



Women and Equalities Committee

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

Tel 020 7219 6123 Email womeqcom@parliament.uk Website www.parliament.uk

From the Chair

Victoria Atkins MP
Minister for Safeguarding
Home Office

By email

28 January 2021

Dear Victoria,

Forthcoming Violence Against Women and Girls and Domestic Abuse Strategies

Thank you for meeting the Committee on 20th January. In light of technical problems, you helpfully offered to respond in writing to the Committee's questions about the decision to separate Domestic Abuse out from the long-standing Violence Against Women and Girls strategy and to take a dual approach with two forthcoming strategies. I would be grateful therefore if you would provide the following information which we will publish for the benefit of victims/survivors and other stakeholders:

1. The UK's international obligations require you to adopt and implement 'integrated policies' on all forms of VAWG, including DA. This is partly because victims/survivors often experience multiple forms of VAWG. Could you set out the rationale for having separate strategies?
2. Can you tell us why there was not a formal consultation with stakeholders to inform such a shift in direction for the long-standing approach of a single integrated VAWG strategy?
3. The evidence is clear that all forms of VAWG, including DA, are gendered in that most (not all) victims/survivors are women and girls and most perpetrators are men and boys. Will you commit to continuing to take a gendered approach to the two new strategies, including in policies and implementation at local level? How will violence against men and boys be addressed in the two strategies?
4. The Equality and Human Rights Commission's guidance on [Meeting the Equality Duty in Policy and Decision-Making](#) says that assessing the impact of policy decisions should inform decision-making and start early in the policy development process. It says "Assessing impact on equality should be an integral part of policy development and decision-making" and that documenting is strongly advised. Can you tell us why an impact assessment was not carried out to inform a significant policy decision such as this, which will impact not only those with the protected characteristic of sex, but also race, disability and other characteristics?
5. Can you set out the current governance arrangements for the VAWG strategy;
 - Does the Inter-Ministerial Group still oversee the strategy?
 - Which Cabinet sub-Committee are you accountable to?
 - What mechanisms are in place to ensure other Government Departments deliver on their actions to support the strategy?



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- How do you engage with stakeholders?

Can you set out how the two strategies will be governed in future, including mechanisms for ensuring action by other Departments?

6. What mechanisms will you build into the two strategies to ensure that services supporting women from BAME communities, migrant women and disabled women are not negatively impacted by the dual approach, for example by doubling their work and resources in engaging with public services, local authorities and funding bodies?

7. How will the strategies better protect women subject to the No Recourse to Public Funds rule which currently leaves them outside protections and support that other women have?

8. The Prime Minister's announcement on the current lockdown measures included a statement in relation to Domestic Abuse. How is VAWG more widely, for example child sexual abuse and exploitation, embedded into the UK's COVID response at senior levels of government and into Cabinet Committee oversight?

9. What work is being done to ensure that the standards and rights in the EU Victims Directive are in place at a domestic level for victims so that there isn't a regression in safety, support and protection?

10. The Istanbul Convention, when ratified, will require the UK to allocate resources for the implementation of integrated policies, measures and programmes. How will you ensure compliance with the Convention when there are two strategies?

11. Do you have a provisional date for ratifying the Istanbul Convention?

I would be grateful if you could respond by Monday 22 February.

Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP

Chair, Women and Equalities Committee