



30 March 2022

Rt Hon Dame Diana Johnson MP
Chair, Home Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
United Kingdom
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Dear Diana,

TACKLING DOMESTIC ABUSE PLAN

I am writing to you as the Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee to notify you that the new cross-Government Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan has been published today.

Domestic abuse needs to stop. And it is everyone's responsibility to make this happen. These crimes have a devastating impact on the lives of millions and in cases of domestic homicide, the consequences are fatal. Anyone can be a victim or survivor, but it is women who are disproportionately affected. Domestic abuse is the most common form of violence against women and girls and our approach to tackling it reflects this.

This Government has already acted. We made Relationships and Sex Education mandatory in all secondary schools so young people better understand healthy relationships. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we provided over £28 million to support domestic abuse organisations to deliver vital services for victims and survivors, as well as launching the #YouAreNotAlone campaign and innovative Ask for ANI codeword scheme to raise awareness of the support available and increase opportunities to disclose abuse. Last year, the landmark Domestic Abuse Act 2021 achieved Royal Assent and in January this year we commenced Section 3, which recognised that children too are victims of domestic abuse.

The Plan builds on the Government's previous work to date and seeks to transform the whole of society's response to domestic abuse in order to prevent offending, support victims and pursue perpetrators, as well as to strengthen the systems in place needed to deliver these goals. It also makes sure that public and charity sector organisations, including the police, education and local authorities work together more effectively to drive down the number of domestic abuse cases. This Plan includes over £230 million of investment for tackling domestic abuse.

This Plan is fully aligned with the wider Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy that we published last July. Both that Strategy and this Plan are informed by the

unprecedented 180,000 responses we received to the Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Call for Evidence. They echo the voices of victims and survivors. Through analysis of the Call for Evidence, a wide-ranging literature review and assessing the available data, four major problems were identified that the plan seeks to address through the four pillars below, which set out the key areas of action.

Prioritising prevention

By preventing cases from happening in the first place, we can drive down the prevalence of domestic abuse and domestic homicide. We know several factors are associated with an increased risk of domestic abuse, so the Plan takes steps to address them. It also acts to improve our understanding of what works best, and to determine which risk factors cause an increased incidence of domestic abuse, and those just correlated with it. Below are some of the key commitments the Plan makes to prevent domestic abuse:

- A package of support for teachers to help them deliver the recently refreshed **Relationships, Sex and Health Education curriculum**. Ensuring children know about healthy relationships at a young age, as well as challenging poor attitudes towards gender and behaviours, will help to prevent cases of domestic abuse later in life.
- To make it easier to access information on a partner's or ex-partner's previous abusive or violent offending, before abusive behaviour begins, the Home Office will **review and revise the guidance on the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, known as Clare's Law**. As part of this, we will consider the timescales for disclosure and promoting tools which allow applications to be made online.
- The Home Office will work with the National Police Chiefs' Council to **identify and audit police forces which record the highest rates of domestic homicide and serious domestic abuse crimes**.

Supporting victims

The Plan is clear, **we must do more to take the onus off victims and survivors**. We must mitigate the impact of domestic abuse to improve outcomes for victims and survivors. We know what each individual needs differs. There is no magic bullet. That is why the Plan is not prescriptive in the type of support it offers to victims and survivors, instead setting out a wide range of support which enables individuals to access the services and support that are right for them. The Plan makes several commitments to strengthen the support available:

- **The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy will review whether the current statutory leave provision for employees does enough to support victims and survivors who are escaping domestic abuse.**
- In recognition of the importance of support services, **the Ministry of Justice will ringfence a minimum of £15.7 million per annum for community-based services supporting victims and survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence between 2022-23 and 2024-25**. A minimum of £81 million will also be provided over three years to fund 700 Independent Domestic Violence Advocate and Independent Sexual Violence Advocate roles, with additional funding to be

confirmed later this year for an additional 300. Both the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice **will offer multi-year awards of funding to organisations supporting victims and survivors of domestic abuse.** This will enable the delivery of higher capacity, higher quality support services.

- To facilitate more reporting of domestic abuse to the police and improve the police response, **the Home Office will provide up to £3.3 million to fund the rollout of Domestic Abuse Matters training** to forces which have yet to deliver it that don't have their own specific domestic abuse training. The Home Office will also **review the police response to children experiencing domestic abuse.**

Pursuing perpetrators

The Plan is also clear that it is **perpetrators are the ones who need to change their behaviour, not anyone else.** By ensuring perpetrators are dealt with uncompromisingly and overseen punctiliously, they can be stopped from reoffending. This too will drive down the prevalence of domestic abuse and domestic homicide. With that aim, the Plan includes the following commitments:

- We will do more to actively manage perpetrators, the Ministry of Justice will **increase tagging** for those leaving custody, including around 3,500 individuals who are at risk of perpetrating domestic abuse. We will also **explore other options, including a register of domestic abuse offenders** to manage the most harmful domestic abusers.
- To better understanding the falling number of domestic abuse charges so we can ensure more perpetrators face the full force of the law, the Government will accept recommendations made in reports by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services to **conduct a review of data on domestic abuse cases closed for reasons falling under the definitions of Outcome 15 or 16,** where cases are closed due to 'evidential difficulties'.
- **Invest £75 million over the next three years to tackle perpetrators.** This includes funding for perpetrator interventions, with multi-year agreements where appropriate, evaluation and further research.

A stronger system

To mount the best possible response to domestic abuse, we need an effective system which better coordinates different parts of society, from professionals to large businesses, from support services to the police, and from local agencies to central Government. A system which encourages and facilitates greater identification of cases. And one which improves knowledge and understanding of domestic abuse that can be used to hone the whole of society's response. To deliver such a system, the Plan includes the following actions:

- **The Home Office will invest up to £7.5 million over three years to facilitate greater coordination within healthcare settings to tackle domestic abuse.** This investment will also include packages to **upskill healthcare professionals, so they are better able to identify, refer and support victims and survivors of domestic abuse.**

- To facilitate disclosures and identify more cases, **the Home Office will work with the Department for Work and Pensions to trial and, if this is successful, consider a national rollout of the Ask for ANI codeword scheme across the Jobcentre Plus offices.** The scheme currently provides a simple and discreet way for domestic abuse victims to signal they need immediate help.
- To improve our data on and knowledge of domestic homicides, **the Home Office will reform the Domestic Homicide Review process,** to ensure we learn lessons from every death and stop the same mistakes being repeated. We will also launch an online repository of all reviews, in which we have invested £1.3 million, in 2021-22.
- The National Police Chiefs' Council and College of Policing will also take forward work to **support police to help identify and reduce the risks of suicide in cases involving domestic abuse.**

In addition to the Plan, updated versions of the Violence Against Women and Girls National Statement of Expectations and Violence Against Women and Girls Commissioning Toolkit have also been published today. These documents will support local areas in commissioning effective support services for victims and survivors. The Government has also published a refreshed Supporting Male Victims document today in recognition of the specific challenges which may be faced by men and boys who are victims of crimes considered violence against women and girls, including domestic abuse. These documents have been placed in the libraries of both Houses and made available on GOV.UK.

The Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan, along with these documents, sets out our vision for reducing the prevalence of domestic abuse and domestic homicide. It will be unrelenting in its pursuit of perpetrators and unwavering in its support for victims and survivors. Through the Plan, this Government will deliver the practical steps needed for the whole of society to say, 'enough is enough', and to stop domestic abuse now

I look forward to continuing to engage with you on this important issue.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rachel Maclean', with a small dot at the end.

Rachel Maclean MP