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Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown  
Public Accounts Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA  
**Via Email Only**

26 March 2025

Dear Sir Geoffrey,

**Public Accounts Committee (PAC) Hearing – Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls**

Thank you for inviting me to give evidence at the hearing on 17 March on Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). As we heard so movingly from the constituency cases the Committee shared, VAWG is a hugely impactful crime. I welcome the National Audit Office and the Committee's scrutiny of the Home Office's leadership of cross-Government efforts to combat VAWG.

During the hearing the panel and I committed to write to you with an update on the progress of the Operation Encompass notification scheme, and on the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) and Department for Education's (DfE) work to tackle VAWG and harmful, misogynistic behaviours in youth groups, in particular boys.

*Operation Encompass*

Operation Encompass is a police and education early information safeguarding partnership enabling schools to offer immediate support to children experiencing domestic abuse. In April 2024, Clause 20 of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 put a duty on police forces to notify schools when they have reason to believe that a child may be a victim of domestic abuse. The clause allows for regulations to specify exceptional circumstances in which notifications should not be made and to extend the scheme to cover children below school age in the future.

We are currently finalising plans for commencement, and will write to the Committee as soon as the commencement date is known. It is important to note that all 43 police forces in England and Wales already operate Operation Encompass on a voluntary basis.

Alongside commencement, the Home Office will publish statutory guidance to support police forces to implement Operation Encompass to the highest standard and facilitate communication with schools. We are working closely with DfE to address education's role and include support for teachers when responding to notifications. This includes a range of

other actions the Home Office and wider Government are taking to ensure children are at the heart of our efforts to tackle domestic abuse in line with the upcoming VAWG Strategy.

### *DCMS National Youth Strategy*

DCMS is developing a National Youth Strategy to set out a new vision for young people and an action plan to deliver this. They are exploring what young people's current needs are, their access to safe spaces, and what young people would like to have access to in their local areas outside of school.

DCMS will be publishing an interim report this spring and the Strategy will be published this summer. In addition to DCMS' development of the National Youth Strategy, the Home Office is working closely with DCMS and DfE on the establishment of the Young Futures Programme. This Programme will establish a network of Young Futures Hubs and Young Futures Prevention Partnerships that will intervene earlier to identify and offer support in a more systematic way, as well as creating more opportunities for young people in their communities. This will ensure every opportunity is taken to intervene earlier with children and young people at risk of being drawn into crime, with a particular focus on VAWG, as well as knife crime and anti-social behaviour.

### *DfE VAWG Education and Interventions aimed at Boys*

Much of the work DfE is undertaking on youth violence reduction has an implicit focus towards boys, as statistics indicate that boys make up a greater share of both victims and perpetrators of serious violence. On VAWG specifically, the Department's Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) guidance, which was updated in May 2024, is already clear that all pupils in secondary school, including boys, should be taught about VAWG. DfE is currently reviewing the RSHE curriculum and considering additional content that might be needed to support teachers to tackle misogyny and foster healthy relationships.

In addition to RSHE guidance, DfE offers specialist support through school-based, targeted violence prevention programmes (SAFE Taskforces and Alternative Provision (AP) Specialist Taskforces). This support is delivered to children and young people who are most vulnerable to involvement in violence, which are typically more likely to be boys. These interventions include teams of youth workers, mental health and family workers embedded in AP schools, as well as mentoring, social and emotional skills and cognitive behaviour therapies in mainstream schools. DfE is working with the Youth Endowment Foundation to conduct an evaluation of both intervention programmes and inform future policy development.

### *Offence of spiking*

I would like to take this opportunity to clarify a reference I made to a 'new offence of stalking' in response to questions 18 and 70. There is not a new offence of stalking that has been, or is expected to be, introduced. I was referring to the new criminal offence of spiking, which we introduced through the Crime and Policing Bill in February 2025, as part of our commitment to tackle spiking, strengthen the law and improve the response to victims.

We are taking forward additional measures on stalking. In December 2024, the Home Office set out a new package of six measures to tackle stalking. These include introducing statutory guidance to empower the police to release the identities of online stalkers to protect victims

through the Crime and Policing Bill, and a review of the stalking legislation to ensure it is fit for purpose.

### *Family Hubs*

I would also like to take this opportunity, on behalf of my colleague Justin Russell, to clarify the answer to question 76 that we know the majority of local authorities we are funding through the family hubs and start for life programme provide domestic abuse support from at least one of their family hub sites.

I look forward to reading your report and its findings on tackling VAWG. Ministers have been clear that they intend to use every lever available to us to meet our mission to halve VAWG in a decade. As I said at the hearing, I have confidence our whole of system response, marshalled by the Safer Streets Mission, will achieve this transformational impact.

I am copying this letter to my colleagues on the panel and to their Accounting Officers.

Yours sincerely,



**Sir Matthew Rycroft**  
**Permanent Secretary**