

Violence against women and girls newsletter

November 2010

INTRODUCTION

On 20 October, the Chancellor presented the Government's Spending Review which fixes the spending budgets for each department up to 2014/15.

So, what do we know? For the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice, for example, the plans mean an overall reduction in the department's expenditure of 23 per cent in real terms. For the Department for Communities and Local Government, the plans mean that central government funding to councils will decrease by approximately 26 per cent over the next four years, however councils' budget should decrease by approximately 14 per cent after the independent Office for Budget Responsibility's projections for council tax are taken into account. For more information please visit www.hm-treasury.gov.uk

Although the overall settlements for departments have been announced, the next stage of the process is to determine what this means for individual programmes like the work the Home Office and Ministry of Justice have been funding to support victims of violence. We will need to match our resources to priorities and it will take us some time to get this right. We will keep you updated.

In the meantime, thank you to everyone who participated in the consultation event in London on 10th September on violence against women and girls. It was a really helpful event and clearly set out the key issues that external partners are facing to support people affected by gender-based violence. The Home Office team are also holding a series of regional meetings with domestic violence co-ordinators to inform the forthcoming strategy.

For more information on any of the updates or if you have any other queries on issues relating to violence against women and girls, please e-mail: VAWGenquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

UPDATES

United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325

31 October marked the 10th anniversary of the UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. This landmark resolution recognises the disproportionate affect that conflict has upon women and underlines their vital role in preventing and resolving conflict. The UN Security Council held a debate to mark the anniversary and build support for Women, Peace and Security issues and to encourage other states to take further practical steps to implement the resolution.

The UK has also agreed a new National Action Plan which will be published in November. This will set out how the Government will integrate Women, Peace and Security into our work on conflict, including specific action plans for priority countries such as Afghanistan and Nepal. Please visit www.fco.gov.uk for more information.

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Gender Equality Duty factsheet

The Government Equalities Office published a Gender Equality Duty fact sheet in July 2009 which explained how the Duty applied to, and could be used by, public authorities. The department has now updated the fact sheet in light of the commencement of the Equality Act and the new Public Sector Equality Duty, which will come into force in April 2011. The new fact sheet is available on the department's website: www.equalities.gov.uk

Consultation on draft practitioner guidance to tackle female genital mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is an extreme violation of women and girls' human rights that the government fiercely condemns and is committed to tackling.

As part of our cross-government work to prevent and confront this illegal and abhorrent practice, we are currently seeking input on draft guidelines for frontline, multi-agency practitioners who will play a key role in the fight against FGM. We would welcome all comments on the draft guidelines by 3 December 2010. For further information, please visit: www.fco.gov.uk/fgm

Review of implementation of guidance to address forced marriages

As part of its continued efforts to tackle forced marriage, the Forced Marriage Unit is currently conducting a review of the implementation of multi-agency statutory guidance to deal with forced marriage issued in November 2008, under the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007.

The review is being conducted to evaluate how agencies (those who exercise public functions in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children; and protecting adults, including those with support needs from abuse) have implemented the requirements and principles laid out in the guidance with a view to identifying patterns, good practice and possible areas for improvement.

We would be grateful if completed questionnaire could be returned to the Forced Marriage Unit by 17th December 2010. For further information and a copy of the questionnaire please visit: www.fco.gov.uk/fmu

Scoping exercise of work to tackle honour-based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation

The Home Office are currently conducting a scoping exercise to determine the level of local activity to tackle cases of honour-based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation. A questionnaire is being sent to all domestic violence co-ordinators and projects/organisations working to tackle these issues, if you would like to take part please e-mail VAWGenquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk Completed questionnaires should be returned by 17th December 2010.

NHS awareness raising campaign

To coincide with International Violence Against Women Day on 25 November, an NHS awareness-raising campaign is being planned. Targeting patients and NHS professionals, guidance will be made available prior to the launch on how to run the campaign locally, with key messages, prevalence facts and various posters and leaflets for trusts to tailor. There will be a ministerial event to mark the launch.

The materials will be available on www.dh.gov.uk/vawc from the first week of November and if you are already planning any communications activity to mark this period, please let us know by e-mailing: violence@dh.gsi.gov.uk

Office for Civil Society launches strategy and consultation

On 14 October 2010, Nick Hurd MP, Minister for Civil society, launched *Building a Stronger Civil Society*, a government strategy for voluntary and community groups, charities and social enterprises.

He also launched *Supporting a Stronger Civil Society*, a Cabinet Office consultation on improving support for frontline civil society organisations. The purpose of the paper is to consult individuals and organisations about proposals for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of support and advice for frontline civil society groups. We would encourage you to respond to this consultation by 6 January 2011. Note that due to specific timing requirements, responses to Question 9 should be sent by 25 November 2010.

Both papers are available on the Cabinet Office website: www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk

“The Prime Minister has put building a stronger sense of society – the Big Society – at the heart of our agenda for Government. Through a radical transfer of power and information we want to inspire more people to come together and drive local solutions to our social problems.”

Nick Hurd MP, Minister for Civil Society

Review of Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences

In September 2010, as part of the coalition government’s Violence Against Women and Girls strategy, Ministers requested that a review of Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) be undertaken to inform our future approach to MARACs. The review, which will report to the Home Secretary by January and will include a survey of all co-ordinators, aims to bring together evidence from a range of sources. The research aims are to explore:

- Existing evidence for effectiveness and cost effectiveness;
- How the MARAC model currently operates within the wider response to domestic violence;
- Variation in current practice amongst MARACs; and
- Future areas for development (including the advantages/disadvantages of placing MARACs on a statutory footing).

Tackling stalking conference

Together with charities and victims, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), the Crown Prosecution Service, the Ministry of Justice and the Home Office have been working to better understand the challenges posed by this distressing and often dangerous crime.

On Thursday 9 December, the ACPO lead on stalking and harassment, Assistant Chief Constable Garry Shewan, will host a conference with appointed Single Point of Contacts for the National Stalking Helpline within police forces and the Heads of Public Protection Units. The day will be used to raise awareness about stalking and share best practice. It will also be an opportunity to highlight areas where further support is needed. This will inform the violence against women and girls strategy and shape future government policy in this area.

Tackling teenage relationship abuse

Earlier this year there was a government-led national campaign to tackle teenage relationship abuse. Building on the success of that campaign we will shortly be making available additional materials to support young people, schools and other front-line professionals to deal with this issue. This will include:

- A leaflet providing information and advice to young people who are worried about this issue;
- A guide for teachers explaining how to spot the signs of abuse and provide effective support; and
- A toolkit for teachers, including lesson plans and resources, to raise awareness about this issue in schools.

The Home Office is grateful to Women's Aid, Against Violence and Abuse and Womankind Worldwide for all their work in developing these materials, which will be available on the Home Office website on 25 November.

For more information about the campaign including short films, please visit:

<http://thisisabuse.direct.gov.uk>