

Home Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [Domestic Violence and Abuse](#), HC 1015

Tuesday 4 September 2018

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Members present: Yvette Cooper (Chair); Sir Christopher Chope; Stephen Doughty; Kate Green; Kirstene Hair; Tim Loughton; Stuart C. McDonald; Alex Norris; Douglas Ross; John Woodcock.

Questions 78–120

Witnesses

I: Rachel Griffin, Chief Executive Officer, Suzy Lamplugh Trust; Dr Nicola Sharp-Jeffs, Founder and Director, Surviving Economic Abuse; Laura Richards, Founder, Paladin National Stalking Advocacy Service; and Andrea Simon, Public Affairs Manager, End Violence Against Women Coalition.

Written evidence from witnesses:

- [End Violence Against Women Coalition](#)
- [Surviving Economic Abuse](#)



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Rachel Griffin, Dr Nicola Sharp-Jeffs, Laura Richards and Andrea Simon.

Q78 Chair: I welcome our panel of witnesses today to our Home Affairs Committee inquiry into domestic abuse. We are very grateful for your time. Unfortunately, due to the timing of the parliamentary session today and the urgent question on the Windrush case, we will be somewhat constrained by time and will need to finish the panel session in about an hour's time, but hopefully that should give us plenty of time to cover all the important issues before us. Can I ask you all to briefly introduce yourselves and the organisations that you represent?

Rachel Griffin: I am Rachel Griffin. I am the chief executive of the Suzy Lamplugh Trust. We run the National Stalking Helpline.

Laura Richards: I am Laura Richards. I am the founder of Paladin National Stalking Advocacy Service, author of the book "Policing Domestic Violence" and also DASH—the Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and Honour Based Violence risk model—and the former Head of Homicide Prevention at New Scotland Yard.

Dr Sharp-Jeffs: I am Nicola Sharp-Jeffs. I am the Director of Surviving Economic Abuse, a charity that seeks to raise awareness of this form of abuse and transform responses to it.

Andrea Simon: I am Andrea Simon. I am the Public Affairs Manager at the End Violence Against Women Coalition. We are a coalition of more than 80 members, working to end violence against women and girls, and we are primarily campaigning to improve responses by national and local governments.

Q79 Chair: Thank you. We are particularly interested in the Government's current plans for legislation around domestic abuse, so my first question is about whether you think those plans should be changed or should have things added to them. If you had to raise one issue that you wanted to either add to or amend on the Government's current approach to the legislation, what would it be?

Rachel Griffin: For us, while we welcome the renewed approach, the renewed focus on domestic abuse, we are aware from the National Stalking Helpline that only 55% of our callers are being stalked by an ex-partner. We therefore think there may be a risk of creating a two-tier response to victims of stalking, whereby those who are stalked by somebody other than an ex-partner or family member may not receive the same level of support and advocacy. We would therefore look for ideally a widening of scope. Because 80% of the people who call our helpline are women, we see stalking as part of a broader violence against women framework and we think a broader scope to look at all violence against women crimes, including stalking, might be welcome.



Laura Richards: We have been calling for a register for serial stalkers and domestic violence offenders. Although the consultation talked of seriality, it did not pin down the framework or how that operates. There already is the Violent and Sex Offender Register. I was part of the team in the Met bringing in the ViSOR system, and MAPPA, the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements. We would like to see serial stalkers—those who have been convicted and also those who have not been convicted, but that have offended on two occasions against two separate women—included on the register.

Dr Sharp-Jeffs: We are pleased to see a new focus on economic abuse within the proposed definition of the Bill. Previously it was not recognised—it was an almost invisible form of abuse—so we have raised awareness of this specific form of abuse and more victims will come forward. For us, it is about ensuring that there is access to support services and specialist advocacy in relation to this issue in particular, because it does involve working with stakeholders that domestic violence services have not traditionally worked with, including, for example, financial and legal institutions.

We agree with the Suzy Lampugh Trust about the need to broaden the scope of the Bill, as economic abuse can be an aspect of lots of different forms of violence against women and girls: forced marriage, trafficking, modern slavery and sexual exploitation, to name but a few. We also want to move slightly away from the criminal justice system towards other ways of dealing with economic abuse, perhaps through consumer and regulatory law, to find ways of achieving economic justice, because a lot of women do struggle with establishing economic stability and independence, which leaves them vulnerable to not only intimate partner violence, but also other forms of abuse.

Andrea Simon: Similarly, we find that limiting the Bill to proposals addressing domestic violence is disappointing, particularly the lack of focus on sexual violence within intimate partner relationships, when data from the Home Office shows that it is a factor in one-third of rapes suspected to be committed by intimate partners, and even higher figures from the Crime Survey for England and Wales of almost half of sexual assaults by rape and penetration being committed by partners or former partners. We feel that the Bill needs to encompass a wider focus than just domestic abuse. We would also like to see some of postcode lottery issues that affect access to support and advocacy being addressed so that this Bill works for all women, not just some women, and that there are no additional barriers placed on women because of disability or immigration status. That is a key priority for our organisation.

Q80 **Kirstene Hair:** In Scotland, there is the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act, which contains many welcome provisions, but one thing that it did not examine—one of the things that we had called for in the Scottish Parliament—was a trial of one family, one judge, where one judge was assigned to a domestic abuse case and victims were not forced to



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continually repeat their horrific experiences. This does work in similar systems across the United States, Australia and New Zealand. Do you think this is something that the UK Government should think about implementing? That question is open to anybody.

Chair: Do feel that you can dip in and out. If this is not an area that you have a view on, don't feel obliged to answer every question.

Dr Sharp-Jeffs: Are you talking about across the criminal and family justice systems, saying one judge would hear both types of case?

Kirstene Hair: Yes, so that victims do not have to continually repeat what they have been through, which is very distressing.

Laura Richards: I know that one of the issues that the women we work with raise is that they feel they fall between the two systems. A lot of women say that the police response to economic abuse is almost the same as it was to physical violence 30 or 40 years ago, that the police will say that this is a private matter and that it is something that you should look to resolve in the Family Court. The Family Court does not recognise economic abuse and quite often women are referred back to the police. They therefore feel that they fall between two stools, so I do think it would be useful to take a more integrated approach. I know this had been trialled in Croydon some years ago. Unfortunately, I do not think the evaluation showed whether it was effective or not.

At the same time, however, women talk to us about how the Family Court is used to perpetrate economic abuse, particularly post-separation, and especially for women who do not qualify for legal aid. In relation to economic abuse, they do not have access to assets that are assessed as being theirs, meaning that they do not have access to those assets, but they are seen as owning them so they cannot access legal aid, which means in turn that they can end up with very high court costs, continually being taken back to the Family Court by the perpetrator and having to keep paying out in order to keep their children safe. We know a lot of women who are indebted as a consequence, having to borrow money from family members, and I do think an integrated system that recognises economic abuse in the two different spheres would be very valuable for economic abuse specifically.

Andrea Simon: I would add that there are some significant issues with how the Family Court is functioning, not really paying mind to what is going on in the criminal courts. There are perpetrators of abuse who face sanctions in the criminal courts and the Family Court does not always understand that that has happened or pay heed to it, so much better working between the two is necessary. What you are suggesting has happened in Scotland would, it would seem, facilitate—

Q81 **Kirstene Hair:** It has not happened in Scotland. It was a proposal that was put forward that was not included in the Bill, but it has happened in other countries across the world. I wondered if it was something that you, from your experiences, would deem to be helpful to be implemented



in the UK.

Andrea Simon: Yes, that obviously is one way of addressing this very serious issue of the Family Court and the criminal courts not being joined up enough.

Rachel Griffin: About 7% of callers to the stalking helpline say part of the stalking pattern of behaviour has been making vexatious complaints against them. That can sometimes be stalking effectively perpetrated through the Family Court, perpetrators trying to use the Family Court process to sustain access to their victim, but also more widely, so not just where there has been an intimate partner relationship and there are children, but also in a civil court, for example, taking someone to court on vexatious grounds simply to maintain their pattern of perpetrating stalking. Anything that brings together all the court systems and is informed about the abuse that can happen using those systems would also be very welcome.

Laura Richards: I would agree with that, but prior to that, training is a critical issue because judges in the judiciary are not trained. Last year, 2017-18, 80% of stalkers did not even face prosecution for a start, so we still have a major problem with even getting cases to court. When they are, out of the number that did face a charge, only 85 stalkers received a prison sentence. Training is a key issue. Yes, if you could join up the family justice system with the criminal justice system—I agree with Rachel—a lot of our clients are taken through the civil courts, but the stalking behaviour continues and I would have to say that most professionals are not even aware that that is what is happening, the secondary victimisation that emanates.

If you look at the Chambers case, Christine Chambers and Shania Chambers, who were stalked and murdered by David Oakes, you would see somebody who played the system and then shot them both dead in a house siege situation. Statements had been taken from the Family Court, but nothing on the criminal side, despite the fact that Christine Chambers had called the police 16 times. Although she had called the police 16 times about her children, not one question was asked about the risk to the children, yet when he called the police to say she was a neglectful mother, the police sent a unit that searched her house thoroughly to see if she had been neglecting the children.

That disparity, the lack of joining of dots and understanding risk prior to any court process is really vital. When you add coercive control, of course many of the perpetrators can be very manipulative and judges and magistrates do not seem to be attuned to that when we are talking about the dynamics of what is going on, even in their courtrooms.

Q82 **Kirstene Hair:** Following on from that, the Government consultation on domestic violence contained proposals to end cross-examination of victims by their alleged attackers in Family Courts. Would you welcome that? I believe one-quarter of domestic abuse survivors have been cross-



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examined by their abusive ex-partners. What protection do you think needs to be put in place for victims and what dangers are there in allowing the current practice to continue?

Rachel Griffin: If you are putting a perpetrator of abuse—indeed, across the spectrum of violence against women—face-to-face with their victim and giving them licence to cross-examine them, you essentially have a state-sanctioned continuation of the abuse. Stalking is just one of a number of examples of the kinds of abuse we are talking about. Anything that puts protection around a victim so that they are not subject to that revictimisation would definitely be welcome. I would say that if we can look beyond the Family Court to the wider civil court process, that would also be particularly helpful.

Laura Richards: If there is stalking and fixation, that is exactly what the stalker wants to do. They will have their day with that victim. As Rachel said, it is very much a collusion with the perpetrator and it is very risky and dangerous, particularly if the perpetrator has nothing left to lose. These are very much psychologically-rooted crimes. It is said that victims do not support a prosecution. You can ask any expert witness how they feel about going to court, whether it is joyful experience or not. When you add in that you are there and you are going to be cross-examined by the perpetrator, it is an incredibly terrifying experience for a victim to go through. Oftentimes we just pay lip service to that and do not understand the risks that are entailed and the psychological impact, which could lead to serious trauma—many services are still not trauma-informed—and there are lots of repercussions as a consequence.

Q83 **Alex Norris:** Andrea Simon, your coalition has said that the definition of domestic abuse is too broad and does not reflect the gendered nature of domestic abuse. Could you explain how you came to that conclusion and what unintended consequences it would have for the broader legislation?

Andrea Simon: We think it is important to centre intimate partner violence in a definition, as opposed to violence between siblings or other family members, as it is different. We do not think that the definition of domestic violence should be a catch-all for all the abuse that is happening behind the front door. There are power dynamics between intimate partners and coercive control dynamics that are happening and which are deeply rooted in gender and the perceived role of a woman, what she should do, how she should act and how she should be controlled.

It is really important to centre that in the definition, but it is also important to have the type of statutory guidance that can support it and can support professionals to be able to understand how coercive control operates and understand the different typologies and prevalence of intimate partner violence within the definition of domestic violence. If we do not get the definition right, it will have an impact on the types of services that are commissioned and how we understand domestic violence, so it is really important that we get something that accurately reflects the experiences of women in intimate partner relationships.



Q84 Alex Norris: Is it your suggestion to extract intimate partner relationships out from the other forms you talk about and then for Parliament to legislate separately for those things?

Andrea Simon: Those types of abuse and other types of family abuse have their own policy responses, which are really important to have, but I believe it is important that you centre intimate partner violence and coercive control within our definition of domestic violence.

Q85 Sir Christopher Chope: I am talking to Andrea Simon. Your organisation talks about being against violence against women and girls and who could be against violence against women and girls, but why does your organisation exclude the issue of violence against men and boys?

Andrea Simon: It does not exclude the issue—obviously men and boys are victims of domestic abuse—but there is an issue with prevalence. The majority of victims of domestic abuse, which is what we are talking about, are women and girls, so we feel that we need to have policy responses that reflect the prevalence of it being a gendered crime. That is not to say that within our responses, which look at violence against women and girls—and we have a framework for that within the Home Office and within the CPS in London and in other local areas—we do not also recognise the victimisation of men and boys and that there aren't responses for men and boys, but it does not preclude that from being part of a violence against women and girls framework. It is very important to keep that.

Q86 Sir Christopher Chope: But surely in terms of domestic abuse, everybody should be equal before the law, whether they be a man or a woman, a girl or a boy. You are trying to make it more complicated, to differentiate between the different categories. Do you not agree that it is just as bad for a man to be the victim of the domestic abuse as it is for a woman to be the victim?

Andrea Simon: I do not think it is a case of measuring them against one another, to say one is worse than another, but we are looking at a gendered crime, where the vast majority of victims are women and girls, so we do have to have responses that address that. You have taken evidence about the danger of degendering this issue and how that would affect the commissioning decisions that are taken locally in the services and how it would reflect the types of services that are in place and that do not meet the needs and the demands, which are, in the main, from women and girls. That is not to say that we do not have to consider the victimisation of men and boys, but they cannot have a response within a framework that acknowledges the gendered nature of this crime.

Q87 Sir Christopher Chope: Isn't that your problem, that you are concentrating on gender and that you are trying to make this into, as you say, a gender crime? What it is is a crime against individuals, a crime often involving violence, threats, intimidation and life-changing consequences, whatever the sex of the victim. Surely it is a misnomer to



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describe this as a gender crime. This is a crime and surely it should be dealt with on the basis of everybody being equal before the law.

Andrea Simon: I would disagree and say that it is a gendered crime. We have an accepted policy framework that focuses on violence against women and girls because it is a crime that disproportionately affects women and girls. There are different motivations and different patterns of how abuse plays out. Women are much more likely to be victims of repeat abuse than men, who are more likely to be victims of single incidents, so there is a need to look at this with a gendered lens and to understand that, to understand the motivations and the causes and consequences of abuse, which are rooted in the inequality of women. This is what you have to remember. This is at the heart of this particular issue, the inequality of women as a cause and a consequence of the violence that they experience.

Q88 **Sir Christopher Chope:** Can I suggest that if that were correct, then there would not be any violence against men? You are saying that all this violence is because of the innate inequality of women. Can I suggest that it is a very old-fashioned approach that you have towards this? We should be treating all the sexes equally on this. It is perhaps because your organisation is committed to only dealing with one aspect of this issue, namely violence against women and girls, that you have a predisposition to see this in terms of gender, whereas it really should be in terms of everybody being equal under the law.

Andrea Simon: Our work is vetted. There are several international frameworks that focus on violence against women and girls. It is a global issue. It is not just an issue for us to work on here in the UK. It affects women across the globe. I would dispute that it was our particular organisation that is making it a gendered issue. The UN and CEDAW look at this as very much a gendered issue, the Istanbul Convention is based on trying to address the inequalities and violence that women and girls experience and this Bill we are talking about is seeking to ratify that. I do not think that the principle of it being a gendered crime is really in dispute.

Q89 **Chair:** Dr Sharp-Jeffs, do you want to add anything about that economic inequality of women that underpins some of this?

Dr Sharp-Jeffs: I would go back to the question that we started off with about the definition and different forms of violence and whether they are against women or men, because we are talking about the different dynamics that underpin it. When we are looking at individuals, we do have to recognise that they do not necessarily start from the same place so we cannot look at them equally before the law if they start in a different position. That is not only in relation to gender, where domestic abuse is predominantly experienced by women, who, as Andrea said, are more likely to experience repeat victimisation—two women a week are killed as a consequence of domestic abuse in this country—so the important thing is to make sure that we have a gendered response to it.



We understand what those dynamics are, we understand what the needs of the victims are and we work from that basis.

I would also add that this is more complicated than gender. We need to look at intersectionality: another reason why people do not start in the same place is because they might have a different sexuality, they might have a disability, they might have a different socioeconomic status, which would take us to the issue of economic abuse specifically. Again, while it is experienced by people of all socioeconomic standing, there is evidence to say that situationally you are more likely to experience abuse if you cannot access economic resources at short notice. We know that a lot of victims of domestic abuse want to leave, but they can't because they do not feel they have the economic resources to be able to do so and to live independently.

Again we go back to gender inequality, things like the gender pay gap and caring responsibilities. We know that women struggle more because they experience gender inequality. It is important to recognise all of these factors.

Chair: Laura Richards, Rachel Griffin, do you want to add anything, very briefly, on that? We do have quite a lot of issues to cover.

Laura Richards: Yes. On Christopher Chope's point, the data does bear out that it is very much gendered and about sex. Particularly when we think about lethality and the murders—I have been tracking the murders since 2001, as has Karen Ingala Smith, Counting Dead Women—you will find that it is mainly women being murdered by men at a rate that has remained static for the last 18 years. I believe that it is static because most of these cases are stalking-related murders about fixation. Coercive control happens pre-separation, separation escalates it and then we call it stalking.

There are also links with suicide—we think about Justene Reece's case, I have been tracking it, where she had been coercively controlled and stalked, people were not helping her and then she took her own life—and that is a rate of 10 women a week. I believe that when we think about coercive control, it is rooted in the patriarchy. The data bears it out and the cases that I work on with my colleagues also show that.

Rachel Griffin: I would agree with everything my colleagues have said.

Q90 **Douglas Ross:** Do you think the police service currently provides a satisfactory response for victims of stalking and domestic abuse? If not, do you think it will be enhanced or improved with what Government are hoping to get out of this Bill?

Rachel Griffin: From a stalking perspective, sadly not. Around half the people who call the National Stalking Helpline have already contacted the police and most of those report to us that they are unhappy with the responses they have received. It is not uncommon to hear a victim say that they have not had any form of risk assessment. That is particularly



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the case where they are not being stalked by an ex-partner. What we end up doing a lot of the time through the helpline is advocating for those victims to get better responses from the criminal justice system.

The proposals in the Domestic Abuse Bill, particularly things like the creation of a Domestic Abuse Commissioner and the commitment to an improvement in culture around the response to domestic abuse, may well help those victims of stalking who are being stalked by an ex-partner. I am not sure—I am doubtful at the moment—that the proposals will necessarily do much for those victims who are being stalked by someone other than an ex-partner or family member.

Q91 Douglas Ross: What would improve that?

Rachel Griffin: The ground-floor response for us on this is that we need to see wholesale training for police officers and those who are taking the first reports of stalking so that they understand stalking when it is reported to them and therefore can record it properly. We did some research earlier this year, which we launched in April, and it revealed that there is still a very low recording rate of stalking by the police forces when it is reported to them. We suspect that a lot of the time stalking is being lumped in with harassment and therefore the appropriate risk response is not being offered. We think that that training needs to go all the way through the criminal justice system, but starting with the police would be a really good place.

Laura Richards: Yes, the HMIC and CPS inspection published last year showed a 100% failure rate on the six forces they inspected. That is Paladin's experience in the last six years, bearing in mind that the stalking law came in—Yvette Cooper will remember well—in 2012 following our parliamentary inquiry. However, very little has changed on the ground. I was very disappointed to see that 80% of stalkers are not facing charge. This is just unacceptable.

Q92 Douglas Ross: Is it solely down to the police? I imagine police officers want to do their best and if they see a victim they want to try to get the best for that victim, so why are we still having these problems years after the legislation was implemented? Is it a concern that despite the good onus that is being looked at in this Bill, it will not improve results?

Laura Richards: The first is a training issue and we have been trying to roll training out. We are not a statutorily-funded organisation. We have been paying to train the police, which is crazy.

Q93 Douglas Ross: How are you training?

Laura Richards: We have developed a best standards package, but it is piecemeal as to who wants to take it up. There are also training SPOCs—single points of contact—all around the country, but you need multiple SPOCs in one area. Then when you think about Alice Ruggles and other cases, we did an FOIA in 2015-17 that showed that 49 women who were being stalked and who had contacted the police were then murdered.



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That is unacceptable. We are not talking about just one case here, one case there. It is across the country. I was an adviser to the Office for Police Complaints, the former IPCC. What happens with those reports? Why aren't the findings being rolled out? Why isn't good practice being established and police leaders being held to account?

I would suggest it is just not a priority and people do not realise how dangerous stalking is. I call these cases murder in slow motion. Alice Ruggles called the police multiple times and then the officer says that he wants to give him a PIN, a Police Information Notice. I know that routinely what is happening now on the ground, people have tried to get rid of PINs, so instead police officers are substituting and saying, "We will warn the stalker" which is what happened in Molly McLaren's case before she was murdered. The police pick up the phone, warn the stalker, and that can escalate the situation. It is an incredibly dangerous practice when police just use their own initiative.

My concern about the stalking protection orders that Dr Sarah Wollaston is keen to bring in is that again we just get into this piecemeal approach where an order is just given to a stalker and it is breached, just like restraining orders and other orders are, and then there is no follow-up. A piece of paper will not protect a victim from a fixated and obsessed individual who has made a threat to kill. In those 49 cases a threat to kill was made, the victim was terrified and the perpetrator carried out that threat to kill. The victim was left completely unprotected.

Dr Sharp-Jeffs: I echo the point about training. We have been talking a lot about the dynamics of domestic abuse more broadly. Things have improved with the introduction of the coercive or controlling behaviour legislation in the sense that people are recognising that domestic abuse is not about single incidents, it is a pattern of behaviour, and that different forms of power and control are used to exert control over victims. We are concerned from an economic abuse perspective because this is just not being picked up or recognised or named as being what it is. From recent research we know that the police quite often rank financial issues near the bottom in terms of importance when doing risk assessment, when women who experience economic abuse within the context of coercive control are at increased risk of homicide. It is really about understanding the issue very thoroughly.

I sit on the Home Office Quality Assurance Panel for Domestic Homicide reviews. It is a bit like the IPCC reports. To any professional who understands coercive control, all the warning signs are there. You can see exactly where it is going. We see failure after failure, inadvertently, because again the police do not get a huge amount of training in this, it does not seem to be a priority. The volume of this crime compared with the amount of training that they receive and the way in which they perceive it do not seem to stack up.



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Rachel Griffin: May I add that the last time the College of Policing reviewed its stalking training offer was before the enactment of the new stalking law in 2012?

Q94 **Douglas Ross:** My biggest concern, Kirstene Hair mentioned the legislation that was passed in Scotland and it was unanimous among all the parties. From what I understand, all 17,234 officers in Scotland had to do an online training course and it was a tick-box exercise so that Police Scotland could say, "All our officers are trained in domestic abuse because of this new legislation". That is not going to work though, is it? What type of training does it need to be, bearing in mind that it is a hugely serious issue, but there will be significant cost involved in training all police officers in England and Wales?

Laura Richards: Specialist-led training. That is what HMIC found in 2004 for domestic violence and it is what HMIC reported on in 2017. We have the packages and we have been delivering—in pockets—the training, but we cannot force chiefs to take that training up. It is already there. We had our first national conference last year, paid for by Paladin, invited the police and CPS in and gave them free tickets. Some still did not attend.

Q95 **Douglas Ross:** You are also saying it is not just police, it is judges. You said earlier training for judges—

Laura Richards: And CPS, absolutely. The judiciary and probation need the training too. We have the packages. Safer Lives has been rolling out training on coercive control with the College of Policing. They are doing that in Scotland too, but where is the training on stalking?

Q96 **Douglas Ross:** Can I finally ask, because I was on the Justice Committee as we started this Bill in the Scottish Parliament before I came down here, one of the biggest issues was training not just for police and the judiciary, but for women themselves so they understand. Many of our witnesses ultimately became aware that they were victims of coercive behaviour, but at the time did not feel it was anything out of the norm because that is just what they had lived with. Again, what do we need to do to ensure that the legislation that is passed here is recognised by people throughout the country, so that their suffering is covered in this Bill? There is no point us passing legislation here and then it not having the desired effect for the people we are trying to protect.

Andrea Simon: It is important to have opportunities for early intervention. It goes to the cross-governmental approach to this as an issue. We need everyone to be on board and we need to look at the opportunities that there are in health, for example, in primary care, to work with GPs. IRIS is a very good example of how you can raise referrals by having GPs trained and aware of domestic abuse, and looking into the hospital settings, for instance, where a number of victims will present. Having IDVAs, independent domestic violence advisors, present will again be an opportunity to intervene. You can identify abuse, disrupt perpetrators of abuse and then signpost those women to help and



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support. It is being in the right places to help identify where abuse is happening and signpost the women to support.

Q97 Kate Green: What is your assessment of the effectiveness of perpetrator programmes and what would you say are the characteristics of effective programmes if you think they are effective?

Rachel Griffin: This might be one for me. The Suzy Lamplugh Trust has recently begun a piece of work with colleagues in criminal justice and health in Cheshire, Hampshire and London to look specifically at how we can improve the management of perpetrators of stalking. This is the first time this has been done—as far as we are aware—worldwide and we went live yesterday. It is a little bit early for me to say what will necessarily prove to work in those situations.

What I would say though is that what we have done right from the outset is ensure that, alongside the professionals who are working to manage the behaviour of the perpetrator, we have a victim's advocate at the heart of that service so that victims' safety and their confidence is very much kept in mind when any decisions are being made. What that allows is for the victim to be kept informed and for their safety to be well planned for. At the very top level, I would say it is absolutely critical that there is no separation of dialogue and thinking between what is going on with the perpetrator and the support that is happening for the victim.

Andrea Simon: I would just add that it is really important to have the highest standards of safety and efficacy when you are talking about perpetrator programmes. While they are being rolled out—there are a number of community programmes being rolled out—we would advocate that the best possible way to ensure safety is to have the Respect accreditation. We recommend that would be a requirement for perpetrator programmes. It is also important that they place the victims at the centre of the programme and that there is assessment of the robustness of how that programme is working going forward. They work best when they have the input of women's organisations, who are experts in this area, but they also need to be resourced.

We also need to check, if you are proposing orders or DVPOs mandating that perpetrators attend programmes, that there is some monitoring and it is not left to the victim to ensure compliance, and that there is a penalty or something that happens when those orders are breached, as they often are.

Q98 Kate Green: Do you think the proposed legislation needs to make any specific provision in relation to guaranteeing those quality outcomes that you are talking about?

Andrea Simon: Yes. A good start would be to make it clear that Respect accreditation and standards for safety are crucial to this. I think the domestic Police Commissioner can have a role in ensuring compliance with standards and safety in this area.



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Laura Richards: In addition to that, stalkers should not be going on those domestic violence programmes. We have seen that there have been lots of problems when they do go on programmes. I would echo Andrea's point about Respect accreditation and ensuring the right people are going on them. That is serial offenders. Many of these are serial offenders who are not tracked by police. It is estimated that there are about 25,000 serial offenders who just operate with impunity.

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme is dependent on a victim going forward and asking about an offender's history. We would like the focus changed so that offenders are tracked as a matter of course by police officers. That has not been happening. It has been discussed. Since 2001 there has been talk at ACPO or NPCC level, but it still has not happened. The talk is cheap, quite frankly, because while everyone is sitting in rooms talking about it, offenders are continuing their offending rates. The lethality figures have not changed and have not reduced. I know Thangam Debbonaire has an All-Party Parliamentary Group on the perpetrators programme specifically.

Dr Sharp-Jeffs: Can I just add a point in relation to attitudes? I think it addresses a couple of the questions in relation to training, but also perpetrator programmes as well. These are deep-seated attitudes, often this is entitlement based on gender, and so there are no quick fixes. It is not just about training someone in coercive control, it is about challenging the attitudes that they bring to the job. That is not just the police, that is people across all professions and the general public more broadly. We want to raise awareness about this issue, which is really important.

It also feeds into the perpetrator work because you must have at least some level of the perpetrator recognising that they are responsible, that they want to change and that they will dedicate time to unpicking those attitudes and gender stereotypes that they hold very dear, because they feel they are entitled to exert this power and control. That takes time. We have to be cautious about perpetrator programmes that are very short term. We need to think about long-term attitudinal change, as I said, and also change in behaviour as well.

Again, working with the Child and Women Abuse Studies Unit, I previously was involved in the Project Miracle study, where you can see some cessation in terms of physical violence, but those sorts of attitudes and those other ways of controlling their partners take a lot longer to shift. Again, the smallest amount of change was seen in relation to the economic side of things because entitlement in relation to money and economic resources is very deep-rooted. We have to recognise that when we come to these solutions.

Q99 **Chair:** Can I ask you your views on the proposals that resurface from time to time about whether there should be restorative justice in domestic abuse cases?



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Rachel Griffin: We can't see how that can be a good idea. I would extend that to stalking cases as well, regardless of the relationship or prior relationship between the stalker and the victim. These are crimes of manipulation, power and control. Anything that gives the perpetrator the opportunity to perpetuate that pattern of behaviour should be avoided.

Laura Richards: It is very dangerous. We have this debate every three years. I would rather time and energy was placed on doing something practical to help people, rather than keep debating the same things that we know do not work.

Q100 **Stuart C. McDonald:** Dr Sharp-Jeffs, you have spoken in the past about how the physical and economic safety of victims of domestic abuse are very closely interlinked. What further steps do you think the Government should be taking to help protect the economic safety of survivors of abuse? You spoke earlier about access to support services and the need to secure economic independence. How can Government help make that happen?

Dr Sharp-Jeffs: There is a good start with recognition of economic abuse within the proposed statutory definition. We need to understand, as I said, that where there is economic abuse alongside coercive control there is increased risk of homicide and victims stay for longer because they cannot get away. It spreads more harm as a result. We need to understand that economic safety is as important as—and very closely linked to—physical safety in terms of responses.

One of the issues around economic abuse and the fact it has been invisible for so long is that we focus on what are seen as high-risk cases, where lethality is looked at just in terms of risk of physical violence. It is recognising that economic stability will underpin someone's ability, as I said, to leave and to make choices. We cannot separate one from the other.

What we would like to see is services, when they are commissioned, recognising the importance of economic stability going forward. As I said, it is a situation of vulnerability. There are specific risks when you are still within a relationship, but again it is a crime that can be perpetrated post-separation. Lots of perpetrators, because they do not have physical proximity when they do not know where the victim lives, can use economic abuse to real effect.

We work with 60 women and a large majority of them have thought about taking their lives before because they found the economic abuse absolutely relentless. They have left and they are dealing with the negative economic impact of the economic abuse while they were in the relationship. They are then dealing with new forms of economic abuse that are being perpetrated after the relationship. They are dealing with both of those things and they are trying to create a stable and independent life for themselves and their children. Again, we know one of the primary reasons for returning to a perpetrator is not having access to



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those economic resources that they need: the housing and the independent income.

I do not know if you are going to be talking about Universal Credit, but as Andrea was saying, the importance of the cross-governmental approach to this issue is that we need to be looking at every point of the victim's journey. Again, this is what the Prime Minister really wanted to address with this Bill. She said that we want to be able to cover every aspect of the victim's journey. If you are saying on one hand that economic abuse is important and that we need to address it, then we have Government policies that are undermining that principle, we need to address that. There needs to be a consistent response across Government.

Q101 Stuart C. McDonald: On the issue of Universal Credit, you have been critical in the past of the single household payment into a joint account, saying that that makes it easier for abusers to control income. The DWP obviously says there is an option to apply for separate payments, but I suspect that does not go far enough. What other reforms to Universal Credit would you like to see?

Dr Sharp-Jeffs: The issue, as you have said, is with the single payment to the household. As I also said earlier, this is about economic inequality as well. If we are going to ensure that we have economic equality, we need to recognise how households function and not just one person in today's household duties, the person who is the recipient of the income. We are, I would hope, well beyond the breadwinner model. We have people who both contribute economically to a lot of households now, so we need to recognise that in practice. We need to be looking at separate payments of Universal Credit to each party.

Q102 Stuart C. McDonald: As the default position?

Dr Sharp-Jeffs: As a default position. Also we can think about how we want to bring children up then to think about, "What does shared financial management look like within a household?" These issues are quite often hidden in plain sight because we are still operating within certain structures. People do not question perhaps why a woman does not have a bank account. They do not question perhaps why she is not working outside of the home. The perpetrators are either drawing on those existing inequalities or are seeking to create them within the relationship and unfortunately they go unnoticed. Separate income is vitally important.

Q103 Stuart C. McDonald: Andrea Simon, End Violence Against Women Coalition, has suggested that there should be a broader review of welfare policies, looking at some of unintended consequences that some might have on women in abusive relationships. What would you say are the main areas of concern with regards social security policy?

Andrea Simon: I would say that the welfare policies that Nicola has mentioned with Universal Credit are a key area of concern. We should be looking at policies that are being rolled out and not then as an



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afterthought thinking, “How is this enabling abuse of victims of domestic violence?”

Another key area would be the Immigration Bill. We feel there are a number of measures that are essentially enabling abusers and that there are a number of things that this Bill could do to reduce some of the barriers for those women. We think it should be recognised in the statutory definition that immigration can be weaponised by abusers. The control of the application process can lead to women becoming undocumented because of the domestic abuse that they are experiencing. The other—

Q104 **Stuart C. McDonald:** Is that because if the victim chooses to leave that relationship, their immigration status is imperilled?

Andrea Simon: Yes. Their immigration status is tied to their spouse. Often women are facing a very desperate choice of becoming destitute or remaining in an abusive relationship and this is not right. We cannot address domestic abuse for all women without taking into account these particular circumstances.

There are other elements of the Immigration Bill—not being able to access housing, the checks that you would have through private landlords, not being able to open bank accounts—which are really closing all the safe spaces and routes for women and stopping them from leaving abusive situations. We need to look across the board at how our policies are preventing women from leaving these situations, whether that means curtailing their access to finances because of welfare reforms that we are rolling out or our Immigration Bills and the hostile environment policies and how that could be weaponised by perpetrators of domestic abuse. We need to be looking across the board.

Stuart C. McDonald: Thank you very much.

Q105 **John Woodcock:** I wonder if you have a view on whether there is a greater opportunity or responsibility for outside agencies to play a role in signposting people, picking up signs of economic abuse and offering support, be that state institutions or private sector. Particularly in my mind there is the example of a constituent who told me about her secret bank account while she was in an abusive relationship. There is a suggestion that there could have been an opportunity for her bank to pick up on this sign—why was she asking for her statements to be sent to another address?—and signposting her towards an organisation like yourselves.

Dr Sharp-Jeffs: Absolutely. We are working with UK Finance at the moment, which is seeking to develop a code of conduct around how building societies should be responding to financial abuse. Part of that would be showing that staff are trained in relation to this issue, so that they can recognise the dynamics of domestic abuse more broadly and economic abuse specifically and ask those kinds of questions that you mentioned in relation to your constituent. That is very valuable work. We



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are very supportive of it. We sat on the advisory group that helped shape it.

My concern is that it does not go far enough, in the sense that banks will still be able to make case-by-case decisions in relation to particular situations that victims find themselves in. That can be quite problematic. It links across to all sorts of issues. I get a lot of victims approach me in relation to mortgages, for example. When we think about the pressure on social housing, a lot more could be done about helping victims stay in privately-owned properties, which is something that is again almost invisible from the debate. We are working with a national working group on housing around a whole housing approach that would recognise privately owned and privately-rented properties as well as the importance of course of refuges and social housing here. Again, a lot of the victims who come to me—and who we also facilitate to meet other victims and gain some kind of peer support—will compare the response that they received from different banks. One might have a fantastic response and one might have an absolutely awful response.

Q106 John Woodcock: In your view, what is the best way of tackling that difference in standards and difference in approach? What is the alternative?

Dr Sharp-Jeffs: A code of conduct is a useful start, but as I said, I think it does need to go further so that there are consistent responses, so that there is one way in which banks and building societies will respond to specific issues.

Q107 John Woodcock: Do you need to set up an arbiter of what the standard ought to be? Can that be given to an existing authority? I do not know how far you have been able to think through what the alternative would look like.

Dr Sharp-Jeffs: I have been lucky enough to travel internationally in relation to this issue and there is some great practice going on in Australia. That was all initiated by the Victorian inquiry—or the inquiry in Victoria—which made specific recommendations in relation to economic abuse specifically. This is not just about banks. It also plays into things like insurance. The DVLA, for example, would need to get involved in this; utilities. When you are talking about how broad do we go in terms of outside agencies, we are talking about pretty much everyone in relation to economic abuse. We are recommending an inquiry—again, that could be something that a Domestic Violence or a Violence Against Women and Girls Commissioner could lead—to unpick and understand this. We have this international evidence, but we need to understand what is going on at the national level.

At this point, I would also say—this was a recommendation of this Committee back in 2008 and it has been made successively—that domestic violence victims should be able to access some kind of fund. This links back again into the issue around welfare policies, where we



know that a lot of the crisis loans and social loans that victims used to be able to access to rebuild their lives are no longer available to them because the money that was put aside for that is no longer ring-fenced. Some kind of injection—we are almost calling it a compensation package—that recognises what victims have to give up in order to access safety would also be something that we would want to explore as part of this inquiry.

Q108 John Woodcock: I was struck by what you said about how economic abuse can be the tale of a woman leaving an abusive relationship and can continue. Are there other ways? How do you stop? How do you put an emergency brake on that while any sort of formal separation process or legal proceedings are ongoing, which as we know can take months or years?

Dr Sharp-Jeffs: Again, it goes back to understanding the dynamics of abuse and the manipulation that perpetrators use. You have just identified an important point about perhaps the freezing of assets between separation and divorce proceedings, for example. Again, we speak to a lot of victims who find that the perpetrator has disposed of items, given up jobs or put things into trust funds.

This is particularly difficult because part of economic abuse is keeping financial affairs secret so that the victim is not aware. There needs to be time for the victim to become aware of what is going on. Again, a lot of the victims that we work with might not even know if the house is in their name. They might later discover that they are in a lot of debt because the perpetrator has fraudulently been taking debt out in their name. There needs to be some kind of breathing space and some kind of freezing of assets or something so that we can explore what these situations are and then be able to resolve them appropriately.

At the minute I know a lot of women are just not going to court because it is such an expense for them to do so. Then when they get to the point when they have to pay the bill and they see what their financial settlement is, they think, "There is really no point in doing this in the first place". They are not accessing what they are entitled to.

Q109 Stephen Doughty: The final thing I was going to say is that, as you know, Chair, I have been lobbying you to go to Australia on another issue of home affairs policy, so this adds to the urgency with which we need to make the trip.

Certainly a number of the cases that I have dealt with with Caernarvon constituents are stalking, controlling behaviour and threatening behaviour have had an online element. What proportion would you say overall of cases involve an online element or a phone-based element, texting and so on? Is it all of them, or is this a particular proportion or age group or background?

Rachel Griffin: About 75% of calls to the helpline are from people who have been stalked by some kind of technologically-assisted means,



anything from texting to abuse on Twitter, and at the far end the use of spyware or things like planting tracking devices on cars. However, in terms of how many of those victims are being stalked purely by digitally-assisted means, it is a relatively small group. It is about 6%. It is really important that we acknowledge and train up the criminal justice agencies to respond to and recognise stalking behaviour when it is perpetrated, for example, online.

We must be really careful not to think we can siphon that off into another category of crime type because a stalking perpetrator will get at his victim or her victim by whatever means are open to them. That might include things online, it might include things offline, and in order to develop or to gather evidence of a pattern of behaviour in order to secure a conviction and indeed to respond effectively to the risk that that perpetrator poses, it is important that we look at the whole pattern in the round, including those offline and online behaviours.

Q110 Stephen Doughty: Would you say that the online behaviours therefore often have a direct read across to real-world physical behaviours as well?

Rachel Griffin: Yes. Someone who stalks offline is likely to stalk online and vice versa.

Stuart C. McDonald: Similar sorts of views from yourselves?

Laura Richards: I was going to say it was almost all of our cases. The challenge of stalking—and I was a victim of cyberstalking—is that you do not know what someone else is doing. You are not tracking that offender 24/7. When I started asking questions I found out he was into so many different things—every workplace I had worked at, calling up the office; everything digitally possible, trying to get my e-mail sent to him, trying to geolocate me—but I would not have known that, had someone not called me up. I would say almost all, because of the way we live our lives online and offline.

We did our first survey with Snapchat. We surveyed 13 to 24 year-olds and over one-third of them had been stalked. That is the first time that data has ever been looked at. Young people are a group we just do not really ask questions of, and of course they live their lives online. You ask them to come off Snapchat, Twitter or whatever they might be using and you are asking them to chop off their left arm. We need to not siphon this off into cybercrime or digitally-assisted crime and create a separate way of talking about it, which some services have been doing, and ensure that we understand that we all live our lives online and offline and the risks exist in both spaces.

Q111 Stephen Doughty: Strictly talking about Snapchat, that very much tallies with stuff I have heard directly as well. Do you think that the social media companies themselves—and conversely the police—are doing enough to tackle this and treating the cyber world in the same way they would the physical world, like a threatening phone call?



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Laura Richards: The easy answer is no. I have spent a lot of time in LA and Silicon Valley trying to get people to engage. They tend to come or ask advice when something goes wrong. We would far rather that they were asking when developing apps and things at the very start. Then we can think about people's safety right from the beginning. You will recall Caroline Criado-Perez and Stella Creasy were stalked online as well as receiving a lot of abuse online, and I think, Yvette Cooper, you were responsible for calling Twitter into this place to ask questions of them. Trying to ask someone to report 50 separate things when you are getting 50 threats an hour, so how the report mechanism works. Online dating: most people online date these days. These are fishing pools for predatory offenders and we are still not making those links.

Q112 **Stephen Doughty:** Do you think therefore on the legislative side, in terms of what Government are going to put forward, that they need to look at more statutory regulation in this area rather than the voluntary approach that has existed to date?

Laura Richards: I do. Anybody can set up an online dating site. It is incredibly dangerous, not just in terms of giving data that can be hacked, but also the predatory offenders who fish in those pools, and you have no redress. Whether they decide to take somebody off a site or not is entirely up to them. We have talked about codes of conduct, but in my opinion codes of conduct do not work. It should be "you must". There should be obligations when we are talking about victims' safety.

Q113 **Stephen Doughty:** I have had my own experiences in the last few days, but I always make the point when I am interviewed about this that if you are a woman, you face 20, 30, 40 or 100 times more than a male public figure or anybody else, and the experience of Stella was pretty horrendous.

In that vein, I wanted to ask lastly about the Lucy McHugh case, which was very present in the news today, obviously. It is an ongoing case and I am not asking you to comment on the investigation, but there is a particular issue there about Facebook in this case not providing information to the Metropolitan Police. Cressida Dick has come out in the last few hours criticising that. Are you concerned that they have not, for example, handed over the information to enable the investigation to take place into the murder of a 13 year-old girl?

Laura Richards: Yes, in all cases. Molly McLaren and Alice Ruggles had their Facebook accounts hacked. We must try to ensure that that information is, first, taken seriously, and secondly, that there is a response. There must be a duty upon them to respond, particularly when we are talking about victims' safety.

Q114 **Stephen Doughty:** You said you have spent a lot of time in LA and Silicon Valley and elsewhere. Do you think the fault lies here with a lot of these companies headquartered in the US and that there is not enough international co-operation in terms of the sharing of information, whether



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it is to do with preventative or post-action investigations?

Laura Richards: That is part of it, but nine times out of 10 it is the police not even asking. They are not trained to understand Snapchat and Facebook and Twitter and the next app and the next app, and half the time they just say, "Just do not go online", which is what they said to Stella and to Caroline. My brief from them was, "Make sure they do not go online, Laura".

Stephen Doughty: Extraordinary.

Laura Richards: Yes. They are both prolific, online and offline. We are not talking years ago and that is still being said to victims now.

Q115 **Tim Loughton:** Most of the discussion has focused on reacting to the incidents of domestic violence and stalking and how we can clamp down on the perpetrators. Nobody has once mentioned children. Alarming, about one-third of domestic violence starts during pregnancy. In safeguarding children cases, certainly in excess of three-quarters have a link to domestic violence. What more can the Government be doing through legislation or through best practice to try to detect the warning signs earlier, particularly through children coming into contact with other agencies, to identify a woman who may not be well aware that she is really a victim or is too frightened to come forward and do something about it, so that the relevant agencies can come in at an early stage before it gets to a really serious crime?

Laura Richards: There is a very good point. About 52% of victims do not realise they are a victim of coercive control, picking up Douglas Ross's point, and I think age-appropriate healthy relationship education in schools is vital. There was a great BBC article about how to teach boys not to stalk because of this mismatch between Hollywood movies of, "Tenacity pays off, keep going, failure is not an option, wear someone down and you will eventually get the girl or the prize". There is teaching young boys and young girls about healthy relationships, but I also think it is about accessible information as well—billboards, in the media, articles and films that really do talk to and educate people—as well as ensuring that there is readily available, accessible information on coercive control and what the behaviours are.

I still have to explain coercive control wherever I go. It is the same in America. Oftentimes people have never even heard of that phrase. I try to explain that what might look like romance and what might look like someone being wonderful could be trying to ensure co-dependence and close somebody down in terms of their space for action. Most of the times victims will go to friends and family first of all, before they even go to the police. It is educating the masses, I believe, to understand what those softer warning signs might look like, to enable people and inform people to then seek help.

Q116 **Tim Loughton:** You mentioned training. We need the training. That is one of the problems. This may only apply training to the police and



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judiciary, ie those who are then dealing with it reactively. Do you not think that one of the keys to the better safeguarding we now have for children has been multi-agency training? Particularly around child sexual exploitation, which is obviously such a big thing now, big on the radar, you will have a room of people being trained, where you have a doctor sitting next to a social worker sitting next to a teacher sitting next to a police officer or whatever, with those agencies working together so that when there is an early sign or a suspicion somebody gets, they can then go to somebody else who has learnt from the same hymn sheet and say, "Hold on, that does not quite tie up, does it?" All of that is about prevention and early intervention rather than reacting when a crime has already been committed. Do you not think that is part of it? Nobody mentioned it.

Andrea Simon: Yes, training should be in schools, training for staff to not only deliver good quality RSE lessons, but also to identify signs of abuse. It is important. It is also very crucial that along with that we have good links with the violence against women and girls sector, so that local women's organisations are also involved and linked in with their schools. With this education comes the likelihood that there will be more disclosures of abuse. Young people are identifying potentially abusive situations in their own homes, for instance. If we are talking about these issues then we need to make sure that there is support available and there are places to refer young people to for support, and also that signposting can happen and we can disrupt potential abuse that is going on in the home. It is important to train the professionals who are delivering that to identify and give good relationship education, but it is also important to have those links in with our specialist domestic violence sector organisations.

Q117 Tim Loughton: Do you think we have done enough to make children recognise that domestic violence is a safeguarding issue, that it is a form of child abuse?

Andrea Simon: It is not necessarily for the children to have to recognise and safeguard themselves, it is for us to do a much better job at recognising the signs and being able to pick up on that, putting relevant interventions into place. Unfortunately we have seen that services like CAMHS for children in many places have disappeared. There are long waiting lists and there is lack of access to counselling services for young people. We have to look holistically at what our offer is and see that we are coming up short. We are not doing enough.

Q118 Tim Loughton: Sure, but there is an issue here about children who are witnessing, certainly on a routine basis, domestic violence. Obviously it has an effect on them and in too many cases there are mums who are suffering the generational effects of being brought up in a household where domestic violence was the norm as well. Therefore there is a mindset that says, "My mum got slapped around a bit by my father. That's how it is, isn't it?" which is a real problem we are still up against. There is that non-recognition that you are being abused, it is violence



against you, it is wrong and it must not happen. It is not routine. To an extent the perpetrators of it are thinking, "Oh, it's the done thing to be violent towards your partner. It shows you're more manly" or whatever. Those attitudes absolutely need to be attacked in school right from the onset, which is why we need to have programmes that are focused both on boys and on girls calling it out and exhorting them to call it out when they see it as well.

But if it is seen as a safeguarding issue, there is more of a likelihood for a mum who is more concerned about her kids than anything else seeing the kids being abused and plucking up the courage to come forward and say, "No, I am not going to see my children abused like that. I am going to come forward" which is why it has to be called out as an abuse towards children issue.

Andrea Simon: There is always a danger though of holding women accountable for the behaviour of perpetrators of abuse. We have seen the issues when women have to sign agreements in order to keep themselves and their children safe, when they are not in a position to stop that abuse from happening. They suffer the consequences and those can be very serious consequences. Mothers can lose access to children. We have to be very careful about looking at how those agreements and things like that can be used because we do not want to hold women accountable for the perpetrators' abuse of them. We do want to offer them safe routes and safe spaces to escape abuse if that is what they choose to do.

Dr Sharp-Jeffs: You also need to make the exit routes realistic. If you are experiencing domestic abuse that is impacting your child, you are a woman with insecure immigration status, you cannot access the refugee system and you have no independent income, what are your choices there? A better way potentially of protecting your child and making sure they are fed, clothed and have a bed to sleep in might be to stay with the abuse and manage the abuse as best you can. Again, I know that for a lot of the women that we speak to it is actually what they are doing. They are not failing to protect, they are protecting the children as best they can in the situation that they are in.

Q119 **Tim Loughton:** There is an issue about immigration status as well. Do you think that has been taken seriously enough in what has been proposed?

Dr Sharp-Jeffs: If you look at the Istanbul Convention, it clearly states that to differentiate between responses based on immigration status is discriminatory, and I would argue that the no recourse to public funds policy in the UK is a form of state economic abuse, because you are taking away the exit routes for women and for children.

Also, just to pick up on your point in relation to safeguarding, there is an issue here in relation to poverty. Again we look at poverty in relation to household income measures with no recognition that resources are not fairly distributed within households. A lot of the women and children we



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support have been living in extreme poverty, not allowed to open the fridge and take food out without permission, not allowed to eat certain foods that aren't value branded. I know a woman and child who are only allowed to eat tuna, for example, who, as I said, are living in abject poverty. There is a role for schools and other institutions to recognise that.

Again it goes back to understanding the dynamics of abuse. If you are being constrained in such a way that you have no choices, when you are penalised for doing what people are telling you to do, which is leave, you are leaving without addressing these issues. You are leaving these victims in very precarious situations and I do not think it is fair to ask them to do that.

Q120 Chair: I thank our panel for your evidence. Unfortunately, with the timing of today's session, we have an urgent question that many of us have to be in the Chamber for in just a few minutes.

I would like to ask you if you are able to perhaps provide us with any further written evidence that follows up any of the questions that we have raised, in particular—the clerks can follow up with this—any concerns on the issue about addressing the Government's response to some of the points that you have made, including the fact that the Government have so far resisted splitting the payments for Universal Credit, saying that there is the option to do so. It would be helpful to hear from you what your views are on what the obstacles are in practice in domestic abuse cases for people being able to ask for payments to be split.

Secondly, on the stalking register, the Government have said that a combination of clear law and statutory protection orders might somehow play the role of a stalking register. What is your response to those points?

Thirdly, on the online issue, do you believe that Snap Map is irresponsible, given the points that you made about Snapchat users?

Fourthly, going back to Douglas Ross's points about the relationships between the Family Courts and the criminal courts, we have picked up some concern that when cases do end up in the Family Courts, when there are other contact arrangements or restraining order arrangements that have been through the Family Courts, in those circumstances the police and council safeguarding services can often be reluctant to intervene when there are further developments because they say it has been dealt with by the Family Courts instead. Is that something that you have picked up or not? Do you think that is being addressed in other areas?

Any further issues that you think you would like to follow up on, given the questions that have been asked, would be very much appreciated. Can I thank you again for your evidence today?