



House of Commons
Home Affairs Committee

**Domestic Violence, Forced
Marriage and “Honour”-
Based Violence: Further
Government Response to
the Committee’s Sixth
Report of Session 2007–08**

Third Special Report of Session 2007–08

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The Home Affairs Committee

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Third Special Report

On 13 June 2008 the Home Affairs Committee published its Sixth Report of Session 2007–08, *Domestic Violence, Forced Marriage and “Honour”-Based Violence*, HC 263-I & II. The Government’s response to the Report was published as a Command Paper (Cm 7450) in July 2008. The Committee has received a further response from the Government on 30 September 2008. This is published as an Appendix to this Special Report.

Appendix: Further Government Response

Recommendations

1. A lack of standardised data, and what is judged to be significant under-reporting, make it difficult to make an accurate assessment of the numbers of individuals experiencing domestic violence. Only a tiny proportion of victims ever come into contact with statutory authorities, particularly criminal justice agencies, making measurement of the scale of abuse even more complex. However, available statistics suggest that one in four women and one in six men will experience domestic violence at some point in their lives. The vast majority of serious and recurring violence is perpetuated by men towards women. (Paragraph 30)

2. Understanding of the scale of “honour”-based violence and forced marriage is even patchier. The Government’s Forced Marriage Unit handles around 300 cases of forced marriage each year, but this is likely to represent only the tip of the iceberg. (Paragraph 31)

3. Too little is still understood about the true scale of domestic violence, “honour”-based violence and, particularly, forced marriage. Because of the different ways in which data is gathered and recorded by different agencies, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of the Government’s response to domestic violence. Differences in data recording also makes it virtually impossible to track offenders across agencies, and between relationships. We recommend that the Government implements a single performance management framework on the collection and reporting of domestic violence data, to apply across all relevant Government agencies, not only criminal justice agencies. This framework should ensure that data are comparable across all agencies, and be used to measure the effectiveness of the Government’s response to domestic violence. (Paragraph 32)

July Response

The Government acknowledges that there are challenges with understanding the numbers of individuals experiencing domestic violence including “honour”-based violence and forced marriage.

We are looking at ways of gathering more accurate information from a variety of sources, however we need to be cautious about over-inflating numbers as this could be counter-productive.

We are looking at all our data sources and the CJS are the most reliable. However we are constantly looking at how to gather and collate a variety of data sources which will give us a more accurate figure and identify the needs in order to intervene.

Update

We will be setting up a cross-government working group in 2009 to look in detail at the challenges presented by current systems and to explore the options for addressing these.

Recommendation

4. We had sight of emerging data on prosecutions of “honour”-based violence and forced marriage cases, which is currently being collected via a pilot study in four Crown Prosecution Service areas. We think that this data, particularly that relating to the age of defendants, will make an important contribution to understanding the nature and scale of these particular forms of violence. We look forward to the full results of the pilot in the summer of 2008. (Paragraph 35)

July Response

Since compiling the emerging findings from our pilot study on forced marriage and ‘so-called’ honour crimes, we have been working towards finalising the findings. Additional information on prosecutors’ experiences in identifying, managing, and prosecuting these cases has also been collected through questionnaires and a focus group discussion held in June. The final report is due to be published in the autumn.

Update

The final report on the so-called ‘honour’ crime and forced marriage pilot is currently on track for publication in autumn 2008.

Recommendations

5. The evidence we heard from survivors about the ignorance they faced from many quarters, coupled with widespread under-reporting, persuades us of the need for at least one major public information campaign. We consider that in the UK a number of different campaigns would be valuable, targeting different audiences, including the following:

(a) A general public awareness campaign to target victims, including male victims, and friends and family. This should emphasise the nature of abuse, educate friends and family on warning signs, and publicise support.

(b) A campaign specifically on forced marriage and other forms of “honour”-based violence. The Government should make full use of feedback from survivors, starting with that gathered through our eConsultation, to design key messages and media. (Paragraph 67)

6. The Government should consider implementing an overall communications strategy for domestic violence, including “honour”-based violence and forced marriage. This could perhaps be developed along the lines of the THINK! Road Safety campaign, which is well recognised and has wide coverage. (Paragraph 68)

July response

The Government recognises that there is a need to raise awareness of domestic violence, including “honour”-based violence and forced marriage. We have already run a number of successful campaigns to tackle rape, sexual assault and domestic violence which were

aimed at different audiences. We are currently looking at the role for communications in tackling violence against women and particularly with a view to prevention of violence, which would involve changing attitudes and behaviour among key audiences.

Update

We will be building a communications support package for this area of work.

Recommendation

7. We welcome the research being carried out by Respect and the NPSCC with the Big Lottery Fund. We recommend that the Government consider amending its definition of domestic violence to include under-18s. (Paragraph 77)

July Response

The Government acknowledges those issues raised about widening the definition of domestic violence to include under 18s and continues to keep the definition under review.

Update

Consideration of the definition will be covered in our Delivery Plan for 2009/10.

Recommendations

8. We acknowledge that there are areas of good practice in education in schools on domestic violence and forced marriage, and we welcome the initiative by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to design ‘school-friendly’ materials in conjunction with the Forced Marriage Unit. We recommend that the DCSF and FMU work together proactively to distribute these materials to all schools, rather than waiting for materials to be requested. (Paragraph 93)

9. However, we were alarmed by the evident resistance of some schools and local authorities to displaying information, particularly on forced marriage. Whilst schools should retain discretion about the most appropriate way to display materials, it is clear from survivors’ accounts that schools can provide a lifeline to vulnerable pupils by providing information on support services. We strongly recommend that the Department for Children, Schools and Families take steps to ensure that all schools are promoting materials on forced marriage, whilst allowing them to retain discretion on the details. We intend to follow up this issue. (Paragraph 94)

July response

Schools have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of their pupils and we have encouraged them, through guidance, to make available information about helplines and access to support for victims or people in fear of forced marriage.

In April 2008 Ministers at the DCSF wrote to local authorities and schools to remind them of their responsibilities in relation to the issue of forced marriage and the materials and guidance already available and to explain the further action being taken.

DCSF has worked with the Forced Marriage Unit to develop materials specifically for schools and for young people to raise awareness of forced marriage and of sources of support. We have been helped by schools, young people and support groups, including Karma Nirvana, in the development of these materials, and they are already available on the Every Child Matters website:

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/socialcare/safeguarding/forcedmarriage/>.

We will be sending printed copies to all secondary schools in July, as well as to all local authorities and LSCBs, and DIUS will be sending them to all colleges. We are strongly encouraging schools to use these materials, and will be using a wide range of methods to promote their use. For example, we will use conferences, and workshops (such as the HBV roadshow), and have already asked regional staff (for example Safeguarding Advisers) to promote them. We are also engaging with professional associations.

Update

We can confirm that materials designed specifically for schools and young people were officially launched by Kevin Brennan at the HBV Roadshow in London in July. These consist of two posters, one aimed at young people and the other aimed at practitioners working with them, leaflets and information cards. Hard copies were sent to all secondary schools, local authorities, Local Safeguarding Children Boards and pupil referral units before the summer break. DIUS have also sent copies to all FE colleges.

Recommendation

10. Recent concern raised by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children over the inadequacy of sex and relationships education in schools serves to highlight further the need for better statutory education on these subjects. We recommend that the Department for Children, Schools and Families specifically consider education about relationships, domestic and “honour”-based violence and forced marriage as part of its current review of sex and relationships education in schools. We strongly urge the Department to recommend that education on these issues is explicitly made a part of the statutory school sex and relationships curriculum, rather than being left to the discretion of individual schools. (Paragraph 95)

July response

The curriculum already provides scope for the exploration of issues relating to domestic violence and forced marriage principally, although not exclusively, within Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE), which includes sex and relationship education (SRE).

It is important that we focus efforts on raising the overall standard of teaching in PSHE and SRE, where issues to do with healthy relationships, managing conflict and aggression

would be addressed, and alerting schools to ways in which domestic violence can be used as context for exploring key concepts within the PSHE curriculum.

Much of the content of PSHE including sex education and drug education is already statutory. However, recognising the importance of these aspects of the curriculum and their contribution to promoting wellbeing—a new duty on schools introduced in September 2007—DCSF is currently conducting two parallel reviews on how to improve the teaching of sex and relationships education and drug education within the context of PSHE. We will give careful consideration to all of the recommendations from the reviews when they report later this summer. In the meantime our efforts remain focussed on driving up standards in the teaching of PSHE through:

- a national accredited cpd programme which has trained over 6,000 teachers to date;
- initiatives such as healthy schools which require schools to have comprehensive programmes of PSHE; and
- advice and guidance provided by bodies such as the QCA and the PSHE Association.

Update

Sex and relationship (SRE) Review is now due to report in the autumn rather than the summer. This is to permit further consultations with key stakeholders. We will carefully consider the recommendations of the review and a government response will follow in due course.

Recommendation

11. An emerging picture of violence between young people in intimate relationships demonstrates that it is not only schools which need to engage in educative work on domestic violence and forced marriage. Sixth forms, further education colleges and universities also must ensure that they provide information about support for students and run educative programmes about domestic violence and forced marriage. (Paragraph 96)

July response

This response was unfortunately omitted from the Government response.

Update

The Department accepted the Committee's view that colleges should provide appropriate information about support for students on forced marriage. In August we issued, in conjunction with the Department for Children, Schools and Families, materials that will support both staff and students in colleges. Statutory guidance on forced marriage is also being prepared and, following consultation, will be published in the autumn.

The provision by colleges of educative programmes to cover domestic violence and forced marriage will be considered in consultation with sector stakeholders later this year.

With respect to universities, as autonomous institutions, the Department feels that they can fulfil their responsibilities by ensuring that they can advise students of sources of support rather than develop programmes in the manner that the Committee suggests.

Recommendation

12. Full use should be made of the expertise of local and national voluntary sector organisations to deliver educative programmes in schools and colleges, drawing in particular on good practice in areas such as Newham and Waltham Forest. These organisations should also be consulted in drawing up changes to the sex and relationships curriculum, and in training teachers, both of which we recommend in this report. (Paragraph 97)

July Response

One of the key issues being considered in the sex and relationship education (SRE) review is how best to encourage schools to use external professionals and agencies—which have expertise on particular issues—to support the delivery of their SRE programmes. This could include organisations with expertise in issues such as domestic violence and forced marriage. The SRE review is due to report later this summer.

The Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills is happy to accept the Committee's recommendation that local and national voluntary sector organisations should play a prominent role in the delivery of support and guidance and the development of programmes where these are appropriate. Good practice where identified would quite rightly be drawn upon where it demonstrably would make a positive impact.

Update

See update to recommendation 17.

The Department is happy to accept the Committee's recommendation that local and national voluntary sector organisations should play a prominent role in the delivery of support and guidance and the development of programmes where these are appropriate. Good practice where identified would quite rightly be drawn upon where it demonstrably would make a positive impact.

Update on Recommendations 21–28

With some of our proposals we did not set out when we intend to introduce the proposals in the original response to the Committee and an update on this is below.

- We will increase the age at which someone can sponsor or be sponsored as a spouse from 18 to 21, improve our current system for investigating allegations for abuse of the marriage route and ensure information and advice is available to sponsors, including awareness of the Forced Marriage Unit by December 2008.
- We will set out our approach on the requirement that sponsors are required to register their intention to sponsor a spouse to come to the UK before they leave and if needed

attend a compulsory interview and on introducing new stronger measures to allow the UK Border Agency to revoke indefinite leave to remain following abandonment of a spouse or evidence of abuse of the marriage route to gain settlement in a Statement of Intent in the Autumn.

- We will establish a working group chaired by the Attorney General and involving the Ministry of Justice to consider how we are able to share confidential information with Immigration Judges so that those at risk of abuse can feel more confident in voicing their concerns. The group will report its findings in the Autumn.

Recommendations

13. The evidence from victims collected by the Forced Marriage Unit and other survivors' groups, and heard in the course of our inquiry, convinced us that there are children in real danger of being removed from school, or further education, and forced into marriage. (Paragraph 164)

14. However, when we examined the issue of these 'missing' children we exposed a confusing picture, of different data recorded by different schools and local authorities in different categories, none of which could give us concrete information about children at risk of forced marriage. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for Children, Schools and Families himself recognised the shortcomings in the available data, and proposed to consult on developing a standard definition for local authorities in collecting information. (Paragraph 165)

July Response

We are developing standard definitions for local authorities to improve consistency in collecting information on children not receiving a suitable education and we are consulting local authorities on these.

The results of this consultation on standard definitions will be included in revised statutory guidance for children not receiving suitable education, which we plan to publish in the autumn. References to forced marriage will be strengthened and we shall ensure clear cross-references to, and consistency with, the revised forced marriage guidance.

This will give schools and local authorities an even clearer and more robust basis on which to track children missing from education and safeguard children and young people from forced marriage and other harm.

Update

Significant progress has been made on developments that will help local authorities take action to identify children who are not receiving a suitable education, and who could be at risk of involvement in forced marriage. All local authorities were invited to make proposals for standard data definitions that could be used to improve consistency about how information is shared about children who go missing from education. The results have been included in revised statutory guidance for local authorities on 'the duty to identify children not receiving a suitable education' that was issued for public consultation

in August. The revised guidance strengthens the messages about how implementing this duty has a critical role in safeguarding children from harm and preventing negative outcomes, such as forced marriage. The public consultation runs until the 24 October, and key stakeholders concerned with the well-being and safety of vulnerable children and young people are being encouraged to respond. This will help final guidance, which we intend to publish in late Autumn 2008, to fully support the work local authorities and their partners need to undertake to identify these potentially vulnerable children, and act effectively to safeguard them. See the consultation documents at:

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations/conDetails.cfm?consultationId=1569>

Recommendations

15. Currently, schools only record data on pupils listed as being ‘not in suitable education’. This covers a wide range of reasons, and from our investigations it became clear that these data tell us little about children at risk of forced marriage. This caused us great concern. Rather than disproving that there are children missing from schools who have been removed and forced to marry, our investigation showed simply that there is no adequate mechanism of identifying these children. (Paragraph 166)

16. We acknowledge that data collected by schools are unlikely ever to identify the true numbers of young people forced into marriage. Many victims are aged 16 or over, some may be listed as home-schooled, and others are taken abroad during school summer holidays. These categories are unlikely ever to be comprehensively captured in school data. Nevertheless, we consider that data collected by schools provide a vital mechanism by which some of those most at risk might be identified. (Paragraph 167)

July Response

In February 2007 we introduced a new statutory duty for local authorities to put robust systems in place to identify any child not receiving a suitable education, and provided guidance on how to implement this duty, setting out the follow-up action local authorities should take, including when to involve the police.

There may be a number of reasons why children are not in education, including that they have not yet taken up a school place, that they have moved home or that they are on extended leave. In most cases there is no reason to think that these children are at risk of harm, although any child missing education is a source for concern.

The duty supported by statutory guidance means that all local authorities must put co-ordinated and centralised systems in place for tracking children missing education. They are also expected to work, and share information, with other local authorities and agencies in order that children moving from one area to another can be tracked.

The guidance to local authorities is clear. They are responsible for following up any child who is missing from education or at risk of being missing from education. Even if a child is missing from education, it does not automatically mean they have come to harm or have been forced into marriage. But guidance clearly signposts local authorities to possible forced marriage issues so they know what to do and where to refer cases.

The data returns we received from local authorities as part of our evidence gathering for the Select Committee demonstrate that they have put to good use the existing statutory guidance on identifying children not receiving education and have implemented policies and procedures accordingly to enable them to follow up effectively children missing from education.

It is important that local authorities implement robustly the duty to identify children not receiving a suitable education. In March 2008, Ministers asked Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for a view of how well this new duty is being implemented. She indicated that the majority of local authorities inspected since April 2007 have good procedures in place for tracking children and young people missing from education. Ofsted is currently undertaking a further review of the approaches that a small sample of schools and local authorities are taking, and its findings will inform the revisions to the statutory guidance for children not receiving suitable education.

Update

Work is well underway to respond to these recommendations.

Ofsted is in the final stages of its review of a sample of local authorities to ascertain how the duty to identify children not receiving a suitable education is being implemented. Ofsted aims to report its findings to DCSF in September 2008, and is considering making the report publicly available the same month. Ofsted's findings will be taken into account when finalising revised statutory guidance for local authorities on this duty, alongside the responses to the public consultation on revisions to the guidance that began in August 2008. The consultation version of this revised guidance contains a number of updates including stronger safeguarding messages, along with details of potential data definitions for local authorities to use when sharing information about children not receiving a suitable education. The consultation runs until 24 October, with the intention to publish final revised guidance in late Autumn 2008.

Recommendation

17. We consider that the measures outlined by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for Children, Schools and Families—to develop a standard definition for local authorities, and reissue guidance on children listed as 'not in suitable education'—are urgently necessary as a first step to standardising data collection between schools and local authorities. However, more action is needed. We recommend that as a matter of urgency the Government commission research into the relationship between trends identified through cases of forced marriage and data collected by schools. In this, we support the broad framework for research set out by the Joint Director for the Association of Directors of Children's Service, John Gaskin. (Paragraph 168)

July Response

We support the need for new research on this issue and are willing to consider funding it from the DCSF research budget. We agree with the recommendation by the Association of Directors of Children's Services that a range of different research methods should be used

in combination to provide better information on the problem of forced marriage. This new research is likely to comprise further analysis of existing data, case studies to explore in depth what happened in specific cases of forced marriage and which agencies knew and what they did, plus research on best practice in preventative work with young people at risk.

This will contribute to wider work across government to improve data on forced marriage.

Update

We are progressing with commissioning research to look at the data available on forced marriage, and seek evidence of best practice in dealing with cases of forced marriage. This work is being taken forward working in partnership with ADCS, and we hope to make the results available in April 2009.

Recommendation

18. We did not investigate the relationship of children listed as being home-schooled to possible cases of forced marriage. However, the link made by experts between home-schooling and forced marriage is troubling, and we recommend that the Government include this issue in a revision of data collection and procedures for identifying cases of forced marriage and child protection. (Paragraph 169)

July response

When developing our research in response to recommendation 41, we will include the issue of home schooling.

Local authorities already have a duty to establish the identities of all children in their area who are not receiving a suitable education, the guidance on which is currently being revised and strengthened. This duty will be supported from May 2009 by ContactPoint which will hold “educational setting” data for all children in England: this will identify children where no educational setting is included in the child's record. It will also enable local authorities to identify home educated children whose parents have not been in contact with the local authority.

Parents have a longstanding right to educate their children at home. The elective home education guidelines (published on 29 November 2007) clarify the balance between the right of the parent to educate their child at home and the responsibilities of the local authority.

As with school-educated children, child protection issues may arise in relation to home educated children. If any child protection concerns come to light in the course of engagement with children and families, or otherwise, these concerns should be dealt with using established protocols for child protection.

Update

The standard data definitions (recommendation 38) cover children who are home-schooled and the consultation on the revised statutory guidance to local authorities in England to identify children not receiving a suitable education includes a strengthened section on local authorities' powers in relation to home-schooled children.

Recommendation

19. We recommend that Ofsted be tasked, as part of its inspection framework, to inspect schools specifically on their success or failure in tackling domestic violence and forced marriage. This should include the effectiveness of teacher training on these issues, and assessment of the implementation by individual schools of the Forced Marriage Unit Guidelines for Education Professionals. (Paragraph 178)

July Response

We will discuss the report's recommendations with Ofsted.

Update

We have discussed this recommendation with Ofsted and agree with their conclusion that it would not be possible to make specific judgements in school inspections reports on schools' effectiveness in tackling domestic violence and forced marriages. There will be scope within the new very light touch inspection arrangements to consider patterns of absence amongst some groups of pupils, and to discuss such issues with the school. But inspectors will not have access to data to enable them to make reliable judgement on domestic violence and forced marriages, and would not have evidence as to whether, for example, schools were successful in identifying actual levels of domestic violence.

Ofsted will however be considering these issues as part of its rolling programme of safeguarding (and children in care) in local areas. This will form part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment due to be introduced in 2009.

Recommendation

20. We note that ACPO has not yet published its strategy and action plan on "honour"-based violence, and urge it to do so. (Paragraph 203)

July Response

We understand that ACPO will publish their strategy in the coming months.

Update

We understand that ACPO will publish their strategy in October.

Recommendations

21. We welcome the extra investment in units of housing for domestic violence victims provided by the Government. However, despite this investment, there remains a desperate shortage of refuge spaces. Those who flee domestic violence give up their homes, their possessions and move away from family, friends, jobs and possessions. Refuges represent the very last resort for these victims and those who access such services do so in desperation. The Government must not fail in its duty to support these vulnerable people. (Paragraph 218)

22. The Department for Communities and Local Government must urgently investigate the scale of the shortfall in refuge spaces and work with local authorities to ensure that refuge space is sufficient to meet demand across every local authority area. Once it has quantified the scale of the shortfall, it should produce a timetable for delivering the additional refuge places required, and report back regularly on progress against this timetable. (Paragraph 219)

July Response

This Government takes extremely seriously the issue of protection for people at risk of domestic violence. Refuges and other accommodation options such as Sanctuary Schemes have an important role to play. We agree that there is a need to understand better the extent of current service provision and where there are gaps, as there has been no recent comprehensive research in this area. This is why we are commissioning new research this summer that will look at the current provision of supported housing for people experiencing domestic violence and how well it meets current need.

We are not aware of robust recent evidence to support the assertion that there is a “desperate shortage” of refuge provision across the country. Since 2003 CLG and the Housing Corporation have invested over £61m in refuge provision:

- £34 million under the Women Fleeing Domestic Violence programme to build and refurbish 511 units (2003–06)
- Through the Housing Corporation’s Affordable Housing Programme invested over £17 million to provide 153 units of housing (2006–08)
- Through CLG’s Hostels Capital Improvement Programme £4 million to fund 6 refuges (2005–08)
- Through initial allocations for the Corporation’s new Affordable Housing Programme a further £6m to provide 113 rented units. (2008–11)

In 2006/07 the Supporting People programme spent £61.6m on housing related support for victims of domestic violence (compared to £57.4m in 2004–05).

Update

Work will begin in November on a study to look at accommodation and support provision for households at risk of domestic violence will identify the current housing options available to households at risk of domestic violence, and to assess whether this provision meets current need.

It will involve establishing:

- The extent and type of temporary and settled accommodation available for households at risk of domestic violence in England, including the provision of support services delivered to both temporary and settled accommodation, and to households' own homes
- The extent and nature of other options which enable households to remain safely in their homes
- Whether current provision meets the needs of households at risk of domestic violence
- What gaps in provision exist

It is expected to involve both primary data collection as well as the analysis of existing data.

Timetable: work to start in November 2008, and complete in winter 2009.

Recommendation

23. On the question of male refuges, it is clear that there is a need for some emergency housing, perhaps particularly for victims of forced marriage, who can be younger and more isolated. However, it would seem that the need for bed spaces for men is not of the same order of magnitude as for women. We recommend that the Government consider whether or not alternative support might be appropriate for male victims, such as a means-tested grant for accommodation. For male victims of “honour”-based violence or forced marriage, consideration might also be given to using the forced marriage survivor network, launched on April 11, to facilitate short term accommodation of victims with survivors. A possible model for this could be the Albert Kennedy charity, which supports homeless LGBT individuals through facilitating lodgings with LGBT carers. Clearly due care would need to be given to the acute vulnerability of forced marriage victims. (Paragraph 220)

July Response

As part of the research we are commissioning this summer looking at the provision of supported housing we intend to look at provision for specific groups. One of those groups will be male victims of domestic violence. We will work with the voluntary and community sector to look at the appropriateness and effectiveness of our current response and consider, in light of the research findings, whether there is a case for further action.

Update

A study on accommodation and support provision for households at risk of domestic violence will identify the current housing options available to households at risk of domestic violence, and to assess whether this provision meets current need.

It will involve establishing:

- The extent and type of temporary and settled accommodation available for households at risk of domestic violence in England, including the provision of support services delivered to both temporary and settled accommodation, and to households' own homes
- The extent and nature of other options which enable households to remain safely in their homes
- Whether current provision meets the needs of households at risk of domestic violence
- What gaps in provision exist

It is expected to involve both primary data collection as well as the analysis of existing data.

Timetable: work to start in November 2008, and complete in winter 2009.

Recommendations

24. Although we heard some accounts of poor implementation of Sanctuary Schemes, evidence suggests that the schemes have great potential to allow women and children to remain in their own homes, thus minimising disruption to their lives. The schemes are also available to male victims, and may better suit the needs of male victims than refuge space. (Paragraph 225)

25. We heard evidence, however, that some local authorities are using the schemes as 'cheap' alternatives to emergency housing, simply providing a spare lock or bolt. It is vital that Sanctuary Schemes are only employed when this can be done safely and when associated support and protection measures are in place. Where schemes are implemented properly—with victim safety the paramount concern—local authorities must ensure that any savings made in temporary accommodation costs through the scheme are reinvested in domestic violence services. (Paragraph 226)

26. We urge the Minister to carry out a national evaluation of Sanctuary Schemes, as he proposed, and publish the findings. Guided by the evidence we heard, this evaluation should explicitly consider: whether schemes are providing adequate security, or being used as a 'cheap' option; whether local authorities are offering women any choice, or whether women refusing the scheme are classed as 'intentionally homeless'; and how any costs saved in temporary accommodation can be ring-fenced for investment in other domestic violence services. (Paragraph 227)

July Response

We will commission research this summer that will look at the effectiveness of Sanctuary Schemes and other housing interventions that help tackle domestic violence.

As Sanctuary Schemes began and spread across the country we initially relied on the data and research carried out by the individual local authorities operating the scheme themselves. Much of the evidence centred on customer satisfaction and the initial surveys were very encouraging. For example customer satisfaction surveys carried out in Barnet revealed 90% of users felt safer in their home after works were completed. However relying on this data alone is not enough and as the scheme has grown so has the potential evidence base.

We cannot emphasise enough that a change of locks alone does not constitute a Sanctuary Scheme. That kind of behaviour is simply wrong and can leave victims at risk. The guidance 'Options for Setting up a Sanctuary Scheme' sets out clearly what measures a partnership needs to take—from ensuring a robust risk assessment takes place to make sure the victim is safe right through to ensuring that the appropriate support is also available.

A victim who has opted for a Sanctuary Scheme so that they can remain in their own home but who subsequently flees that home because they are still at risk of violence should not be found intentionally homeless if they seek further help from the local authority. Where someone has agreed to have the security of their home strengthened in the genuine belief that it would make it safe for them to live there but they subsequently have to leave because the measures have been ineffective, they would not have brought homelessness on themselves through their own action or inaction. Moreover, the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities makes clear that an applicant cannot be treated as intentionally homeless unless it would have been reasonable for him or her to have continued to occupy the accommodation. And, under the homelessness legislation, it is not reasonable for someone to continue to occupy accommodation if it is probable that this will lead to domestic violence or other violence against them or someone who normally lives with them or might reasonably be expected to live with them.

Update

Research on the effectiveness of schemes to enable households at risk of domestic violence to remain in their own homes will begin in November 2008 and complete in winter 2009.

Commonly referred to as 'Sanctuary Schemes', they aim to ensure the safety and security of accommodation occupied by the household at risk of domestic violence, and are often implemented alongside legal measures such as injunctions and restraining orders.

Although 'Sanctuary Schemes' have been an important part of many local authorities' actions to help prevent homelessness, there has been little research into their effectiveness and in identifying 'what works' in terms of ensuring they are a safe and sustainable option for households at risk of domestic violence.

This project will evaluate a number of case study Sanctuary Schemes in order to identify what works in the provision of a Sanctuary. It will highlight examples of good practice, and

use the evidence gathered to update the existing government guidance on the provision of Sanctuaries (see CLG (2006) *Options for Setting up a Sanctuary Scheme*). It will also gather evidence and assess the cost benefits of Sanctuaries.

Recommendation

27. We are very pleased that, during the course of our inquiry, the Government announced that it would introduce measures to help those acutely vulnerable victims of domestic violence who have insecure immigration status and therefore ‘no recourse to public funds’. This should ease the heavy financial burden of supporting these women on the refuge sector. (Paragraph 233)

July Response

We welcome the Committee’s comments in relation to our announcement on ‘no recourse to public funds’. The development of the new scheme which will provide support to victims of domestic violence who are successful in applying for indefinite leave to remain is currently being negotiated and will be implemented later in the year.

The proposals under the new scheme will strengthen the way in which domestic violence cases are considered enabling those victims who are vulnerable to access additional support. Details of the scheme will be made available shortly.

We remain committed to finding a long term solution to support victims of domestic violence who have no recourse to public funds. We will continue to work both within the statutory and voluntary sector to find ways to support this group of women.

Update

Work on negotiating the detail of this scheme is continuing.

Recommendation

28. Many victims of domestic violence suffer long-term physical and mental ill health following abuse, including substance misuse, self harm and suicide. Whilst the Department of Health is funding some therapeutic services for victims of abuse, it is hard to believe that what amounts to £27,083 a year per organisation is anywhere near enough. We urge the Department of Health to increase its funding of mental health and other therapeutic services for victims. (Paragraph 246)

July response

Between 2002 and 2008, DH has provided 20 streams of funding totalling over £1.95m to 12 mental health voluntary and community sector organisations providing therapeutic services for victims of abuse. This funding goes towards their central administrative costs and/or innovative projects.

The funding of health services for individuals suffering the effects of domestic violence is the responsibility of the NHS locally.

The Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IATP) programme seeks to deliver on the commitment to provide improved access to psychological therapies for people who require the help of mental health services. It also responds to service user's requests for more personalised services based around their individual needs.

It will test the effectiveness of providing increases in evidence based psychological therapy services to people with 'common' mental health problems such as anxiety and depression, in providing improvements in health, well-being and in maintaining people or returning people to employment and community participation.

The DH Victims of Violence and Abuse Programme will report in early summer 2008 and will include guidance for PCTs on the impact of domestic violence on mental health. The guidance will emphasise the need for close collaboration with the voluntary sector as well as other statutory agencies in providing a comprehensive service for both adult and child victims of abuse.

Update

The National Violence and Abuse Prevention plan will be launched on 25 November 2008.

Department of Health policy (Implementation guidance: mainstreaming gender and women's mental health, 2003 pertaining to all service users) is that adult mental health services should acknowledge and address the links between violence and abuse and mental ill health, by:

- ensuring staff, once satisfactorily trained, raise issues of violence and abuse routinely and consistently in assessments (both at 'first contact' and at assessment reviews)
- providing appropriate care and support to survivors of abuse through the care programme approach (CPA), subsequent to disclosures

The Mental Health Trusts Collaboration Project pilot learning outcomes will inform national implementation from November 2008: roll-out of the one-day sexual abuse training and publication of supportive practice guidance.

Recommendation

29. We recommend that the opportunity presented by the Housing and Regeneration Bill be used to ensure that domestic violence victims, both with and without dependent children, and with or without an additional vulnerability, are given priority need for appropriate social housing. This is not only of huge benefit to victims, but will also save the Government and the domestic violence sector money in refuge provision, since victims will not be blocking bed spaces in refuges. In line with his suggestion, we recommend that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government undertakes to report back to us on progress at report stage of the Bill. (Paragraph 254)

July Response

During the reading of the Housing and Regeneration Bill we announced that we would look at this matter and determine whether there is evidence that people without dependent children who are at risk of violence are failing to get the help they need and to what extent this was happening. The principal aim of that review will be to provide a sound basis for the Government to consider what changes, if any, need to be made to ensure that no one is expected to return to accommodation where they would be at risk of violence. We are commissioning this research and it will report during summer of 2009.

Update

Work will begin in October to establish the extent to which adults who are neither pregnant nor who have dependant children and who have to leave their homes due to domestic violence are getting the help they need from local authorities to ensure they do not have to return to accommodation where they would be at risk of violence.

The study will establish an estimate of the numbers and circumstances of adults in such circumstances who do and do not receive sufficient assistance from local housing authorities to ensure they do not need to return to accommodation where they would be at risk of violence.

It will establish the types of assistance being provided to these adults—via both statutory and non-statutory means—and the implications for households who do not receive the assistance they need.

Timetable: work will start in October 2008, and complete in winter 2009.

Recommendation

30. We recommend that Ofsted carry out a follow-up inspection of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) response to domestic violence at a national level within the next year, to assess progress following the critical 2005 and 2008 reports. (Paragraph 298)

July Response

DCSF is in discussions with Ofsted about this recommendation.

Update

We will consider, with Ofsted, the recommendation to ensure that domestic violence is considered within the wider context of safeguarding as part of the plans for the inspection programme of Cafcass.

Cafcass continues to prioritise practice improvement, in particular in its private law work. At the end of July 2008, 19% of Cafcass teams are filing private law (section 7, Children Act 1989) reports in less than 12 weeks, with a further 42% of teams filing reports between 13 and 16 weeks of them being requested by the courts. This means that 39% of teams are filing their reports in more than 16 weeks, of which five teams have filing times in excess of

20 weeks (with no team being greater than 22 weeks). This picture, though better than that reported to the Select Committee's original enquiry, needs to continue to improve. Cafcass continues to make strenuous efforts to achieve the further reduction of report filing times.

However, it continues to be important to recognise that cases in which section 7 reports are requested from Cafcass represent only about one third of all private law cases. At least as important an intervention is Cafcass' initial screening and risk identification of all cases received from the courts, in accordance with the risk assessment duty imposed (by section 16A of the Children Act 1989) on Cafcass with effect from 1 October 2007. This duty relates to all private law cases, not only those where section 7 reports may subsequently be requested by the courts, and applies throughout the time that all cases are before the courts. While the main focus of Cafcass' risk assessment work relates to significant harm to children, it is important to bear in mind that the definition of such harm extends to include harm caused by a child witnessing or experiencing the harm of another (in particular, through domestic violence incidents).

In the light of recent adverse Ofsted inspection reports, Cafcass has developed and is actively implementing action plans to respond to the recommendations set out in the reports. On a national level, Cafcass is currently reviewing its Safeguarding Framework (first implemented in 2007) and is in the process of developing, in response to a specific Ofsted recommendation, an initial assessment framework for its private law work, which is based on the Government's *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and Their Families*.

Recommendation

31. We conclude that there is a need for research into the effectiveness of perpetrator programmes in the UK, and urge the Government to consider funding Respect to carry out this work. This should include improvement of the current system of measuring programme success. There is also a need for research to identify the characteristics and criminogenic need of all domestic violence perpetrators, not only those who have been convicted, in order to inform effective interventions. (Paragraph 318)

July Response

There is a programme of research designed to evaluate programmes in the statutory sector. All research into the effectiveness of perpetrator programmes for non convicted and convicted perpetrators is of interest and will be useful in targeting future resources. We will consider if there is scope to expand research in this area. Research will be commissioned through the Ministry of Justice's procurement processes. We recognise the valuable work that Respect undertake and will consider their role in tendering further research in this area.

Update

The National Offender Management Service is committed to ensuring the effectiveness of its programmes. As part of NOMS business planning for 08/09 priorities for further research will be considered against the availability of resources.

Recommendation

32. The Government should set and publish a timetable for implementation of the remaining sections of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act. We look forward to the results of the independent evaluation of those parts of the Act which have already been enacted. We urge the Government to review any parts of the Act which that evaluation identifies as performing poorly. (Paragraph 404)

As the Committee knows there are two sections of the Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004 still to be implemented. We are aiming to implement section 9, domestic homicide reviews, in the Autumn and there are ongoing discussions across Government about when we can implement section 12. The independent evaluation of those parts of the Act which have already been enacted has recently been received and we will consider the findings and recommendations.

Update

We are keen to ensure the successful implementation of measures within the Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004 and are looking at ways to take this forward across Government.

In relation to section 9 we have been working closely across Government and with the Local Government Association to resolve the issue of new burdens and are hopeful that this will be agreed shortly. Guidance on establishing and conducting domestic homicide reviews is in the final stages of approval and will be circulated as soon as the new burdens issue is resolved.

The independent evaluation of those parts of the Act has since been published. Key findings of the research highlighted issues such as:

- the snapshot suggested that impact of the Act had been limited and in some respects unclear;
- a positive impact since common assault became an arrestable offence (as are all offences now)—strengthening and clarifying police powers and positive arrest policy. Early findings indicated an increased use of common assault;
- impact of making breach of non-molestation orders less clear-cut among professionals. Phased entry appeared to have caused confusion. Victims and advocates generally welcomed the measure, on the hope that better enforcement and heavier sanctions would result; and
- no clear link to implementation of this provision and the decrease in applications and order.

The Ministry will, with the full support of the President of the Family Division, reconvene the Family-Criminal Interface Committee before the end of the year. The Committee will consider the research findings, along with concerns voiced recently about the level of injunction applications etc and identify how best to disseminate effective practice procedures for dealing with breaches of non-molestation orders between the two

jurisdictions and between the statutory and voluntary sector agencies. We continue to work with the judiciary and others to improve the family and criminal justice systems' response to victims of domestic violence.

Recommendation

33. We therefore recommend that the Government should adopt a strategy on domestic violence, or on violence against women more generally, to include explicit emphasis of the importance of prevention. We consider that such a strategy would facilitate many of the recommendations we have made in this report, including reducing the current over-emphasis on criminal justice responses, improving prevention and early intervention, ensuring more even distribution and sustainable funding of services, and ensuring the equal commitment of all Government departments to tackling domestic violence. (Paragraph 426)

July Response

In England and Wales we have in place a series of linked plans to address domestic violence (including forced marriage, 'honour-based' violence and FGM), sexual violence, trafficking and prostitution. These Plans have focused attention and funding on these issues on both a national and local level, as reflected in Public Service Agreements 23 and 24 on crime and criminal justice.

However, we recognise the value of taking a fresh look at work to tackle violence through the prism of gender. We are therefore undertaking a scoping project to audit current activity to tackle violence against women and consider what added value a violence against women strategy would bring.

Update

The scoping project to audit current activity to tackle violence against women and consider what added value a violence against women strategy would bring is due to report imminently.