**Response of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the questionnaire from the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health**

**Question 8: Please share examples of good practices and examples of comprehensive health responses to survivors of violence and indicate efficient multi-sectorial efforts at the community, national, regional and international levels by State or non-State actors.**

The UK’s Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) oversaw £2 million of Government funding to expand the pathfinder programme led by the charity Standing Together Against Domestic Violence (STADV) to develop a whole health system response to domestic abuse in acute, community and mental health settings. The programme provided staff training and a support programme to bridge the gap between the voluntary sector and primary care, to harness the strengths of each, and to provide an improved domestic violence service. The toolkit and resources are available online and are free to download: <https://www.standingtogether.org.uk/blog-3/pathfinder-toolkit>.

NHS [National Health Service] England and NHS Improvement (NHSEI) have published a five-year Strategic Direction for Sexual Assault and Abuse Services to ensure victims receive joined-up pathways of care over the course of their lifetime whenever they need it. This Strategy and the NHS Long Term Plan set out our ambition to improve access to services for all victims and survivors of sexual abuse, including children.   
   
DHSC, through NHSEI, commissions 47 sexual assault referral centres (SARCs), which provide an integrated response to sexual violence and rape. We have increased our investment in SARCs each year since 2015/16. SARCs are available to all victims and survivors of sexual violence and abuse, irrespective of age, gender or when the assault or abuse occurred. NHSEI will launch a communications campaign in February 2022 to raise awareness of the support available to victims and survivors through SARCs.

NHSEI are developing local ‘pathfinder’ projects for enhanced trauma-informed mental health support for sexual abuse victims and survivors with the most complex needs.

NHSEI has created a staff policy to address the issue of NHS staff who are victims or perpetrators. This will act as an exemplar template for NHS organisations. NHSEI has published an internal staff domestic abuse policy which speaks to the voice of the victim and survivor of domestic abuse. This document was created with support from lived experience third sector organisations, safeguarding system leaders and internal human resources colleagues. Importantly, it considers how the organisation responds to self-disclosures of staff who may have perpetrated abuse. Due to staff working remotely, specific line manager guidance has also been developed on how to ask and signpost about domestic abuse safely in a virtual setting.

The Government has set out the new multi-agency arrangements for safeguarding children in the ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’ guidance to strengthen safeguarding arrangements locally. This recognises the key role the health sector has to play in identifying and protecting children and young people from harm.

In February 2021, Public Health England published a training module on county lines[[1]](#footnote-1), to support health professionals with identifying and responding to children at risk of involvement in this practice, including intervening to reduce the associated risk factors and enhance the protective factors: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/county-lines-exploitation-applying-all-our-health/county-lines-exploitation-applying-all-our-health>.

In October 2021, the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) was established to improve public health and tackle health disparities across the UK. It provides the opportunity to deliver evidence-based, whole-system approaches to improving public health, working across central and local government, the NHS and wider society.

New partnerships between the organisations that meet health and care needs, known as Integrated care systems (ICSs), are being established across England to coordinate services and to plan in a way that improves population health and reduces inequalities. Integrated care is about giving people joined up support and removing divisions between hospitals and family doctors, between physical and mental health, and between NHS and council services.

These new partnerships will provide greater opportunity to focus on whole system approaches to tackling violence and abuse including preventing and responding to the risk factors associated with violence.

In 2020/21 the Home Office provided funding to the charity IRISi, which provides a range of interventions to support clinicians to recognise and respond to the needs of patients affected by domestic abuse in a range of health care settings. The principal intervention is ‘IRIS’ (Identification and Referral to Improve Safety), which involves the provision of training, support and a referral programme, relating to domestic abuse, for general practitioners. The funding was to enable IRISi to continue to provide an effective service amidst the pressures of the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Question 9: Please describe State and other actors’ initiatives and measures to prevent these forms of violence, specific budget allocated to prevention, and good practices in this regard.**

**Violence against women and girls (VAWG)**

Tackling VAWG is a UK priority. This response focuses on the UK Government response, further information on the work of the devolved administrations can be found [here](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1030018/E02686085_Istanbul_Conv_Progress_Report_Accessible.pdf).

In 2021, Parliament passed the Domestic Abuse Act to transform our response to victims throughout England and Wales and ensure perpetrators are brought to justice.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, currently in the final stages of parliamentary scrutiny, includes measures to tackle VAWG, including:

* piloting a problem-solving court approach for domestic abuse perpetrators; and
* placing the arrangements governing the extraction of information from digital devices on a statutory footing, to protect victims’ privacy better.

The Online Safety Bill, currently in draft, will give companies clear legal responsibilities to understand the risk of harm to users and take steps to improve safety. For illegal content like revenge pornography, companies will have to act to prevent its proliferation online.

Last year we published a cross-Government Tackling VAWG Strategy to help ensure women and girls are safe at home, online and on the streets. It was informed by a national Call for Evidence, which received an unprecedented 180,000 responses.

Within that strategy we committed to a multimillion-pound communications campaign, focused on targeting perpetrators and harmful misogynistic attitudes, educating young people about healthy relationships and ensuring victims can access support. Through the Strategy, we committed to:

* a £5 million ‘Safety of Women at Night’ fund, focused on preventing VAWG in public spaces at night;
* providing £3 million to understand better what works to prevent VAWG and invest in high-quality prevention projects; and
* piloting the StreetSafe tool, which enables the public to report anonymously areas where they feel unsafe and why, so that the police can take actions.

The forthcoming complementary Domestic Abuse Strategy will seek to transform all of society’s response to domestic abuse, to prevent offending, support victims and pursue perpetrators, and to strengthen the systems in place.

We have invested unprecedented sums into tackling domestic abuse perpetrators. In 2020/21, we committed £10 million, including awarding £7 million to Police and Crime Commissioners to support innovative approaches to preventing domestic abuse and reducing reoffending, including expanding projects like [Drive](http://driveproject.org.uk/). In 2021/22, we committed £25 million.

Local authorities are key partners in delivering VAWG services, for example providing refuge accommodation and funding local domestic abuse and sexual violence services. Much of the £151m which the Government is spending on VAWG victim and witness services this year is channelled through local authorities.

The Government approach is informed by independent viewpoints, including Nimco Ali as Independent Government VAWG Adviser, and Nicole Jacobs as the first statutory Domestic Abuse Commissioner.

**Violence against children**

The Tackling VAWG Strategy contains several actions to tackle VAWG crimes which disproportionately affect children, such as FGM and forced marriage.

The Government’s Tackling Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) Strategy (January 2021), sets out a whole-system, cross-Government approach to tackling all forms of CSA, wherever it happens. The Government is working to ensure all victims of CSA are supported to recover and rebuild their lives, through: increasing investment in specialist support services such as advocacy; improving multiagency working in the provision of support services; and consulting on a new Victims’ Bill to enshrine victims' rights in law.

Education is a protective factor for many vulnerable children who experience harm or are at risk of it. To support teachers, the Government strengthened statutory guidance, expanded trials of social workers in schools, and piloted further support for Designated Safeguarding Leads. Relationships, Sex and Health Education is now a statutory part of the curriculum. Its focus on healthy relationships will help children know where to seek help and report abuse and will address inappropriate behaviours, harassment, abuse or exploitation.

**Violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity**

Hate crimes are crimes when, immediately before, during or after the offence, the offender demonstrated hostility towards the victim based upon the victim’s actual or perceived race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or transgender identity[[2]](#footnote-2), or where the offence was motivated by such hostility.

In year ending March 2021, the police in England and Wales recorded 124,091 hate crimes, including 18,596 relating to sexual orientation and 2,799 to transgender identity.

Recognising the harms caused by hate crime, in 2016 the Government launched a Hate Crime Action Plan, which included the Home Office’s development of the Hate Crime Community Project Fund (HCCPF). This funded community organisations to deliver projects which aim to tackle hate crime by working with affected communities. [This report](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/872606/successes-and-challenges-horr115.pdf) provides details.

1. This is the transportation of illegal drugs from one area to another, often although not exclusively across police and local authority boundaries, usually by children or vulnerable people who are coerced into doing so by gangs. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Defined in [section 66(6)(e) of the Sentencing Act 2020](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2020/17/section/66). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)