were commissioned by Public Health England, first to do an evidence review to assess what the evidence is for bystander intervention programmes for addressing violence against women and domestic violence in university settings. That is what we did. Based on the

evidence, for a whole load of reasons that I do not have time to go into now but that I would gladly bore you about at length anytime, bystander programmes are very widely recognised as a very good vehicle for delivering attitude change and ultimately behaviour change when it comes to norms around violence against women.

We conducted an evidence review and then developed a specific programme based on the evidence, designed to change attitudes and drive down the high levels of sexual violence, domestic abuse and so on in universities. The good news is that that was rigorously statistically evaluated, and the results were published in a peer-reviewed journal article. For example, it is difficult to measure how we bring violence down. We have to do it with proxies, like attitudes that we know are related to violence perpetration.

For example, immediately after taking part in this programme, the students' rape myth acceptance changed dramatically, so they were far less accepting of the common rape myths that we know go hand in hand with attitudes that are conducive to violence against women. Domestic abuse myth acceptance went down. The denial that we were talking about earlier—denial that there is a problem of men's violence against women—went down very significantly. Bystander efficacy, readiness to help and responsibility for tackling male violence against women all increased significantly, as did intent to help. Exposure to a concurrent social media marketing campaign also helped.

If we had had more time, I am sure we would have talked about how important it is to triangulate interventions so that people get the sense that the messages are coming at them from more than one place and for longer than five minutes. The good news is that it is a very successful programme and it looks very promising for bringing down violence against women. The students also absolutely love it, find it very engaging and find that it helps their communication and leadership skills, which are very important tools.

The bad news is that the programme has not been widely taken up in universities. There is not a mandate that it should be taken up. What has tended to happen is that the regulators have said, "Yes, we need to tackle violence against women, but we also need to tackle all other forms of bad things that people do to people in universities. Can you just make sure that you have a prevention programme that teaches people not to do any kind of bad things to any people?" When you do that, when you take away that really important gendered understanding that is so key to developing positive attitudes, you end up not actually tackling the attitudes and roots of violence against women. You make things less effective.

Unfortunately, very few universities are prepared to commit the resources that it takes to undertake prevention programmes that are evidenced as working. On one level, that is really understandable because you cannot flick a switch and ask a student to do a half-hour online programme and expect that, after they have done that programme, they are no longer

going to harbour violent tendencies. It is not that simple, unfortunately. You need repeated dosage and you need to meet with all other kinds of criteria that have been identified as being important for behaviour change programmes that work. It is a slog.

We have evidence about what works. We are pretty sure that it would work if it were implemented. Unfortunately, prevention programming is still not being taken as seriously as very many of us think it ought to be in universities, given that in any one year 10% of female university students report suffering sexual misconduct, violence or assault of one kind or another.

Q29 **Kim Johnson:** Thank you for sharing that, Helen. Again, I am disappointed that it has not been taken up more widely, but in time it might be, because it has been mentioned in this Select Committee and as a result of Everyone's Invited, and the fact that it is high profile at the moment in the media. Hopefully, universities might change their mind and start delivering that.

My next question is to Stephen. Consent workshops are delivered in some universities. Would you say that these are effective? What do you believe are the risks of a backlash?

Dr Burrell: As you say, we have seen in recent years more universities having things like consent workshops. Sometimes those have come out of the student body themselves, with student unions pushing that. That is an important step forward.

On its own, it is probably quite limited, if we are just talking about a one-off consent workshop at the beginning of your time as university. As Helen said, it very much needs to be something that is ongoing, with in-depth conversations taking place throughout your time at the institution as part of a multi-stranded strategy at that institution to really tackle this problem, recognising exactly what Helen said: the need to make sure there is actually space to get into a dialogue about the harmful gender norms that are underpinning this. You probably cannot do that in a one-hour consent workshop.

There is another thing to recognise that is really important. As we have said, we need to focus a lot more on prevention, but we also need to recognise that is not just about changing individual attitudes and behaviours. As we said, we need a whole-institution approach. That also means looking at the structures of our different institutions and how those are continuing to be shaped by gender inequality. In terms of universities, who is it that is still in the majority of the leadership positions? Do we still have a substantial gender pay gap, for example?

In that respect again, and in terms of what men can do, I would in particular emphasise the role and responsibility that men, or anyone in a position of power, have. They can play a really powerful role in speaking out about these issues and instigating change in different institutions

towards gender equality and towards the prevention of violence against women. Sorry; was there another aspect to your question?

Q30 **Kim Johnson:** I was just asking what the risk of a backlash was.

Dr Burrell: As was mentioned earlier, that is something to be aware of. Often there is a backlash, because you are challenging very deep-rooted attitudes and you are challenging power relations in society, fundamentally. It is important to anticipate the potential for backlash and to come up with ways of dealing with that and working around that, and not to be put off by it. Often it might be a very vocal minority, but there is also a much larger group of people who probably just do not know what to think about a lot of these things. Perhaps they are interested and are just looking for more of an opportunity to have a conversation and a dialogue, because there just are not spaces to do that enough in society.

We should not be put off by it and we should be prepared to have ways of dealing with the kind of backlash responses you might have and, as I said earlier, taking the conversation forward, in a positive way, about the role that all of us can play in tackling this. This issue is not separate from any of our lives. It affects all of us. We all play a part in shaping society and shaping these ideas about masculinity, femininity, violence and relationships, so we can all play a positive role in shifting those in a healthy direction.

Q31 **Kim Johnson:** Far more structural changes are required in terms of going forward; thank you for that response.

The sustainable development goals envisage a partnership between Government, civil society and the private sector, and the UK has committed to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls by 2030. What is the role of civil society and private bodies in tackling cultures underpinning male violence against women?

Dr Sen: Thank you for raising that and thank you for ensuring that we talk about that inter-partnership approach. It is absolutely in the fabric of the sustainable development goals that we recognise states parties in law as being duty-bearers around the legal issues. In terms of the bigger agenda of social, economic, political and cultural change, there is a much broader understanding that all these sectors have a part to play.

You asked specifically about the private sector and civil society. I would like to lead with civil society. There is not much work on the connections between the women's sector, the sector against violence and policy measures. There was a very important piece by Htun and Weldon that was looking at policy, legal and other practice changes around violence against women in 70 countries. It found that the most significant correlate of effective work against violence against women came from having a thriving and active women's sector.

They tend to be the ones who know what is going on, the ones who are trusted by victims and survivors. They are prepared to put their heads

above the parapet and shout. They unfortunately tend to be underfunded, insecure in their existence and often at risk, as we know now as we talk about human rights defenders, of adverse consequences for challenging the things that we are talking about today. The centrality of civil society cannot be dismissed and really must be at the forefront of our minds. A commitment by all states and all Governments to ensure that that sector is well funded, that expertise is recognised and that they can work in safety is crucial.

You asked about the private sector. With recent recognition of the ubiquity and the harm of sexual harassment in the workplace, it opens our eyes much more to why non-state actors, as we call them—civil society, private sector and third sector—are key players in changing lives and how inequality operates in different aspects of our lives. In the workplace, where many people across the world are employed, issues of inequality that feed sexual harassment, all the way through from looks to rape, need to be made explicit and undone by the people with the responsibility, so the employers in those cases.

One of the things that I did when I was at UN Women working on this was to provide a set of standards and guidelines on what could be done to change organisational culture in the workplace towards real intolerance. One of the issues is, when an organisation is challenged as to their shortcomings around sexual abuse, sexual violence or anything, there are some very easy go-to expressions and defences that sit at the front of their minds and can be easily bandied about. Zero tolerance is one: "We have zero tolerance". The second one is, "We have a victim-centred approach. We put victims first". There is a whole list of these. What does it mean to go beyond a slogan and actually make those real, lived reality for people in the workplace? It is something that needs a lot more work. Helen talked earlier about training and work with bystanders. We did a whole piece of work around why training against sexual harassment has not worked.

All of them have a role that they can play in terms of re-examining what they do, going beyond easy, quick solutions and slogans, making sure that victims and survivors, as experts, are those who inform policy, practice and culture change and being transparent on what happens with cases that are reported. The pressure on victims and survivors constantly to report, report, report is misplaced when the systems of reporting are not fit for purpose, when they are opaque and when they are not actually working to encourage trust in systems. There is a lot that needs to be done in all workplaces, including the private sector, to ensure that this sort of work moves forward.

There is also work to do around understanding human rights commitments. We talked about international standards earlier, standards to do with equality and non-discrimination. The work to progress this includes those beyond the state. Everybody has a role to play. We categorise them as non-state actors in the framework. Hold people to account. Create workplaces that are free of violence and abuse, under which we would

include sexual harassment. Ensure that those in the positions of least power and authority—young people, newcomers, interns, volunteers, people on temporary contracts and casual workers—all have the same rights to protection, safety and equality. The list is very long; I probably cannot go through it all here.

It is also as true for Government as for the women's sector as for the private sector that this very popular commitment we all have to neutrality is actually not neutrality. It is taking sides in the context of inequality if you do not challenge that inequality. That neutrality means that nothing is taken on and challenged. You are taking sides with the person with the most power. You are taking sides with inequality, because it takes effort to undo that.

Helen mentioned earlier those sexual entertainment venues. We talked earlier about pornography. If the compulsion is to continue with the status quo, what you are doing is reinforcing the relationships of inequality that are part of that status quo. With the media, you cannot be neutral about reporting that somebody was abused. It is always a bad thing that somebody was killed. It is always a bad thing, no matter if the person who did the killing was a great doctor or an academic star. Those sorts of things really need to be outed and made very clear, particularly for this Committee. As I said earlier, in the pursuit of equality, sides have to be taken and it has to be recognised.

For example, people are shy around pornography because they feel they are stepping on people's toes and freedom of expression, but, actually, freedom of expression and Article 19 is qualified if it impinges on the realisation of other people's rights. That is something that has got lost in the debate and that we need to remember, prioritise and privilege.

Kim Johnson: That is great. Thank you so much for a very informed and detailed response to that question, Purna.

Chair: Can I just take this opportunity to thank all of our witnesses for the evidence that you have given this afternoon? If there are any issues you wish to follow up on in writing, please do feel free to do so. To conclude, we are hoping to hear from Ministers, including Victoria Atkins, in due course, to hear the Government's response to some of the issues that you have raised this afternoon.