



Women and Equalities Committee

Friday, 24 May 2024

Rt Hon James Cleverly MP
Home Secretary
Home Office

Rt Hon Alex Chalk KC MP
Secretary of State for Justice
Ministry of Justice

[by email]

Dear James, Alex,

The escalation of violence against women and girls

The Women and Equalities Committee recently concluded its inquiry to look at the escalation of violent behaviours perpetrated by men against women and girls. The inquiry was launched in the wake of a number of high-profile cases where women have been raped and murdered by perpetrators with a concerning history of offending. We considered patterns of behaviour and escalation, third sector perpetrator intervention programmes, interventions provided by HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), victim experience of the criminal justice system, and whether the emergency services and NHS are safe places for women to work.

Patterns of behaviour

One of the main questions the Committee has been seeking to address throughout the course of this inquiry is to what extent there is evidence that men who exhibit non-criminal behaviours or certain types of crimes go on to commit serious violent VAWG offences. However, what we have repeatedly been told is that there is a distinct lack of evidence to suggest this is the case; not because the evidence suggests these patterns do not exist, but because there has been a lack of research on the issue and thus there is no joined-up data to refer to.

The Government must do something to address this as soon as possible. As a first step, a Government-commissioned, comprehensive academic study into whether there is a pattern of behaviour in men who commit certain types of 'low level' crimes, or exhibit certain behaviours, escalate their behaviour to commit more serious VAWG offences, is needed as a priority. Only once the issue has been properly researched can it be effectively tackled.



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Perpetrator intervention programmes

Much of the evidence we took said that reoffending rates should not be the only indicator of whether a perpetrator intervention programme is effective or not. The Committee acknowledges this, but was shocked to learn that after more than ten years of running some of its programmes, such as Building Better Relationships (BBR), HMPPS has never assessed their effectiveness.¹

Places for people in custody on the HMPPS-run programmes BBR and Kaizen are currently oversubscribed by approximately one third. In reality, this figure could be even higher – at the same time as those figures were calculated, the Government told us that there were 316 people awaiting initial assessment for eligibility for the programme.

We understand that HMPPS is currently developing new programmes to replace Building Better Relationships. Any such programmes must be regularly reviewed and assessed to ensure they are effective in reducing reoffending; the Government must never again be in a situation where, ten years down the line, HMPPS is none the wiser as to whether an intervention programme is functioning effectively.

This letter goes only a short way to highlight some of the important issues raised with us during the course of our inquiry, but I hope our successor Committee and the next administration will prioritise these matters.

I am copying this letter to your shadow ministers Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP and Shabana Mahmood MP.

Yours ever,

Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP
Chair, Women and Equalities Committee

Cc by email:

Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP, Shadow Home Secretary
Shabana Mahmood MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Justice

¹ Building Better Relationships (BBR) is a moderate-intensity cognitive-behavioural programme for adult men convicted of an offence against an intimate partner.