



MAKING THE GRADE?

An independent analysis of Government initiatives on violence against women

November 2005

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What is Violence Against Women?

Violence against women (VAW) includes, but is not limited to: domestic violence (DV), forced marriage, crimes in the name of honour, rape and sexual assault, murder, trafficking and sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation (FGM), sexual harassment and stalking.

How common is VAW?

These are just some of the statistics that illustrate the scale of VAW across the UK:

- Almost half of all adult women in England and Wales have experienced DV, sexual assault or stalking¹.
- One in four women in England and Wales² and one in five women in Northern Ireland³ have experienced DV. DV in England, Wales and Northern Ireland has the highest rate of repeat victimisation⁴. In 2003, DV alone accounted for a quarter of all violent crime⁵.
- In 2002, 36,010 incidents of domestic abuse were recorded by Scottish Police. Ninety per cent of the incidents involved a female victim and a male perpetrator⁶.
- In England and Wales, the rate of conviction for rape, after trial, has decreased from one in three cases reported (32 per cent) in 1977, to one in 16 (5.6 per cent) in 2002⁷ and in 2003, 5.3 per cent of reported cases ended in conviction⁸.
- Women between the ages of 20 and 45 years who experience rape or sexual assault, are most commonly assaulted by a current or ex-partner. In addition, two of the locations where sexual assaults occur are the victim's or perpetrator's own home⁹.
- Eighty-five per cent of forced marriages cases dealt with by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office involved female victims¹⁰.
- While there has been no Government-funded prevalence study of FGM, it is estimated that 74,000 women in the UK have been genitally mutilated and 7,000 girls under the age of 16 are at risk of FGM¹¹.
- Recent research has found that, at the time of survey, only 19 per cent of women working as prostitutes in flats, parlours and saunas were originally from the UK¹².

The costs of VAW

- Government research puts the cost of DV (including domestic sexual abuse) in England and Wales alone at £23 billion¹³. In Northern Ireland the direct cost of DV to services and lost economic output is estimated to amount to £180 million each year – and this does not include the cost in human and emotional suffering¹⁴.
- The most costly violent crime in terms of health-related costs is now estimated to be rape¹⁵.
- Violence causes extensive physical damage, ranging from cuts and bruises to grievous bodily harm, miscarriages, broken bones and permanent disability to death. Sexual offences bring additional risks of HIV, sexually transmitted diseases and forced pregnancies. Violence can also cause lasting psychological harm to women and their children who witness assaults.

FALLING THROUGH THE GAPS

What happens when systems are inadequate or non-existent? Rates of violence against women and children continue to prevail at unacceptably high levels, and interventions are delivered haphazardly or not at all. The case of Ian Huntley is a clear illustration of the consequences when women and children are failed by inadequate systems. The reports made to the police of his sexual attacks were not taken seriously – but a failure to intervene ultimately led to two murders.

Two investigations following the deaths of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman uncovered Huntley's history of sexual abuse. During 1995-1999, he came to the attention of police and social services on nine separate occasions for allegations of rape and sex with underage girls. Even when he admitted having sex with an underage girl he was not even cautioned, let alone charged. Like many perpetrators, he targeted girls and young women who did not fit stereo-types of 'innocent victims' - several had already had sex with older men and many came from deprived backgrounds. His sexual offending was 'written off' as consensual underage sex, thus denying vulnerable young women protection and allowing Huntley to operate with virtual impunity, with tragic consequences. Unfortunately, the lessons to be learned from this case have been reduced to technical matters about information and monitoring, when in fact the key issues relate to the ways in which male sexual exploitation is tolerated and excused and women and girls' credibility is undermined and their suffering ignored.

Department scores

Department	Score
Cabinet Office (CO)	0.5/10
Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA)	2.5/10
Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS)	0/10
Department for Education and Skills (DfES)	0/10
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)	0/10
Department of Health (DoH)	3.5/10
Department for International Development (DfID)	2.5/10
Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)	1/10
Department for Transport (DfT)	0/10
Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)	0/10
Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)	3/10
Her Majesty's Treasury (HMT)	0/10
Home Office (HO)	3/10
Ministry of Defence (MoD)	1/10
Office for the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)	1/10
Average total for central Government	1/10

What are the current approaches to VAW in the UK?

There have been many positive legal and policy developments with respect to various forms of VAW, although the central focus has been on DV. In spite of this, the attitudes that tolerate or justify violence are not changing, incidence rates are not falling, conviction rates are not increasing and women and children still fall through the gaps.

There remains a glaring lack of any overall strategic direction from central governments in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. For instance, in England there are three inter-ministerial groups operating in parallel – on DV, rape and trafficking – alongside entirely separate work on forced marriage and FGM. The Government recently launched the Rape Action Plan and the National Domestic Violence Action Plan. However, these are limited to one form of violence and do not include budgets, timelines or a system for monitoring.

Northern Ireland and Wales have developed strategies to tackle DV. Some real progress has been made in Scotland, where the Scottish Executive has had a domestic abuse strategy for a number of years and is currently broadening this to address all forms of VAW. However, the Scottish Parliament cannot legislate on reserved matters (such as immigration and asylum), limiting the scope of Scotland's strategy. None of the existing policies across the UK is comprehensive.

Why a strategic approach to VAW?

In 1995, the UK signed the UN Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), which requires that governments work towards ending VAW by implementing national action plans containing the following elements:

- effective **planning** across the board
- a coherent and integrated approach to **prevention**
- devising and delivering effective **protection**
- full access to and provision of **support and rehabilitation**
- effective mechanisms for **prosecution**
- adequate **resources**.

As the rest of this report will show, progress on these areas has been slow and halting, although more urgency and investment has been evident in the last four years. What we have missed, and still lack, is consistency in approach and ongoing investment in building capacity. For example, the last two years have witnessed the first dedicated funding from central Government for sexual violence services – £4 million was allocated from the Victims' Fund, the monies confiscated from the proceeds of crime. However, this represents just 3 per cent of the total confiscated during the period, and it is still unclear if the funding stream will continue.

We believe an integrated approach would be cost and time efficient, ensuring that vital services do not waste energy having to apply every year for new funding streams. Such an approach would also enable the UK to be in full compliance with its international commitments and, most important,

allow a commitment to prevention that would lead to a reduction in gender violence and its costly impact to victims and society as a whole. The gains from a more integrated and coordinated approach include:

- savings of billions of pounds annually;
- earlier and more effective interventions limiting the untold suffering of women and their children;
- ensuring more effective and integrated advocacy and support services;
- recognising the crucial links between identifying and preventing VAW;
- providing a relevant and more joined-up response to women who experience multiple forms of abuse: FGM may be carried out on a young girl as a prelude to forced marriage; young women escaping abuse at home may end up in the sex industry;
- providing Government with routes to assess the effectiveness of its policies and see whether VAW is being reduced and taxpayers money spent wisely.

THE TRAUMA OF REPEATED VIOLENCE AND LIVING IN FEAR

I had a breakdown. I just wanted to hurt myself. I would cry a lot. I was scared and worried. I was bruised. The back of my neck was bleeding from being hit...they told me, 'Don't scream or we will kill you'. They would. I kept quiet.

Ellen, trafficked from Albania to the UK

Do strategic approaches work?

The Greater London Domestic Violence Strategy has led to a fall in female domestic homicides by a third since its inception in 2001. Other countries with integrated Plans of Action on VAW report many benefits including:

- better inter-agency working;
- raised awareness of the problem;
- more effective legislation and policies; and
- innovative practice¹⁶.

What would a strategy look like?

The integrated VAW strategy should be devised by the Government in consultation with all relevant bodies, including women's organisations, other service providers and state agencies. This work would involve:

- Studying the causes, consequences and nature of VAW and assessing the effectiveness of measures implemented to prevent and redress this problem by promoting research, improving data collection and compiling statistics.
- Conducting education and public information programmes that raise awareness on the causes and nature of VAW and that also lead to attitudinal change.
- Ensuring that accessible, just and effective

criminal remedies and civil remedies are in force against all forms of VAW.

- Training for key agencies (including the police, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), the judiciary, social services, immigration and health services) on the causes of violence, its impact and the remedies available.
- Devising minimum standards of provision for all key agencies and ensuring that these are implemented and monitored.
- Ensuring full access to and provision of emergency, legal, support and rehabilitation services for all women, with particular regard to the needs of vulnerable or marginalised minorities (including black and ethnic minorities, children, the elderly, people with disabilities, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community and those lacking mental capacity).
- Ensuring adequate resources to implement effectively all elements of a strategy¹⁷.

How have we assessed Government initiatives on VAW?

We wrote to all Westminster Departments asking them to tell us what they were doing to address VAW, since in our view they all have a role to play (a number of them are relevant for all of the UK most reflect work in England and Wales). Our letter included some analysis of how their individual Public Service Agreements (PSAs) linked to VAW, so the Departments knew too. However, it was clear from their responses that the work that goes on is fragmented and, in many instances, unstructured. Their replies followed no coherent pattern in terms of strategic indicators.

Our experts, the VAW Strategy Sub-Group, developed an assessment framework based on three areas: **Integrated Coverage; Planning; and Resources**. Each Department was assessed in relation to twenty questions, and awarded a score out of 10. *Making the Grade?* reports on their responses against this framework.

What we found

The outcomes of this exercise show that most Departments only recognise responsibilities in relation to VAW in a limited way. A small number have made considerable strides but usually in a specific area, most commonly DV, and fail to see the bigger picture. The departmental responses, which are presented in full in Appendix B of the *Making the Grade?*, make clear that the Government does not adopt a consistent approach to its work on VAW in terms of planning, resourcing and measurement. Very few Departments responded to our questions about

budgets so we were unable to assess how much they are spending, nor whether the investment is an effective one. Budgets are uncertain or invisible, making audit trails difficult, if not impossible, to follow. Departments were also unable to respond to the question on training, so it is impossible to say if officials are well informed.

Summary

Our first annual analysis of Government activity addressing VAW is, therefore, disappointing. It reveals that whilst there is a lot of work going on in relation to some aspects of VAW, there is no strategic framework underpinning it.

This Government has done pioneering work on a range of areas related to VAW - much of it is detailed in the responses we have reproduced. Although there were no plans or targets at the highest level of PSAs, it was clear that in one or two cases there were plans and work programmes on some aspects of VAW: for example, the Rape Action Plan and the National Domestic Violence Action Plan, including establishment of Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) and DV specialist courts, respectively. It has also legislated to protect girls being taken out of the UK for FGM and has reformed sex offences legislation. However, this work is on a narrow range of violence issues, has limited coverage and is not part of a systematic or planned approach. This represents huge lost opportunities, not just in the absence of a VAW strategy but also the failure to make connections between VAW and existing high profile Government strategies, for example, drugs and alcohol, violent crime and anti-social behaviour.

Government Departments reported on current policy initiatives – mainly addressing DV; no Department, even those doing a great deal of work on VAW, was able to give a coherent account of its strategic approach to VAW, in terms of definitions, planning, targets, training, budgets, research or evaluation, that we asked for; the DoH, FCO and DfID illustrated the most understanding of an ‘integrated approach’ to VAW; and Government Departments continue to conflate VAW and DV despite a very clear definition of VAW in our original letters.

Finally, all this means that work being done is not effectively mainstreamed into the Government machine. As the current projects end, there is no framework for sustainable, ongoing work. Assessing the big picture - whether all Government's efforts are making an impact or not - is impossible when there is no systematic collation of evidence. Much of the good work is dependent on the sponsorship and efforts of committed individuals at both Ministerial and Government official level. As these people move on, resources and personalities shift and the work is jeopardised.

BELIEVING YOU'RE WORTHLESS

He raped me and hit me in the head and kicked me in the leg. He raped and beat me so that I would understand that I am just the same as all the rest. No better.

Katerina, trafficked from the Ukraine to the UK

TOO MUCH BUREAUCRACY

Funding is a major issue because all projects including mine spend a lot of their time filling in forms for funds. It is a minefield and important work is not going on.

WNC, *Unlocking the Secret: Women open the door on domestic violence, findings from consultations with survivors*, 2003

1 Walby, S. and Allen, J. (2004) *Domestic Violence, sexual assault and stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey*, London: Home Office.
2 *Ibid.*

3 Northern Ireland Office & Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (2005) *Tackling Violence at Home. A Strategy for Addressing Domestic Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland*, Stormont: Northern Ireland Office & Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

4 Walby & Allen (2004) *op. cit* and Northern Ireland Office & Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, *Tackling Violence at Home. A Strategy for Addressing Domestic Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland*, (2005) *op. cit.*

5 Women and Equality Unit (2003) *Changing World, changing lives. Women in the UK since 1999*, London: Department of Trade and Industry.

6 Scottish Executive Justice Department (2003) cited in Greenan, L. (2004) ‘Violence against Women’. A literature review, commissioned by the National Group to Address Violence Against Women, Scottish Executive, (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/03/20895/55133>, accessed 7 November 2005).

7 Kelly, L. Lovett, J. & Regan, L. (2005) *Gap or Chasm? Attrition in reported rape cases*, London: Home Office.

8 Home Office (2005) data supplied to the Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit.

9 Kelly, L. Lovett, J. & Regan, L. (2005) *Op. cit.*

10 Figure cited in the joint Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2005 consultation on forced marriage, *Forced*

Marriage: A Wrong Not a Right. See: http://communities.homeoffice.gov.uk/raceandfaith/reports_publications/race_faith/consultation_forced_marriage.pdf?view=Binary.

11 FORWARD cited in House of Commons Research Paper 03/24 March 2003. See:

<http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/rp2003/rp03-024.pdf>

12 POPPY Project (2004) *Sex in the City: Mapping Commercial Sex Across London*, London: POPPY Project.

13 Walby, S. (2004) *The Cost of Domestic Violence*, London: Department of Trade and Industry. See: http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/research/cost_of_dv_Report_sept04.pdf. Costs to the Criminal Justice System £1 billion a year; the NHS £1.2 billion; Social Services £250 million a year; local housing authorities and housing associations £160 million; civil legal services over £300 million a year; and the UK economy through time off work due to injuries around £2.7 million. £17 billion in human and emotional costs.

14 Northern Ireland Office & Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (2005) *Tackling Violence at Home. A Strategy for Addressing Domestic Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland*, *op. cit.*

15 Dubourg, R. Hamed, J. and Thorns, J. (2005) *The economic and social costs of crime against individuals and households 2003/4*, Home Office Online Report 30/05, London: Home Office. See: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs05/rdsolr3005.pdf>.

16 Lovett, J. (2005) *Briefing document on strategic approaches to addressing violence against women*, London: Child & Woman Abuse Studies Unit.

17 Amnesty International UK (2004) *Stop Violence Against Women. A Global Outrage* briefing paper.