Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP
The Prime Minister
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Monday 5 October 2026

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing on behalf of organisations working to end violence against women and girls (VAWG) to urge the government to prioritise its manifesto commitment to halve VAWG; with a focus on prevention. New data published by The Guardian highlights the scale of sexual abuse in schools, with the police recording **more than four sexual crimes against children under 13 in England and Wales every day**. As the newly elected Prime Minister, we ask you to take decisive action in the interests of children and young people and all survivors, to end this cycle of harm once and for all.

New data on rates of sexual abuse and violence in schools
This month, the Guardian published new findings from Freedom Of Information (FOI) requests to the police on the scale of sexual abuse and violence in schools. The data is devastating. Police records highlight that between 2021-2025:

- more than 8,060 sexual offences were reported involving victims under 13, equivalent to 4.4 offences a day.
- A further 2,300 sexual offences against children aged 13-16 were recorded over the same period.
- There have been reports of close to 1,900 rape offences - including attempted rape. In more than a third of these cases, the victim was a child under the age of 13. Three quarters of the victims were female.
- It also shows at least another 5,800 crimes involving possession, taking, making or distribution of indecent images of children under 18, equivalent to three child abuse-related offences per day.

All children should have the right to access education without facing abuse, and this data is only the tip of the iceberg given that most abuse is unreported. For far too many children, particularly girls, their childhoods are adversely affected in what should be a place of safety. And this doesn't even account for child sexual abuse in the home, which represents the majority of

cases. We know that sexual violence can devastate victim's lives, influencing their physical and mental wellbeing, and at school, their attendance, educational attainment and outcomes.

The publication of this data once again shines a light on the harrowing reality of sexual violence in education and among young people. This was most recently forefronted by the awful rapes of girls in Fordingbridge which we addressed in our letter to the former Secretary of State for Education on this issue. There is a long history of governments being alerted to such crises: we have Women and Equalities Committee reports dated from 2016[1] and 2023,[2] mass testimonials from young people via the *Everyone's Invited* movement in 2020[3] and the subsequent Ofsted Review,[4] which concluded that every school and college leader should act on the assumption that sexual harassment and online abuse are problems for their children and young people. Once we know better, we must do better. These should have been watershed moments that led to meaningful change, and we are urging you to make this difference today.

VAWG Strategy

The Labour government's manifesto commitment to halve VAWG is incredibly important, and has the power to make generational change. The subsequent VAWG strategy is hugely welcome, and has important commitments to prevention, including some, albeit limited, support for schools in the delivery of Relationship, Sex, and Health Education (RSHE) and reference to the need for a Whole-School Approach in the accompanying action plan, alongside a promise to make RSHE mandatory for all 16-18 year olds. We also acknowledge and welcome the recent investment in the 24/7 Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Line.

The challenges of the early release scheme are a reminder that we cannot rely on prisons to keep people safe or police our way out of the violence against women and girls epidemic. We welcome your recognition of the 'concern and anger' these measures are causing. For so many women and girls affected by VAWG, whether in the justice system or not, their primary concern is ensuring that no-one else has to go through similar experiences. We are asking that you take steps to ensure that the government is doing everything it possibly can to tackle the root causes of this crisis to make this a reality.

Last week we wrote to the Secretary of State for Education to share our whole-schools approach briefing, and a detailed set of recommendations for change. Will you review this government's commitments to preventing VAWG, and ensure they are built upon and delivered with the urgency that all children and young people need and deserve?

Yours Sincerely,

1. Janaya Walker, Interim Director, End Violence Against Women Coalition
2. Ciara Bergman, CEO, Rape Crisis England & Wales
3. Farah Nazeer, Chief Executive, Women's Aid

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[1] Women and Equalities Committee (2016) Sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools
[2] Women and Equalities Committee (2023) Attitudes towards women and girls in educational settings
[3] Everyone's Invited: https://www.everyonesinvited.uk/about
[4] Ofsted (2021). Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges. Department for Education.

4. Gemma Sherrington, CEO, Refuge
5. Daniel Kebede, GS, National Education Union (NEU)
6. Ghadah Alnasseri, CEO, Imkaan
7. Soma Sara, CEO and Founder, Everyone's Invited
8. Susie McDonald, CEO, Tender
9. Nina Humphries, Director, UK Feminista
10. Harriet Wistrich, founder and CEO, Centre for Women's Justice
11. Naana Otoo- Oyortey, Executive Director, FORWARD
12. Estelle du Boulay, Director, Rights of Women
13. Alice Piller-Roner, CEO, Woman's Trust
14. Issy Warren, Director of Programmes, Our Streets Now
15. Rachel Adamson, Co-Director, Zero Tolerance
16. Faustine Petron-Daniels, Founder, Make It Mandatory
17. Deirdre Kehoe, CEO, Let Me Know (LMK)
18. Professor Aisha K. Gill, Criminologist, University of Bristol
19. Donna Hill, Head of Coram SCARF
20. Natalie Collins, Own My Life
21. Vivienne Hayes, CEO, Women's Resource Centre
22. Carey Philpott, CEO, SATEDA
23. Medina Johnson, Chief Executive, IRISi
24. Baljit Banga, CEO, Hibiscus
25. Louisa Matthews, CEO, Nottingham Women's Centre
26. Joy Doal, CEO, Anawim - Birmingham's Centre for Women
27. Paula Clarke, CEO, Juno Women's Aid
28. Sawsan Salim, Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation
29. Jackie May, CEO, The Women's Centre Cornwall
30. Jo Choi, CEO, Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse
31. Halaleh Taheri, CEO, Middle Eastern Women and Society Organisation-MEWSO
32. Maureen Connolly, CEO, Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid
33. Laura Seebohm, CEO, WWIN Specialist Domestic Abuse Services in Sunderland
34. Lucy Warnes, CEO, Deaf Health Charity SignHealth
35. Zlakha Ahmed CEO, Apna Haq, Rotherham.
36. Bernie Ryan,CEO, Institute for Addressing Strangulation
37. Jessica Ringrose, Professor, UCL
38. Clémence Mahéo, Founder and co-director, togetHER against sexism
39. Hannah Parry, Chair, Action Breaks Silence
40. Sarbjit Ganger, Director Asian Women's Resource Centre (AWRC)
41. Annie A Gibbs, Amour Destiné
42. Sonia Jalal, Hull Sisters
43. Dr Emily Setty, Associate Professor in Criminology, University of Surrey
44. Girijamba Polubothu, CEO, Shakti Women's Aid
45. Liz Mack, CEO, Advance
46. Gisela Valle, Director, Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS)
47. Disha Sughand & Diana Njuguna, Co-CEOs, Womankind Worldwide

48. Diana Nammi , CEO, IKWRO
49. Emma Slinn, UsToo ARC ENGLAND (Association for Real Change)
50. Lee Eggleston CEO SERICC (Rape and Sexual Abuse Specialist Service)
51. Jennifer McDermott CEO of the Cassandra Centre, Domestic and sexual abuse charity
52. Natasha Eeles, CEO & Founder, Bold Voices
53. Dr Abby Gilsenan, Department of Education, University of York
54. Sara Kirkpatrick, in solidarity, Welsh Women's Aid
55. Professor Fiona Vera-Gray, Co-Director, Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit (CWASU) at London Metropolitan University
56. Bekah Legg, CEO Restored
57. Naomi Smith, CEO, Her Centre
58. Amtal Rana, CEO, Kiran Support Services
59. Angie Airlie, CEO, Stay Safe East
60. Samsunear Ali, CEO, Bawso
61. Dr Jenny Lloyd, Global Centre for Contextual Safeguarding
62. Sarah Hill, CEO, IDAS
63. Sam Clifford, CEO, Jewish Women's Aid
64. Tina Pearmine, The DAY Programme
65. Sally Jackson, Director for ending MVAWG, FiLiA
66. Alev Taylor, CEO, Rape Crisis Scotland
67. Helen Marshall, Chief Executive, Brook
68. Rose Caldwell, CEO, Plan International UK
69. Lucy Emmerson, Chief Executive, Sex Education Forum
70. Daniel Guinness, Managing Director, Beyond Equality
71. Debi Steven, CEO, Action Breaks Silence
72. Jo Todd CBE, CEO, Respect
73. Daniela Londoño, Policy Coordinator, Latin American Women's Aid (LAWA)
74. Professor Vanita Sundaram, Department of Education, University of York
75. Nahar Choudhury, CEO, Solace
76. David Wright CBE, CEO, SWGfL
77. Felicity Oswald OBE, CEO, Girlguiding UK
78. Tracey Bleakley, Interim CEO, SafeLives
79. Dolly Padalia, CEO, School of Sexuality Education
80. Kyla Kirkpatrick, Director, The Drive Partnership
81. Debbie Brazil, CEO, End Sexism in Schools
82. Joy Doal, Anawim Birmingham Centre for women
83. Jael de la Luz, The CouRAGEus Project, Women and Girls Network
84. Mollin Delve,CEO, PHOEBE Centre
85. Sawsan Salim, Director, Kurdish andMiddle Eastern Women's Organisation.
86. Yasmin Rehman, CEO, Lucy Faithful Foundations
87. Amy Forbes-Robertson, Director, It Happens Education
88. Matilda Lawrence-Jubb, Development Director, Split Banana Education C.I.C.