



Government
Equalities Office

Putting equality at the heart of government

**Women's Changing Lives
Priorities for the Ministers
for Women
One Year On Progress Report**

July 2008



Women's Changing Lives Priorities for the Ministers for Women One Year On Progress Report

Presented to Parliament by
The Lord Privy Seal, Leader of the House of Commons
and Minister for Women and Equality
by Command of Her Majesty

July 2008

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Foreword



The Government is, and always has been, the champion of equality and fairness for women. We have done a great deal to support families, tackle violence against women, and promote equal representation since I announced last July that these are the Government's priorities for women.

But progress has not been without a struggle. We must, and will, go further. Last month I outlined details of a strong new Equality Bill, because we are not satisfied and we must do more.

On families

Families are the bedrock of society. To support families we have doubled the number of quality affordable childcare places, introduced the right to request flexible working, backed up families with tax credits, narrowed the gender pay gap, improved maternity rights, and introduced paid paternity leave.

Parental leave and pay will be further increased, flexible working extended to parents of older children, and more help given with accessing good quality affordable childcare.

Just as we are backing up families with children, we will back up families who are caring for elderly or disabled relatives. The number of people over 85 is set to double in the next 20 years. That's why we announced last month more respite care, more support, and more financial help for Britain's growing army of family carers.

And we've given carers the right to request flexible working so they don't have to give up their job. But most are not aware of this right, so we will launch a major campaign to make sure that they know about it.

On tackling violence against women

Trafficking women for sexual exploitation remains a problem in the UK. We've changed the law, we're backing up Police operations and the Crown Prosecution Service, and we're working across Europe. But men paying for sex fuels this evil trade, so we will do more to tackle the demand side of prostitution.

We have reviewed the law of murder and propose to abolish the provocation defence, whilst creating two new defences including one for those who kill out of fear of serious violence. At the moment a man who pleads he was provoked by his wife, for example by sexual jealousy, could have his sentence reduced from murder to manslaughter. The proposed changes mean that this will no longer be acceptable.

And we are taking a different approach to the way female offenders are treated, acting on recommendations made by Baroness Corston, pressing ahead with more non-custodial sentences combined with help for the problems which led them into crime.

On equal representation

A modern democracy must be fair and equal. The Government has fought for equal representation and it's because of this that we have record levels of women MPs, as well as more black and Asian MPs and councillors than ever before. But we need more women and more Black, Asian and minority ethnic MPs and councillors to make our democracy truly representative.

That's why in March I announced that political parties will be able to use all women shortlists for another five elections, and why in May we launched a taskforce to increase the number of Black, Asian and minority ethnic women who are councillors. I welcome the Speaker's Conference, prompted by the Prime Minister's *'Governance of Britain'* agenda, to further help increase the number of women and black and minority ethnic MPs.

I would like to thank my Deputy Minister for Women Barbara Follett, the Solicitor General Vera Baird, the Government Equalities Office, my colleagues across Government, the Woman's National Commission and all the stakeholders who play a huge role and campaign for change for women.

There is still a long way to go. I'm determined that the Government will do more in these important areas over the coming years.

The Rt Hon Harriet Harman QC MP
Minister for Women and Equality

Executive summary

This report shows that the Government has made significant progress against the Ministers for Women priorities, laid out last July, which are:

- Supporting women and families who are caring for children and elderly relatives;
- Tackling violence against women, and changing the way we treat women offenders; and
- Increasing the representation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic women

The last year has marked a sea change in attitudes towards equality with the establishment of the new Government Equalities Office, which is responsible for the Government's overall strategy, legislation and priorities on all equality issues, as well as the launch of the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Since July 2007, the Government has:

Priority 1: Supporting Families Caring for Children and Older and Disabled Relatives

- Decided to extend the right to request flexible working to parents of children aged 16 and under – helping an additional 4.5 million parents.
- Announced that there will be a major information campaign to raise awareness of who has the right to request flexible working, as currently only one in two people know who is eligible.
- Launched a new strategy to support people who care for others, including much needed breaks and financial help.
- For the first time, committed to a target to narrow the gender pay gap. Despite falling by nearly five percentage points in the last decade, men working full time are still paid on average 12.6 per cent more than women working full time, and nearly 40 per cent more than women working part time.
- Set out radical proposals to improve transparency on gender pay in “Framework for a Fairer Future – The Equality Bill”, which include banning ‘gagging clauses’ which stop people talking about and comparing their salary; working with business to develop a new equality “kite-mark”; and collecting more evidence on how effective equal pay audits may be in narrowing the gender pay gap. Requesting the Equality and Human Rights Commission to conduct inquiries into particular sectors, such as Finance and construction sectors.

- Announced significant new investment in the extended schools programme, children's centres, early years education, and childcare.
- Announced £12.5 million to help women set up their own business, as well as improved advice and mentoring in the Enterprise Strategy.
- Sponsored the 'Quality Part-Time Work' programme with some 13 projects across the country to improve the availability of good quality part-time work opportunities.
- Held a major conference on Trade Union Equality reps showcasing their work and exploring ways to strengthen their roles.
- Identified 'Exemplar Employers' highlighting best practice on gender pay and flexible working.

Priority 2: Tackling Violence Against Women and Improving the Treatment of Women who Commit Crimes

- Published in April 2008 '*Tackling Violence Against Women: a Cross-Government Narrative*', which set out how different departments across government are working together to tackle violence against women.
- Created a cross-government £1 million emergency fund to support rape crisis centres which provide vital support to rape victims.
- Reviewed the law of murder, looking at the partial defences to murder of provocation and diminished responsibility, complicity in relation to homicide, and infanticide. We propose to abolish the provocation defence, replacing it with two new defences including one for those who kill out of fear of serious violence.
- Ministers met with members of the newspaper and advertising industry and guidance has since been tightened up. Many newspapers are now refusing offending adverts.
- Published a report entitled '*Women Not for Sale*', highlighting how small ads in newspapers can fuel demand for women trafficked for sexual exploitation.
- Set up a review to look at what more can be done to reduce demand for prostitution. This included visits to Sweden and the Netherlands to look at legislative and non-legislative approaches to prostitution and how other jurisdictions are tackling human trafficking for sexual exploitation. The review will report later in 2008.

- Made significant improvements in the treatment of women offenders (many of whom are vulnerable and have young children) through implementation of the Government's response to Baroness Corston's review last year, including: piloting changes to full body search procedures in women's prisons; an upcoming pilot to increase the use of conditional caution; exploring the use of other alternative and community-based sentences for women who are not violent; and prevention of offending through better support for women's centres which provide services to vulnerable women.

Priority 3: Increasing the representation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Women

- Launched a new taskforce, chaired by Baroness Uddin, with a specific remit to encourage more Black, Asian and minority ethnic women to step forward to become a local councillor as they currently make up less than one per cent of councillors across England, despite making up more than five per cent of the population.
- Commissioned research on the routes into public life and politics for BAME women, plus a series of fact sheets on women's and BAME women's representation in public and political life.
- Announced in March that we will be legislating to enable political parties to use all-women shortlists until 2030. There are now record levels of women in the UK Parliament, but women still make up only 20 per cent of MPs compared with less than nine per cent before 1997. This is still gross under-representation as women make up more than half of the population.
- Announced that targets will be set on public appointments for women, race and disability.
- Announced that we will consider with the Commissioner for Public Appointments whether a specific power to encourage diversity for appointments within her remit would assist her.
- Held a major event in July to increase the number of women appointed to public bodies, bringing together women's organisations, head hunters and government departments. This includes a new project led by the Women's National Commission to raise awareness of vacancies and increase the number of applications from women.

- Launched the National Muslim Women's Advisory Group (NMWAG) set up by the Department for Communities and Local Government to advise Government on increasing their participation in civic, economic and social life. Members of the group will act as Ambassadors and role models, and provide leadership for Muslim women.
- Commissioned research into the opportunities for BAME women to start social enterprises.
- Announced £1.5 billion over three years in the *Working Neighbourhoods Fund*, to help get people from deprived areas back to work.
- Launched the *Women Take Part* campaign in October 2007, which provides models and networks to help women get involved in decision making and enter public life.
- Announced that under the Equality Bill, employers will be allowed to take positive action to increase the number of staff from under-represented groups, provided candidates are equally qualified, and so allow workforces to better reflect society.

Finally, this report outlines activity which the Ministers for Women and Equality and Ministerial colleagues intend to make a reality before the end of the current Parliament.

I: Supporting families caring for children and older and disabled relatives

Families matter to all of us. They help shape children to become responsible members of our society. Everyone has a stake – whether they have children or not - in ensuring that young people are properly brought up and in providing the practical support to families to achieve this. The Government has already built a strong foundation of support for families, and recognises that further progress is needed to allow all families to make real choices about how they live their lives. Much has been done but we intend to do more: what matters to families must be at the heart of policy making.

Rather than being separate to economic and social policy, family policy is central to it. Many cross-cutting issues on the equalities agenda rely upon the success of family policy so we must continue to ensure that Government support is joined up. But at the same time family policies must be respectful of family autonomy and different family types. The Government must listen to parents, not dictate answers to them.

The strong foundation for families built so far supports families in critical areas of their daily lives – more free and subsidised childcare available at times when parents want it; higher incomes for the lower paid; more money for women on maternity leave; paternity leave and paternity pay for fathers; more protection at work from unfair treatment and discrimination; more personalised help in finding work; and the right to request flexibility in working patterns. These are all things that enable both men and women to balance their work and family responsibilities and build stronger families and communities.

Actions outlined here taken to support families also support another major objective – reducing the persistent inequality between men and women's pay (the 'gender pay gap').

Since 1997 the Government has:

- Given over 6 million people (parents of young or disabled children and carers of adults) the right to request flexible working;
- Doubled the level of maternity pay, more than doubled the maternity payment period, introduced one year maternity leave for all pregnant employees and introduced paternity and adoption leave and pay;
- Created the right conditions to support the doubling of registered childcare places to over 1.29 million.

Since July 2007, the Government has:

- For the first time, committed to narrowing the Gender Pay Gap in a Public Service Agreement (PSA 15);
- Announced significant new investment in the extended schools programme, children's centres, early years education and childcare;
- Launched the revised National Carers Strategy, which sets out the framework for developing support for carers that is fit for the 21st century.

By the end of this Parliament, the Government

will have:

- Extended the right to request flexible working to parents of children 16 and under— helping an additional 4.5 million parents;
- Led a campaign to ensure parents (especially fathers), carers and employers are aware of the right to request flexible working;
- Introduced an Equality Bill to strengthen protection against discrimination as well as simplifying the existing laws.

Intends to:

- Extend Statutory Maternity Pay, Maternity Allowance and Statutory Adoption Pay from 39 week to 52 weeks;
- Give a new right to fathers to take up to 26 weeks Additional Paternity Leave before their child's first birthday to allow mothers to return to work earlier should they wish.

Flexible Working

Since 1997 the Government has:

- Introduced in 2003 the right to request flexible working for parents of young children and parents of disabled children under 18;
- In April 2007, extended the right to request flexible working to carers of adults. This increased the total number of people with the right to request flexible working to over 6 million.

Since July 2007, the Government has:

- Committed to extending the right to request flexible working to parents of children 16 and under. This recommendation will lead to an extra 4.5 million parents in Britain gaining the right to request flexible working, with effect from April 2009.

By the end of this Parliament, the Government

will have:

- Launched an awareness raising campaign aimed at parents, carers and employers to improve knowledge and understanding about the right to request.

Intends to:

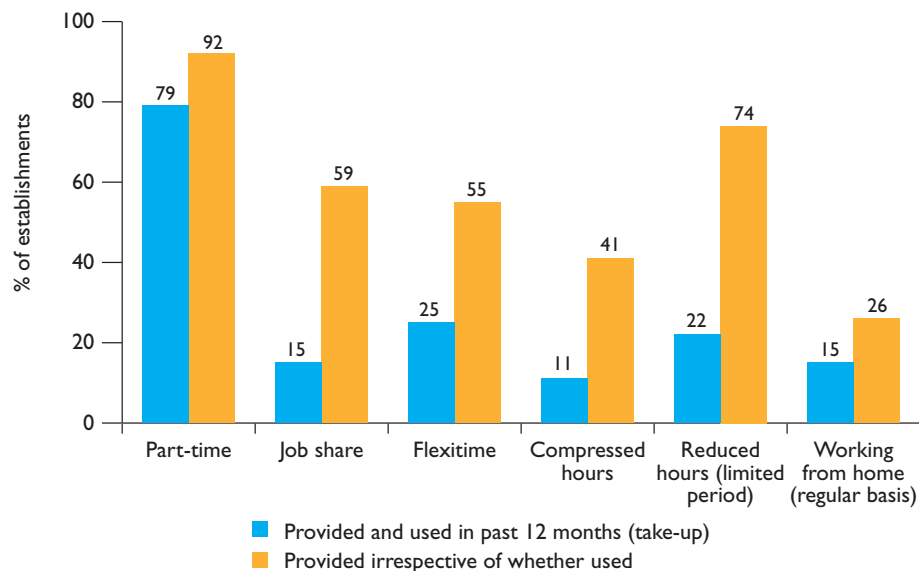
- Give a new right to fathers to take up to 26 weeks Additional Paternity Leave before their child's first birthday to allow mothers to return to work earlier should they wish.

Balancing earning a living with bringing up children can be immensely challenging. Mothers need more flexibility at work and fathers want to play a bigger part in bringing up their children. Awareness, availability and take-up of flexible working have increased significantly since we introduced the right to request flexible working in 2003 for parents of young children and disabled children under 18:

- Almost two-thirds (65 per cent) of working parents with dependent children under 6 now say they are aware of the new right for some employees to request flexible working compared with 56 per cent for all employees. However, awareness among carers is much lower;

- 14 million employees work flexibly, or have done so within the last 12 months. The right to request flexible working for parents has proved to be a success with employers and employees – nearly 4 out of 5 requests have been agreed by employers;
- In 2007, 95 per cent of workplaces reported at least one of six flexible working arrangements was available to employees – an increase since 2003 (88 per cent) and 85 per cent said that at least one of these arrangements had been used in the previous year;
- Part-time working has become near universal, available in 92 per cent of workplaces, (compared to 81 per cent in 2003). At the same time, other forms of flexible working, such as compressed hours working, job sharing and flexitime have also increased significantly.

Availability and Take Up of Flexible Working



Source: Work life Balance Survey, BERR, 2007.

Financial and Employment Support

Since 1997 the Government has:

- Introduced in April 2003 a new framework of support for families and low-income working households through the Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit. These represent the biggest financial boost for families with children since the introduction of Child Benefit.
- Introduced measures since 1997 that have cut the number of children in relative poverty by 600,000;
- More than doubled the flat rate of statutory maternity pay and Maternity Allowance from £55.70 to £117.18 a week, and increased the payment period from 18 to 39 weeks;
- Introduced parental, paternity and adoption leave rights, and increased maternity leave to 12 months.

Since July 2007, the Government has:

- Announced a further package of support for families in the 2008 Budget. We doubled the amount of child maintenance a parent on benefits can keep before it is taken into account in their income-related benefits. This is now worth £20 a week to a parent with the main caring responsibility. In addition, the Budget announcement included increases to Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit from April 2009. These Budget 2008 measures together with those in the Pre-Budget Report and Budget 2007 will help lift around 500,000 more children out of relative poverty by 2010–2011.

By the end of this Parliament, the Government will have:

- Increased the child element in Child Tax Credit by a total of £250 (above indexation) by 2010–2011. The first £175 of this increase was put in place from April 2008.
- Increased the rate of child benefit to £20 a week from April 2009.

Today more than 70 per cent of women in the United Kingdom are in paid employment, a major increase compared with 56 per cent working in 1971. The Government wants women to be able to take up opportunities for employment and be paid fairly for the work they do. It has created a package of support aimed at encouraging women who choose to, to enter paid work

as well as providing financial assistance to low earners. Entering, staying and progressing in work remains the best route out of poverty for families.

The Government has announced new measures to support lone parents into work. From October 2008, eligibility for lone parents to Income Support will be reduced. Currently lone parents with a child under 16 are eligible, but this age will be reduced – initially to 12 and eventually to 7 by autumn 2010.

In the place of Income Support, lone parents will be able to access a more appropriate benefit. Those eligible for Jobseeker's Allowance will be expected to look for and be available for suitable paid work in return for personalised help and support. In addition to the tax credits and childcare help available to all working parents, the Government has announced the introduction of additional pre/in work support to help lone parents into work, as well as help for them to remain and progress in work. This extra help for those moving off benefits includes the In-Work Credit, which is designed to help participants cope with the financial aspects of moving from welfare to work. It is a payment of £40 per week (£60 in London) made to lone parents who have been on benefits for 12 months or more and leave benefit for work of 16 hours or more per week.

Alongside the Budget 2008, the Government reaffirmed its commitment to eradicating child poverty by 2020 and acknowledged that more will be done to achieve this goal. It announced investment of more than £125 million over the next three years in child poverty pilots to draw on new ideas to tackle child poverty over the long term. The pilot approaches include:

- An In-Work credit for second earners and partners of the unemployed, to explore how potential additional earners could be better supported to engage with the labour market;
- Basing advisers from the Department, HM Revenue & Customs, in 30 children's centres across 10 Local Authorities, to give parents financial advice about tax credits. Centres will also provide practical support and training for parents who want to go back to work;
- Providing new child development grants of £200 in 10 local authority areas, payable where parents take up childcare places and have contact with their local children's centre.

Women's Enterprise

Since 1997 the Government has:

- Established a Task Force on Women's Enterprise in November 2006 to increase the number of women led small businesses;
- Worked with key partners, such as Regional Development Agencies, to support the development of women's enterprise, including a national network of 1000 women's enterprise ambassadors.

Since July 2007, the Government has:

- Published the Enterprise Strategy, which set out a range of measures to support women aiming to set up or grow their own businesses.

By the end of this Parliament, the Government will have:

- Implemented a number of the commitments in the Enterprise Strategy, including:
 - Setting up a Women's Investment Fund with £12.5 million from Government for a joint equity fund primarily to invest in women led businesses;
 - Piloting women's business centres – providing advice and support for women to build their confidence, skills and knowledge. The pilots will run in the South East, East of England, East Midlands and North West regions;
 - More mentoring support – championing a national mentoring network for women in business; and
 - Media campaign – the Government will run a media campaign to develop the awareness and potential of women in enterprise.

The number of women setting up businesses is increasing. About one million women are self-employed (which corresponds to 27% of all the self-employed in the UK) and this number has increased by 17% since 2000.

Setting up a business can bring financial rewards and help women achieve a better balance between work and family life. Many women recognise the attractions of self-employment. In a recent survey, one in five women cited family commitments as a reason for becoming self-employed, while family commitments were only identified by one in fifty men.

But although women recognise the potential benefits, fewer than a third of self-employed people are female. Research shows that women are less likely than men to believe they have the skills to start a business. They are more likely to fear business failure than men, even though the evidence shows they are no more likely to fail than men.

Encouraging enterprise among women is important not only for women themselves, but for the wider economy. The UK still lags behind the US in terms of business start-ups and most of the gap is explained by the US having more women-led companies than the UK. If we are to achieve the same rates of competitiveness and enterprise enjoyed in America it makes sense to support women to create, build and develop businesses. If women started businesses at the same rate as men, there would be an additional 150,000 more businesses opened up each year.

Gender Pay Gap

Since 1997 the Government has:

- Established the Women and Work Commission, which made a wide range of recommendations in its 2006 report on closing the gender pay gap. The Government has implemented the majority of these recommendations. These include:
 - Quality Part-Time Work Fund pilots to improve the availability of quality part-time work opportunities;
 - Developing a gender equality checklist to help employers find information on good practice; and
 - An 'Exemplar Employers' programme to promote a range of practices designed to narrow the pay gap.
- Introduced the National Minimum Wage, which now stands at £5.35 and will increase to £5.52 from October 2008. This has made a major contribution to lowering the wage gap between the sexes at the lower end of the income distribution.

Since July 2007, the Government has:

- Committed to narrowing the gender pay gap in a Public Service Agreement. This is the first time a Government has made such a commitment. It means that over the next three years (2008-2011) we aim to reduce further the gender pay gap between men and women through a broad programme of work involving departments right across Government.

By the end of this Parliament, the Government will have:

- Introduced measures through the Equality Bill which ensure greater transparency and encourage equal pay;
- Built upon the success of the Women and Work Commission by reviewing the implementation of its recommendations and identifying where future progress can be made.

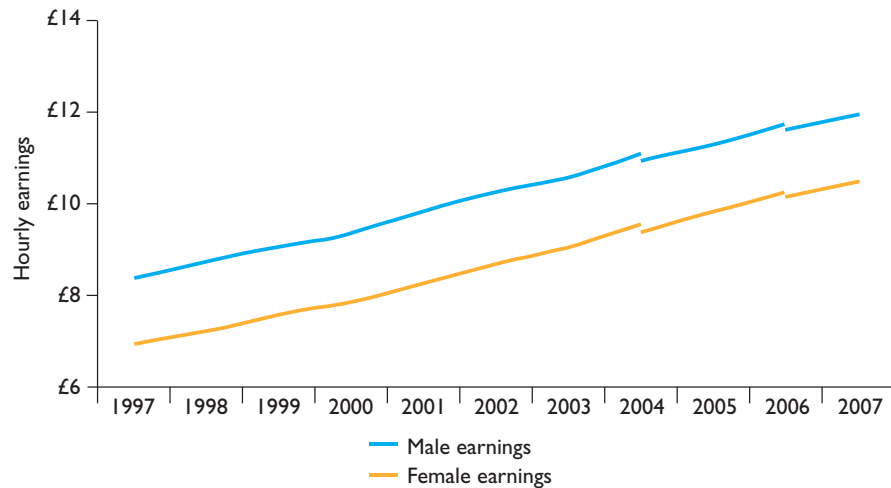
Government Action to reduce the Gender Pay Gap is having an impact. The gap between men and women's pay fell from 17.4% in 1997 to 12.6% in 2007.

Despite the range of support provided by the Government, the gender pay gap is persistent and continues to have a negative effect on women and

families. The economic reality is that when a new baby arrives and the father is earning much more than the mother, the father tends to continue to work full-time while the mother is more likely to cut her hours in paid employment to care for the child. So the pay gap entrenches the division of labour in the home.

The gender pay gap has been falling steadily since 1997. Both men's and women's earnings have grown steadily over the period, as shown in the chart on median earnings below, and women on average now earn around 87p for every £1 earned by men, compared to 83p in 1997.

Pay Levels by Gender since 1997 – median earnings



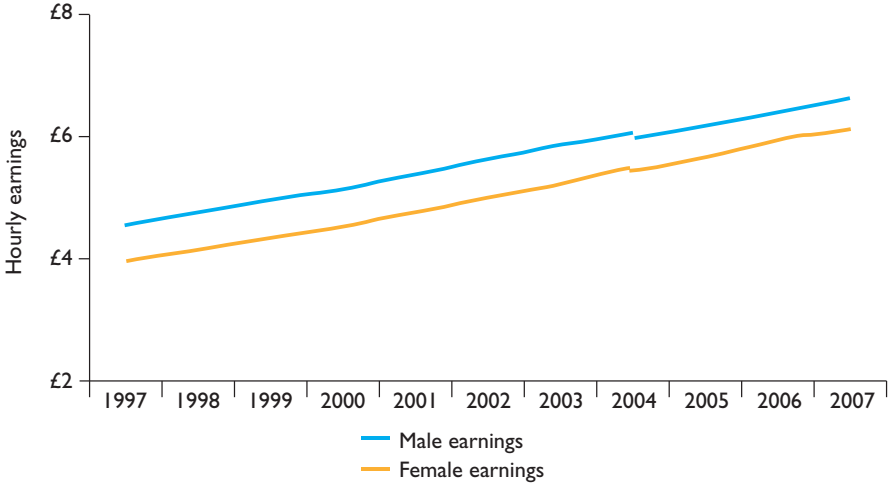
Source: Annual Survey of Hourly Earnings.

Based on hourly earnings excluding overtime of full time employees on adult rates.

The following years (2004-2006) include supplementary survey information and are discontinuous with the 1997-2004 back series. 2007 follows a new methodology – two data points exist for 2006 based on each methodology.

Looking beyond average earnings between all men and all women provides clues to the drivers of differences in pay for men and women and the changes required to reduce them. It is notable that at the lowest end of the labour market the pay gap is very small – likely to be due in part, at least, to the minimum wage.

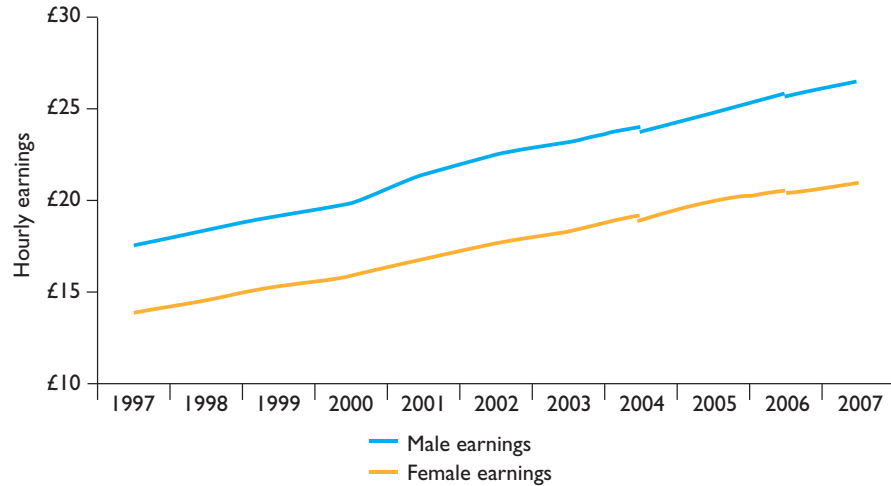
Difference in Pay Levels Between Men and Women since 1997: Low Paid Workers



Source: Annual Survey of Hourly Earnings.
Based on hourly earnings excluding overtime of full time employees on adult rates.
The following years (2004-2006) include supplementary survey information and are discontinuous with the 1997-2004 back series. 2007 follows a new methodology – two data points exist for 2006 based on each methodology.

Although the gender pay gap has narrowed for low paid workers, in recent years the pay gap has actually widened for top earners. This is because high earning men have experienced the fastest earnings growth of anyone during that period and women have been left behind.

Differences in Pay Levels between Men and Women since 1997: High Paid Workers



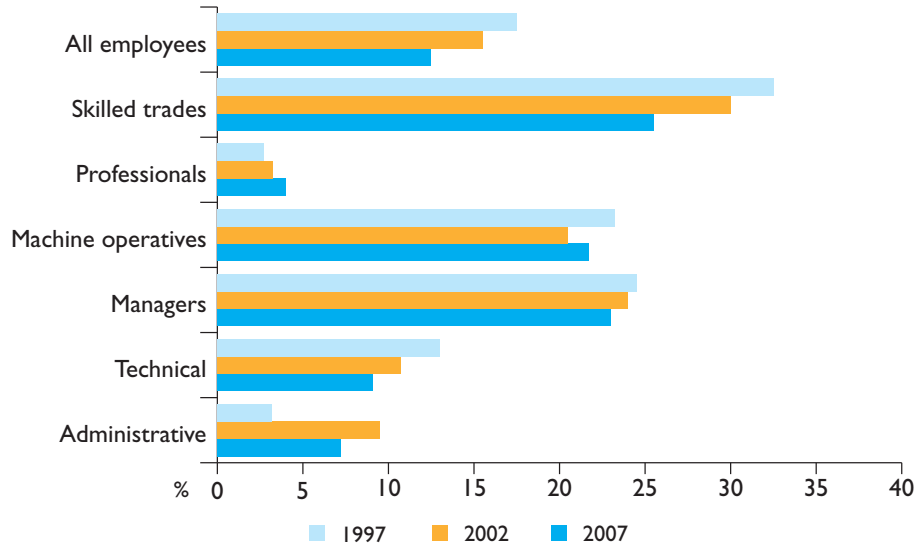
Source: Annual Survey of Hourly Earnings.

Based on hourly earnings excluding overtime of full time employees on adult rates.

The following years (2004-2006) include supplementary survey information and are discontinuous with the 1997-2004 back series. 2007 follows a new methodology – two data points exist for 2006 based on each methodology.

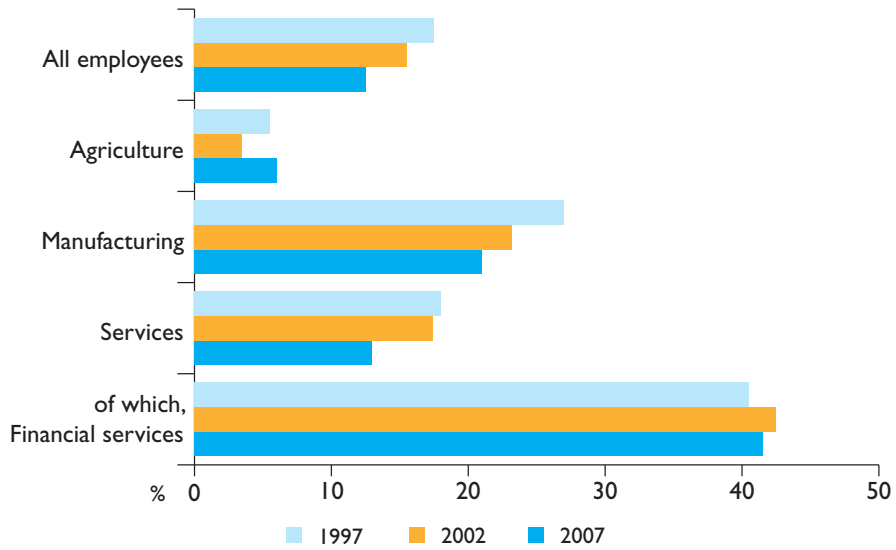
The gender pay gap is a feature of certain occupations and sectors. Particular occupations and sectors tend to be more highly paid than others. Those more highly paid tend to be dominated by men. For example there are ten times as many skilled tradesmen as skilled tradeswomen (1.7 million compared to 0.2 million) and the pay gap is large. Whereas in 'professional' occupations the balance of men and women is more even (1.7 million men compared to 1.5 million women) and the pay gap is narrow.

Gender Pay Gap: by Occupation



Source: Annual Survey of Hourly Earnings.
Based on hourly earnings excluding overtime of full time employees on adult rates.

Gender Pay Gap: by Sector



Source: Annual Survey of Hourly Earnings.
Based on hourly earnings excluding overtime of full time employees on adult rates.

The pattern varies, however, between occupational sector. Despite having a large female workforce, the financial sector has a large gender pay gap (see chart above). This may be due to men and women doing different jobs within the sector.

Clearly there is a role for Government to take action to reduce the differences in men and women's pay and we are committed to building on what we have done to date and further reducing this inequality. Our Equality Bill for example outlines more solid measures to help reduce the pay gap.

Key among these is the commitment to increase **transparency** in pay matters. With transparency it is much easier to see where unequal pay exists and therefore do something about it. That means firms and employees are more likely to discuss their pay and challenge any pay inequality. We will be seeking to increase transparency in the public and private sectors by a variety of means, including:

- Ban secrecy clauses which prevent people discussing their own pay;
- We want public bodies to report on important inequalities: gender pay gap, employment of disabled people and ethnic minority employment;
- £160 billion is spent every year by the public sector on British businesses – Government will look at how public procurement can be used to deliver transparency and change in the private sector;
- The Equality and Human Rights Commission will conduct a series of inquiries in sectors where there is clear inequality, for example the gender pay gap in financial services is 41.5% compared with the national figure of 12.6%;
- We will work with business to improve transparency in the private sector, in particular through the introduction of a new “kite-mark”, and gather and publish evidence on the effectiveness of equal pay audits in closing the gender pay gap.

Childcare

Since 1997 the Government has:

- Invested over £21 billion in early years and childcare services. This includes investment in the early years element of Dedicated Schools Grant funding to Local Authorities to support free early education for 3 and 4 year olds;
- Provided substantial help (totalling over £3.5 million a day) to working families with up to 80% of their childcare costs through the tax credit system;
- Doubled the number of registered childcare places in England since 1997 to over 1.29 million.

Since July 2007, the Government has:

- Reached in March the target of 2,500 Sure Start Children's Centres by 2008;
- Provided £265 million for an extended schools subsidy scheme, enabling disadvantaged children and young people to take part in regular, high quality extended schools activities. More than 10,500 schools in England (49 per cent of the total) are now offering a full range of extended services;
- Announced in August 2007 a major cash injection of more than £4 billion for the years 2008 - 2011 to local authorities for children's centres, early years education and childcare.

By the end of this Parliament, the Government will have:

- Implemented the reforms announced in August 2007. These include:
 - Outreach work to reach the most disadvantaged families;
 - Training and support for the early years workforce;
 - Ensuring there is sufficient childcare in each local authority; and
 - Ensuring every nursery and children's centre has a graduate Early Year's professional to lead children's learning and development.

Providing child care opportunities and improving the quality of the services available has been fundamental to the Government's principle of supporting women and their families. In the July 2007 report on the priorities for the Ministers for Women, we set out the Government's 2010 goals. Those goals are to establish a Children's Centre for every community in England (3,500 in all), to ensure every school will offer access to a range of extended services between 8am and 6pm, and to give all three and four year olds access to 15 hours of free early education per week.

The Government is committed to ensuring that quality child care and support reaches the most disadvantaged communities. We will invest more than £4 billion between 2008 and 2011 in children's centres, early years education and childcare. Some of the money will be targeted at the most disadvantaged areas to enable children's centres to employ extra outreach workers to visit parents in their own homes and encourage them to take advantage of the parenting support and other services on offer. The funding will also support childcare sufficiency and affordability - two key issues identified by the consultation on the Ministers for Women priorities. This work will build on:

- Campaigns to inform parents of the benefits of childcare, the choices of care and the financial help available. Recent campaigns have resulted in 106,000 responses, including 16,000 in-depth conversations. Campaigning has been targeted at Pakistani and Bangladeshi families who are less likely to use formal childcare than other ethnic groups. Since the campaign started, we have seen a 42 per cent increase in the number of parents from Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds calling the helpline.
- A project with six local authorities and other experts to explore practical ways for increasing the accessibility of formal childcare to Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) families. The project ran from July 2007 until March 2008 and reports in summer 2008.
- A project to investigate how parent champions can work with parents to promote positive messages about benefits of childcare and offer support to parents to help them navigate their way through the tax credit system. The project ran from August 2007 until March 2008, and reports in summer 2008.

We set a target of 2,500 Sure Start Children's Centres by 2008 and met it in March. Now over 2,900 centres have been established, offering services to more than 2.2 million young children and their families. The 2008

National Evaluation of Sure Start report shows Sure Start Local programmes, the precursors of Children's Centres, having a positive impact on the life chances of children, and providing the support parents want.

The Children's Plan sets out the Government's long-term vision to improve schools and enhance support for parents and families. A pilot which started in 2006 to get 12,000 disadvantaged two year olds into childcare by March 2008 has been extended with an investment of £100 million over three years.

Good progress is already being made on the extended schools programme, which will be supported by an additional £1.3 billion of Government funding over the next three years. More than 10,500 schools in England (49 per cent of the total) are now offering access to a full range of extended services. £265 million of this funding has been provided for an extended schools subsidy scheme, enabling disadvantaged children and young people to take part in regular and sustained high quality extended schools activities.

Quality nursery education is a priority for the Government. Over a million children (96 per cent of three year olds and virtually all four year olds) in England benefit from some free nursery provision. On 7 November 2007, the Government announced £590 million of funding to extend the free early education entitlement from 12.5 to 15 hours each week for 38 weeks a year by 2010 and to make access more flexible. Twenty pathfinder local authorities have been delivering this extended flexible entitlement since April 2007 and another 14 will start in September 2008. All other local authorities will be funded to deliver a free early education entitlement to their 25% most disadvantaged children from September 2009 and to all children a year later. This will give parents greater choice in balancing work and family life as well as helping children get a better start.

A further £642 million of funding has also been made available to nurseries to provide improved outdoor play areas, computers and expanded indoor areas and help them deliver the 15 hours free entitlement. The money will also help improve the quality and capacity of childcare in the Private, Voluntary and Independent sector and equip providers with facilities for children with disabilities so there are no barriers for any child accessing childcare. This further early years and childcare funding underlines the Government's continuing commitment to ensuring that every child gets the best possible start in life.

Since April 2008, every local authority in England and Wales has had a duty to secure, as far as reasonably practicable, sufficient childcare for working parents. All local authorities are required to complete assessments, showing local supply of and demand for childcare – including out of school and holiday childcare – and identifying where gaps exist. Councils have also been required to provide information through their Families Information Services on childcare and other services, facilities and publications which might benefit parents of children and young people aged up to 20. This includes a childcare brokerage service for parents having difficulty in finding suitable childcare.

Substantial help worth over £3.5 million a day is being provided to working families to support 80 per cent of their childcare costs through the tax credit system. The childcare element of Working Tax Credit can, depending on income and eligibility, provide up to £140 a week for one child or £240 a week for two or more children. In April nearly 450,000 lower and middle income families benefited from the childcare element of Working Tax Credit – up more than 40 per cent over four years - with the average weekly help worth £64.19 per family.

Support for Carers

Since 1997, the Government has:

- In 1999, produced the first ever Government Strategy for Carers, *Caring about Carers*;
- Introduced the Carers Grant to help local authorities in England increase the level of support for carers. Since its introduction in 1999 the grant, which stands at £224 million in 2008/9 and is due to rise to £256 million in 2010–2011, has provided over £1 billion of additional support to local councils;
- Made £2.775 million a year available for a national information helpline and website for carers;
- Made £25 million available to local authorities in England to provide short term cover for carers in emergencies (now included in the Carers Grant);
- Made £4.6 million a year available for a training programme for carers, *Caring with Confidence*;
- Introduced the right to request flexible working for carers.

Since July 2007, the Government has:

- Launched its Carers Strategy in June 2008 which sets out the action the Government plans to take, working with partners and building on the progress made by the first carer's strategy, *Caring about Carers*, released by Government in 1999. The new strategy has the widest support across Government: it has been signed up to by 7 government departments, including the Government Equalities Office, and leading third sector organisations. The strategy is underpinned by £255 million to implement some immediate steps together with a long-term plan to address some of the more complex issues.

The £255 million includes:

- £150 million for breaks for carers over the next 2 years;
- Up to £38 million to support carers to enter/re-enter the job market;
- Over £6 million to provide support for young carers.

By the end of this Parliament, the Government will have:

- Started implementing the new strategy, having worked with local, regional and national partners and stakeholders to ensure successful delivery;
- Received further advice from the Standing Commission on Carers about any changes to carers' needs over the next ten years that we need to address.

Caring for family and friends is something that many of us do at some stage in our lives. Every day 6,000 people take on new caring responsibilities, performing a crucial role in families and in their wider communities, by providing support, care and help with day to day tasks to those who otherwise would struggle to manage alone.

Care needs are not limited to one single group. Support might be needed by relatives, friends, children, older people, people with disabilities or those who are ill. Caring is a universal issue – everyone has the potential to become a carer, and it is likely that in the future more and more of us will. The number of people aged over 85 - the age group most likely to need care - is set to double by 2020.

Traditionally caring has been women's work, and 70% of it is still done by women but as our culture continues to change so too will this figure. 9% of men now have caring responsibilities compared with 11% of women. Caring is increasingly part of all our lives.

People who care do so because they want to help the people they care about, but often it means they end up juggling the support they give with other responsibilities, in a difficult balancing act. For many carers, looking after their own health, combining caring with work, getting access to training or simply having time to take a break and go away for a weekend can be a major challenge. People who provide a lot of care tend to have lower incomes, poorer health, and are less likely to be in work than their counterparts.

The Strategy is not the end of the story. Carers and their needs are diverse and we will continue to work with them on short and longer-term plans to make real and meaningful change and truly recognise the vital contribution that carers make to the lives of those they care for and society as a whole.

2: Tackling violence against women and improving the way in which we deal with women who commit crimes

Violence against women, in all its forms, is unacceptable and the Government is committed to taking action to end it. Progress has been made but we still need to do more to combat violence against women – particularly to tackle issues such as domestic homicide, rape and trafficking for sexual exploitation. The Government has also made a priority the need to improve the way we deal with women offenders. In her statement to the House of Commons in July 2007 the Minister for Women and Equality emphasised the injustice of sending so many women to prison – women often suffering from mental health and drug addiction – mainly for minor, non-violent offences.

Since 1997 the Government has:

- Published 'Living without Fear: An Integrated Approach to Tackling Violence Against Women', the first document comprehensively to set out the scope of the problem of violence against women;
- Produced a National Domestic Violence Delivery Plan and annual progress reports.

Since July 2007, the Government has:

- Published its Violent Crime Action Plan, the first of its kind to focus solely on crimes involving serious violence – including sexual and domestic violence;
- Published in April 2008 a document setting out the detail of Government actions to tackle violence against women (*Tackling Violence Against Women: A Cross-Government Narrative*).

By the end of this Parliament, the Government will have:

- Built on and brought together existing workstreams to ensure that our approach to tackling violence against women is co-ordinated, strategic and effectively delivered.

A. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Domestic Violence

Since 1997 the Government has:

- Established Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVCs) and introduced Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs) which have contributed to an improved rate of successful prosecutions for domestic violence offences, rising from 46 per cent in 2003 to 71 per cent in April 2008;
- Introduced the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004) which includes a range of measures that provide additional protection and support for victims and help to bring perpetrators to justice;
- Launched the Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Violence in March 2005, representing approximately 160 companies and over 2 million employees;
- Introduced routine enquiries about domestic violence to all pregnant women. These enquiries take into account social history and, irrespective of responses, provide information about domestic violence support services.

Since July 2007, the Government has:

- Published the first Crown Prosecution Service Violence against Women Strategy and Action Plan in April 2008;
- Introduced a Domestic Violence Co-ordinator into every police force and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) area, and trained all police and CPS prosecutors about domestic violence;
- From 1 April 2008 increased the number of accredited SDVCs to 98 across England and Wales. 111 IDVA services were funded in 2007–2008 to support victims.

By the end of this Parliament, the Government will have:

- Established Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) in all areas by 2011, ensuring that all vulnerable victims of domestic violence will have access to specialist support services;
- Doubled the number of Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVCs) to 128 by 2011;
- Announced details of a new scheme for domestic violence victims with no recourse to public funds;
- Introduced our proposals to reform partial defences to murder, including provocation;
- Published a Department of Health Violence and Abuse Action Plan with four priority approaches identified, to include: addressing alcohol misuse; improving parenting skills; positive and protective relationship skills to prevent violence and abuse for young people; information sharing and partnership working.

Women are more likely to experience domestic violence than men, and are more likely to experience repeat incidents. Around one in four women and one in six men will be a victim of domestic violence, but the majority of those victims suffering four or more attacks are women. In its worst manifestation, domestic violence culminates in murder. The first aim of the national domestic violence delivery plan is the prevention of domestic violence homicides. In 2006–07 the number of domestic violence homicides of women has fallen to 83 – the lowest figure for 10 years. The Government is committed to driving down this number even further.

Domestic Homicides



Note: Homicides currently recorded for all victims where relationship of victim to principal suspect is partner/ex-partner for England & Wales, 1997/8 to 2006/07

Source: Total male/female victims figures taken from table 1.05 of Povey, D. (Ed) 'Homicides, Firearm Offences and Intimate Violence 2006/07' (HOSB 03/08). London: Home Office.

There are still concerns about the way in which offenders can attempt to reduce the charge from murder to manslaughter by claiming that they were provoked. So the children, parents and other loved ones of the victim not only have to endure the pain of loss, but also hear the accused seeking to minimise responsibility for his actions by saying she brought it upon herself by nagging or threatening to leave. The Minister for Women and Equality is supporting the current review of the Law of Homicide, which builds on the recommendations in the Law Commission's 2006 report, "Murder, Manslaughter and Infanticide" and will include consideration of the partial defence of provocation, amongst other issues.

Rape

Since 1997 the Government has:

- Established a network of 19 Sexual Assault Referral Centres;
- Passed the Sexual Offences Act 2003 which modernised the legal framework for sexual offences, and made it easier for prosecutors to meet the legal requirements for proving their case;
- Introduced specially trained officers and specialist rape prosecutors in every Crown Prosecution Service area, as well as improved training and guidance for the police, the CPS and barristers;
- Supported police forces to develop action plans to implement the recommendations of *Without Consent*, a report on the investigation and prosecution of rape which was published in January 2007;
- Piloted Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) in 38 areas to provide advocacy and support for victims.

Since July 2007, the Government has:

- Announced in March 2008 the establishment of a cross-government £1 million emergency fund to support rape crisis centres, with the first round of payments having now been processed;
- Invested a further £1.25 million into specialist Third Sector Services through the Victims Fund and £150,000 into the umbrella organisations Rape Crisis England & Wales and The Survivors Trust.
- Introduced Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs) in our Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs);

By the end of this Parliament, the Government will have:

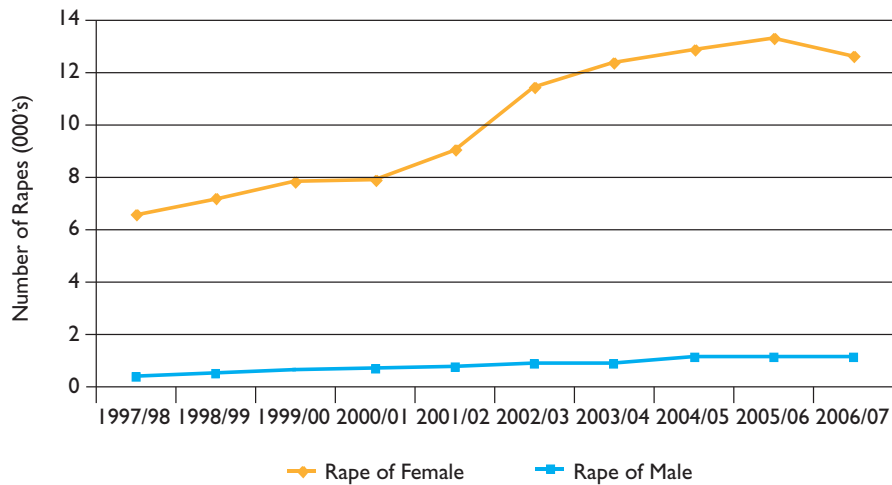
- Increased the number of Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) to 38, ensuring that every victim who reports rape has access to a SARC by 2011;
- Implemented a range of measures to increase successful prosecution for rape, as outlined in the Government response to the Office for Criminal Reform consultation paper, *Convicting Rapists and Protecting Victims – Justice for Victims of Rape*.
- Developed and promoted a coordinated community response to sexual violence to all Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP) as the most effective delivery mechanism for work in this area.

Support for women who have been raped is crucial to help them recover from their ordeal. We are expanding the network of Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs), which provide medical care, forensic examination, and counselling in the aftermath of a sexual assault. The number of SARCs has risen from 5 in 2003 to 19 today and there will be 38 centres by the end of 2009. The Home Office has committed to ensuring that by 2011 every victim who reports rape will have access to a SARC.

Concerns were expressed during the consultation on the Ministers for Women's priorities that the short term nature of funding for rape crisis centres has a significant impact on their ability to help victims. Ministers are keen to resolve these problems. The Stakeholder Advisory Group on Sexual Violence and Abuse (which includes members of Rape Crisis England and Wales) is looking specifically at this issue and we will give full consideration to their recommendations. In March, the Minister for Women and Equality announced the establishment of a cross-government emergency fund to support rape crisis centres. The first payments from this £1 million fund have now been made and the Government Equalities Office (GEO) is about to invite applications for the second and final round of grants. The GEO is working with other departments, particularly the Office of the Third Sector, to investigate how the long-term sustainability of voluntary organisations working with victims of sexual abuse and violence can be enhanced.

Reporting of rape has increased since 1997, with the number of rapes reported to the police rising from 6,628 to 13,780 in 2006-07. This increase does not mean that there have been many more rapes, but rather is an indicator of women's increased willingness to report this abhorrent crime.

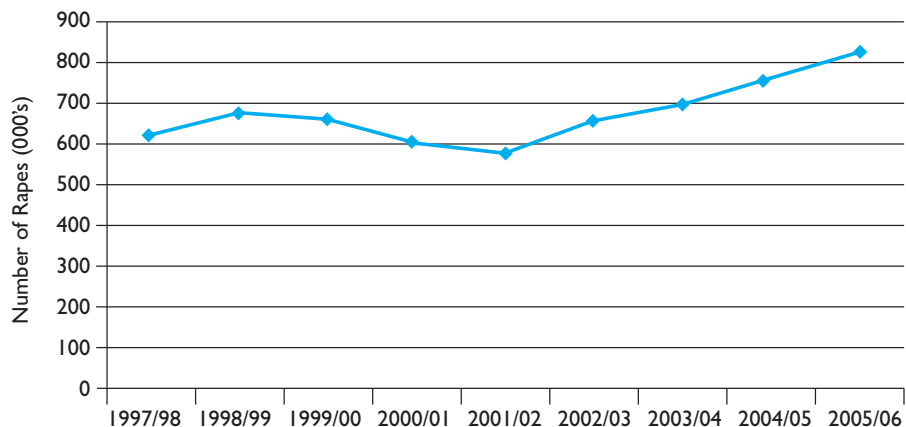
Recorded cases of rape



Source: Home Office Recorded Crime Statistics – Statistical Bulletin 2006/07.

As a result, the criminal justice system is dealing with more cases, many of which hinge on consent. More cases than in the past (see graph below) are resulting in successful convictions for rape. But the 27% increase in the number of convictions has not kept pace with the increase in reporting – meaning that of all cases reported, less than 6% result in a successful conviction. Of cases that are taken to court, 34% result in a conviction. This is the highest the conviction rate has been for a decade and we are working hard to further improve outcomes in rape cases.

Successful convictions of rape



Source: Home Office.

Therefore a cross-departmental Rape Performance Group has been set up with representatives from the Home Office, Office for Criminal Justice Reform, Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), Attorney General's Office (AGO), Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and others to drive up performance in rape cases. The Group, which reports to Ministers, scrutinises the stages at which rape cases fall out of the criminal justice process. Where analysis of data suggests that the performance of particular areas differ significantly from the national average, the Group will raise this with Chief Police Officers and Crown Prosecutors.

The Government has made a range of changes to the legal system and to how the police and Crown Prosecution Service work, to put victims' needs first and to make it easier for cases to get to trial and secure convictions. We have introduced specially trained officers and specialist rape prosecutors in every Crown Prosecution Service area, as well as improved training and guidance for the police, the CPS and barristers. Also, we are supporting police forces to develop action plans to implement the recommendations of *Without Consent*, a report on the investigation and prosecution of rape which was published in January 2007.

We are determined to improve outcomes for rape victims in court. In November 2007, the Government published its response to the Office for Criminal Reform consultation paper, *Convicting Rapists and Protecting Victims – Justice for Victims of Rape*, detailing a range of measures we will introduce to increase successful prosecutions for rape. Measures include:

- Changing the law to make video-recordings of rape victims automatically admissible as evidence-in-chief in trials;
- Legislating, when Parliamentary time allows, to make all complaints of rape by victims to friends, family and others automatically admissible as evidence at trial, irrespective of the time that may have passed;
- Continue to look for ways in which information concerning the psychological reactions of rape victims can be presented to juries in order to challenge myths and stereotypes about victim behaviour.

Human Trafficking

Since 1997 the Government has:

- Criminalised all forms of human trafficking and secured 85 convictions to date (May 2008) under the Sexual Offences Act 2003;
- Launched the UK Human Trafficking Centre in Sheffield, the first of its kind in Europe;
- Formally launched the UK Action Plan on Tackling Human Trafficking;
- Signed the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings;
- Provided £4.5 million over the last 5 years for victim protection via the POPPY project.

Since July 2007, the Government has:

- Accelerated work to implement the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings to enable ratification by the end of 2008;
- Launched the second national ACPO/Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS) led multi-agency operation against human trafficking, known as Operation Pentameter 2. This resulted in 167 victims being identified; 528 criminals arrested and 822 premises visited (582 were residential);
- Published the Update to the UK Action Plan on Tackling Human Trafficking, which highlights progress over the last year and identifies new measures;
- Invested an additional £1.3 million (jointly funded by the Office for Criminal Justice Reform and the Home Office) into the Poppy project;
- Imbedded a Poppy project Outreach Worker into the UK Human Trafficking Centre;
- Published 'Women Not For Sale' in January 2008, a publication dealing with advertisements for personal services in local newspapers;
- Met with the Newspaper Society to discuss tackling classified advertisements offering women for sale and secured their agreement to review their guidance to members.

By the end of this Parliament, the Government will have:

- Ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings. When in force this will see the introduction of one-year renewable temporary residence permits for victims of human trafficking to complement existing asylum and humanitarian protection measures. We will also be extending the existing 30 day reflection period for victims trafficked into sexual exploitation to an *extendable* minimum period of 45 days for all victims.

Human trafficking was highlighted in the Priorities for the Ministers for Women as a blight on the lives of women, men and children on many different continents. In particular, trafficking of women to Britain for the purposes of sexual exploitation was identified as a major problem. These women are invisible to the majority of the population as they are generally hidden away in brothels. They are often living in terrible conditions – and in fear for their lives. It is essential to highlight their plight and to put an end to this modern version of the slave trade.

In January, the Home Secretary announced that Government is accelerating work to implement the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings, with the intention of being in a position to ratify the Convention at the end of 2008. We are working to deliver the UK Action Plan on Human Trafficking which pulls together work currently underway across Government to tackle trafficking and creates a platform for future efforts to combat trafficking. It aims to strike the right balance between protection and assistance for all victims of trafficking, and prevention and enforcement activity to crack down on criminals. On 2 July the Government published an Update to the UK Action Plan which highlights progress since the publication of the original and identifies twenty-three new actions.

A major operation against human trafficking – known as Operation Pentameter 2 – came to an end on 31 March 2008. This was a national, police-led enforcement campaign involving many other agencies and non-Government services. The intelligence gathering phase started in July 2007, and the main operation launched on 3 October 2007 involving 55 police forces across the UK. The focus of the operation was on identifying and rescuing victims of trafficking, and disrupting, arresting and bringing to justice those involved in organising criminal activity. Importantly, given that

human trafficking occurs across geographical borders, it is part of an EU initiative, involving several member countries, led by UK and Poland. The operation should also lead to increased intelligence across EU borders. Alongside this operation, we increased funding to the POPPY project, which provides comprehensive support and accommodation for victims of trafficking.

In January, GEO published *Women Not For Sale*, dealing with advertisements for personal services in local newspapers. These, according to the Association of Chief Police Officers, can fuel the demand for trafficked women. The report highlights the scope and scale of advertising of women offering services, including foreign women - it found that three quarters of local papers carried these advertisements. Independent research by the Child and Women Abuse Studies Unit supports these findings and indicate that personal and classified advertisements in local newspapers are used by men as a means of accessing brothels.

Ministers met with representatives from the advertising and newspaper industries to discuss what could be done to address concerns about this kind of advertising. The representative body for local papers – the Newspaper Society – has since reviewed its guidance to its members on adverts for personal services to ensure it fully reflects concerns about human trafficking.

Prostitution

Since 1997 the Government has:

- Published a co-ordinated strategy on prostitution in January 2006. It sets out activity on prevention, developing routes out of prostitution, tackling demand and ensuring justice can significantly reduce the numbers involved;
- Run a kerb crawler deterrent campaign since the launch of the coordinated Prostitution Strategy in January 2006.

Since July 2007, the Government has:

- Undertaken a short-term review designed to strengthen our approach to tackling the demand for prostitution which will report later this year;
- Mounted a poster campaign to raise awareness amongst male customers of the linkages between human trafficking and prostitution.

By the end of this Parliament, the Government will have:

- Investigated and learnt from good practice in other countries in tackling demand for prostitution.

The demand for prostitution and the link to human trafficking is a concern which we raised when the Priorities for the Ministers for Women were published and is a focus of the UK Action Plan on Human Trafficking. A short-term review designed to strengthen our approach to tackling the demand for prostitution will report later this year and its findings will inform options for legislative and non-legislative reform. The review began in January with a visit by Ministers to Sweden, where there is a specific offence of paying or attempting to pay for sexual services. It has also considered approaches adopted in other jurisdictions, including the Netherlands, where the prostitution markets both on and off the street have been regulated. The review has included consultation with stakeholders and practitioners, as well as an audit of current enforcement, prosecution and sentencing practice.

Forced Marriages and So-called Honour Crimes

Since 1997 the Government has:

- Launched an innovative joint Home Office/Foreign and Commonwealth Office Forced Marriage Unit on 26 January 2005 in order that the relevant Government agencies can work closely together;
- Run a national publicity campaign through the Forced Marriage Unit in March 2006;
- Published a *Survivor's Handbook* in March 2007. This is a practical guide on how to cope with life after a forced marriage;
- Raised the minimum age for marriage entry clearance from 16 to 18 to give those who face forced marriage extra time in which to mature and resist familial pressure.

Since July 2007, the Government has:

- Committed to developing an action plan to address honour based violence, through the Home Office's Violent Crime Action Plan, *Saving Lives, Reducing Harm, Protecting the Public*;
- Held a series of regional workshops on tackling 'honour' based violence with key stakeholders and front line practitioners;
- Launched in April 2008, a helpline for survivors of forced marriage part-funded by the Forced Marriage Unit;
- Completed a pilot study in April 2008 in four areas, monitoring forced marriage and so-called honour crime cases;
- Hosted a European Conference in October on forced marriage and the barriers to effectively tackling the problem.

By the end of this Parliament, the Government will have:

- Implemented the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007;
- Published guidelines for police, social services, health professionals and education professionals for handling forced marriage cases, which will be placed on a statutory footing as part of the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act which provides robust civil remedies for victims of forced marriages;
- Developed a cross-government action plan to tackle 'honour' based violence.

In the recent cross-government Violent Crime Action Plan, *Saving Lives, Reducing Harm, Protecting the Public*, the Home Office committed to developing an action plan to address honour based violence. This will sit alongside the action plans on sexual and domestic violence, ensuring that specific actions are developed where necessary to tackle this particular form of violence against women.

The Home Affairs Select Committee held an inquiry from January – March 2008 into Domestic Violence with a specific focus on Forced Marriage generating media attention and as a result the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) has seen a significant rise in caseload this year. Particular focus was put on the issue of information in schools. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has now written to all schools and local authorities, highlighting the need to recognise this as a safeguarding issue and has developed tailored materials on forced marriage for use with young people. These have been sent to all secondary schools, local authorities and Local Safeguarding Children Boards.

In April, a helpline for survivors of forced marriage was launched part-funded by the FMU. The *Honour Network* is run by Karma Nirvana, a Derby-based non-governmental organisation.

The Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007, which will provide courts with measures to prevent or pre-empt a forced marriage from occurring, will come into force this autumn. Courts will be able to issue Forced Marriage Protection Orders and will have wide discretion in the type of injunction they will be able to make so they can respond effectively to the unique circumstances of the case

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) completed a pilot study in April 2008 in four areas, monitoring forced marriage and so-called honour crime cases. Specialist prosecutors were selected and provided with guidance and training. The project aimed to identify the number and pattern of forced marriage and so-called honour crime cases; to identify any issues facing prosecutors in accurately identifying, managing and prosecuting such cases; and to inform the development of any national guidance or training for prosecutors. A report on the pilot will be published in autumn 2008.

On 5 December 2007, the Border and Immigration Agency launched a consultation paper on marriage to partners from overseas. The paper recognises the need for increased protection for vulnerable people at risk of forced marriage and outlines some potential changes to the process of

issuing a marriage visa. The consultation closed on 27 February 2008 and responses are currently being considered.

The FMU hosted a European Conference in October 2007 as part of the European Commission's Daphne Project. The Conference was designed to increase understanding of the motivating forces behind forced marriage and some of the barriers to tackling the problem. Participants from across Europe attended to hear statutory bodies, the police, the voluntary sector and survivors of forced marriage reflect on the problem.

The violence against women agenda is, unfortunately, wide and therefore needs to be tackled by a range of Government departments and agencies. There is already a considerable amount of work underway and the Government has recently published a document setting out the detail of its efforts to tackle violence against women: *Tackling Violence Against Women: A Cross-Government Narrative*, April 2008. The Ministers for Women and Equality will continue to support the efforts of their ministerial colleagues across Government to make real and lasting change.

B. IMPROVING THE WAY WE DEAL WITH WOMEN WHO COMMIT CRIMES

Since 1997 the Government has:

- Launched a three year Women's Offending Reduction Programme (WORP) in March 2004, to tackle women's offending specifically and reduce the number of women in prison;
- Allocated £9.15 million funding in March 2005 to establish new initiatives to tackle women's offending in the community – the Together Women Programme. These are designed to demonstrate how a co-ordinated multi-agency approach using women's centres and key workers can better respond to the multiple and complex needs of women offenders and women at risk of offending;
- Commissioned Baroness Jean Corston to conduct an independent review of women with particular vulnerabilities in the criminal justice system, published in March 2007.

Since July 2007, the Government has:

- Published its response to Baroness Corston's review, accepting 40 of the 43 recommendations she made;
- Set up a cross departmental project to examine current women's centre provision and to develop proposals for building on existing services;
- Financially supported the establishment and continued development of the women's Turnaround Project in Wales;
- Published the National Service Framework for Women in May 2008;
- Published an 'Offender Management Guide for Working with Women Offenders'.

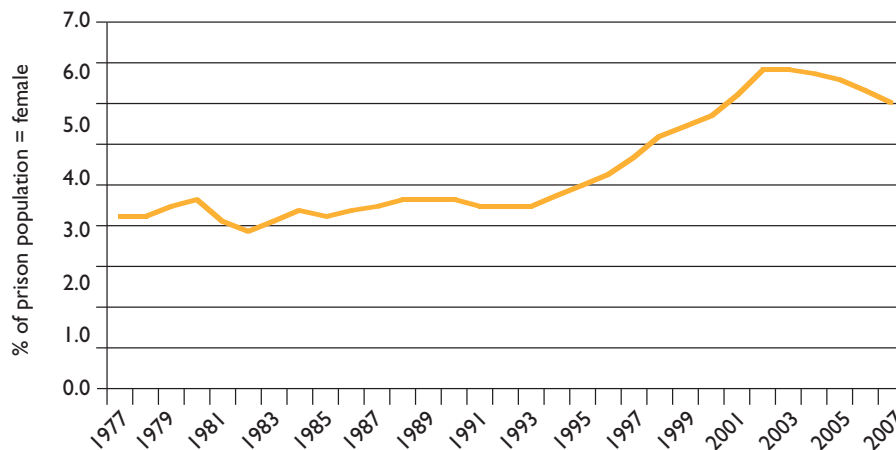
By the end of this Parliament, the Government will have:

- Evaluated the outcomes of the Together Women Programme when it ends in 2009 and assessed the full impact of the projects on women going through them;
- Developed options and delivered a plan of action to take the proactive steps needed to divert women offenders from custody into community provision where that is appropriate;
- Tested a rehabilitative caution with conditions with the main condition to attend a women's centre for assessment, linking to the Together Women Programme site.

Government Response to Baroness Corston's Review¹

The number of women being sent to prison has increased markedly since 1995 although this has levelled off in the last five years. Even though women still make up a relatively small proportion of the prison population their rates of self harm and suicide are much higher than those of male prisoners. It was in the light of a series of deaths of women at Styal Prison in 2002-03 that Baroness Jean Corston was asked by the Government to conduct an independent review of women with particular vulnerabilities in the criminal justice system. Her report was published in March 2007 and contained a broad range of recommendations.

Female prisoners as proportion of prison population, 1977-2007



Source: Ministry of Justice

Baroness Corston identified the need to improve cross-government co-ordination to tackle the range of problems affecting women offenders and women in the community at risk of offending. She considered that a number of different departments should take responsibility and work together to deliver a more appropriate and better co-ordinated approach to issues for women such as mental health problems, housing, drugs, domestic violence, sexual abuse, family responsibilities and education and employment. Baroness Corston also considered it important for there to be a 'Champion' for women in the CJS in order to ensure this work is given the priority and impetus it needs in a system that has evolved primarily in response to the majority of offenders who are male. She also recommended the establishment of a cross-departmental

¹ Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System

‘Women’s Commission’, as she described it, to bring together officials from the relevant departments. She saw these overarching arrangements to be key to the successful delivery of her other recommendations, of which there were 43 in total.

The Government published its response to the Corston Report in December 2007, accepting 40 of the recommendations. We agreed with the overarching recommendations on improving ministerial governance and cross-departmental working. The Reducing Re-offending Inter-Ministerial Group (IMG) now provides high-level governance and brings together ministers from the relevant departments to ensure this agenda is given priority across Government. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Justice has been appointed as the Ministerial Champion for women and criminal justice matters. She has also established a subgroup to the IMG of ministerial colleagues to drive forward the broad range of commitments the Government made in response to Corston. We have also undertaken to establish a cross-departmental Women’s Unit within the Ministry of Justice to support the IMG in managing and co-ordinating the work across departments.

These structures are, as Baroness Corston identified, key to achieving the improvements in provision and services for women. They will ensure that departments from across government are engaged and work more effectively together to tackle the multiple and complex issues affecting women who may become involved in crime. The Government’s aim in delivering the commitments we made in response to the Corston Report is to tackle problems for women sooner and in the community so that fewer women end up in custody.

The Ministerial Champion for women and criminal justice matters made a statement on 26 June 2008, following the first six months since publication of the Government Response, in which she explained the progress that had been achieved so far in implementing the Government’s commitments and set out the Government’s future strategy for tackling women’s offending.

The Government recognises the need to build on the good work already taking place in the community to meet the needs of women offenders and those at risk of offending and has set up a cross-departmental project to examine current women’s centre provision and to develop proposals for building on existing services. The project will explore the benefits that women’s centres could deliver to help address a range of Government aims, such as reducing re-offending, tackling problems around housing, health, childcare, finance, education and employment.

A significant step forward in making sure that action is taken to bring about improvements for women offenders has been made with the publication in May 2008 of the National Service Framework for Women. This document sets out the Government's strategic aims and objectives for addressing the needs of women offenders. It puts in place high-level service expectations, both through the reducing re-offending pathways and for the delivery of statutory services, with a focus on delivering Baroness Corston's recommendation that women who have committed less serious offences should be dealt with in the community rather than custody.

The Framework is supported by an 'Offender Management Guide for working with Women Offenders' which the Government also published in May 2008. This is a practical guide which will ensure that the necessary changes are made to improve interventions and services for women in the community.

The National Service Framework for women is also supported by a set of gender-specific standards for women's prisons, which were published on 28 April 2008 in a new Prison Service Order on Women Prisoners. The specifications cover all areas of provision and will enhance the significant improvements that have already been achieved in the care and management of women prisoners and planning for their resettlement.

Together, these documents provide an embedded framework and mechanism for ensuring that services and provision for women offenders, whether in custody or the community, will be developed and delivered in a way that more effectively meets their needs.

At a more local and practical level, the Government is also supporting and developing individual projects and initiatives in the community to demonstrate more effective ways of responding to women's multiple needs.

Turnaround, a demonstrator project in Wales, is focusing on providing a women-centred approach that meets the needs of women offenders and their children, as well as women who are at risk of offending. The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) has contributed £120,000 to the set up costs of the project and a further £200,000 until 31 March 2009.

We will continue to develop the Together Women projects in the North West and Yorkshire & Humberside, which are using £9.15 million of government funding. These are designed to demonstrate how a co-ordinated multi-agency approach using women's centres and key workers can better respond to the multiple and complex needs of women offenders and women at risk in the community.

For those women who do need to be held in custody, a short project was conducted to consider the future of the women's custodial estate and explore Baroness Corston's recommendation that over the next 10 years women's prisons should be replaced with small, local, multi-functional custodial units. A report of the project's findings was published in June. The Ministerial Champion for women and criminal justice matters explained in her statement that, whilst the Government agreed with the principles underpinning this recommendation, having explored it in depth, Government has concluded that small standalone Units were not feasible and would not be the best way of delivering what Baroness Corston wanted to achieve in terms of better regimes for women prisoners. However, the Government has undertaken to test out how the principles behind the recommendation could be achieved through a different model to inform a new approach to the design of women's prisons.

The Government also undertook to re-emphasise to the courts how community orders, together with supportive interventions and services, can be more effective in responding to women's needs and reducing re-offending. The recently published document 'Community Sentencing – Reducing Re-offending, Changing Lives' includes material on how community sentences can address women's needs more effectively than custody.

Implementation of the recommendations relating to meeting the health and well-being needs of women in the criminal justice system and women at risk of offending are being taken forward as part of the newly developing Offender Health and Social Care Strategy. Included within the Strategy will be a distinct pathway for women offenders which will look at improvements in health and social care provision throughout the criminal justice system process as well as more generally in the community for women who may be at risk of offending.

The Offenders Learning and Skills Unit in DIUS recognise that a different set of skills and employment priorities will be applicable to female offenders and accept Baroness Corston's recommendation that "life skills should be given a much higher priority within the education, training and employment pathway and women must be individually assessed to be sure that their needs are met." They are ensuring close account of Baroness Corston's recommendation are taken in their ongoing work, particularly in the programme of offender skills and curriculum area reviews, now underway, to develop a planned and coherent approach to the learning offer provided in prisons.

Women in Prisons

Since 1997 the Government has:

- Commissioned a review led by Baroness Corston on women with particular vulnerabilities in the criminal justice system;
- Published a *Strategy and Resource Guide for the Resettlement of Women Prisoners* by NOMS in Spring 2006.

Since July 2007, the Government has:

- Rolled out pilots, in five women's prisons, testing a new kind of full prisoner search which does not require the removal of underwear unless there is intelligence or suspicion at any stage that an item is concealed in the underwear;
- Issued new guidance in January 2008 to all women's prisons and launched a Women Affected by Violence (WAVe) project;
- Introduced a set of gender-specific standards for women's prisons, published on 28 April 2008 in a new Prison Service Order on Women Prisoners.

Before the end of this Parliament, the Government will have:

- Developed health related commissioning guidance specifically focused on services for women and their families. Reviewed and set out recommendations for improvements in the health and social care provided to women in police custody, in court cells and during transportation to prison;
- Used the opportunity presented by the addition of a new 77-place wing at HMP Bronzefield to implement, test and embed a new approach to the physical environment and delivery of regimes that could test out the principles developed by Baroness Corston for small custodial centres might work in practice to better meet women prisoner's needs.

All 14 women's prisons provide a range of supportive interventions to women who have been abused. These range from information and advice – including directing women to support that can be offered by external organisations – to supportive interventions, either on a one-to-one basis or

as part of a group work programme (such as the *Freedom Programme*, which is specifically designed for women who have experienced domestic abuse).

The new gender specific standards for women's prisons include reference to guidance "Supporting Women Who Have Been Affected by Violence and Abuse" which was issued to all women's prisons in January 2008. This guidance includes a Directory of Projects of community agencies supporting women affected by violence. This Directory will be updated regularly by the Griffins Society.

Following on from the launch of the guidance, a Women Affected by Violence (WAVE) project has been set up. This project will continue to raise awareness of the needs of women in prison who have been affected by violence or abuse. It will map current provision, and aim to support the work done in establishments by strengthening the links with local community safety teams and Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs). It will also address the needs of BME women, and develop a risk management toolkit for women in prison preparing for their release.

Work is also being undertaken to tackle the offending needs of women who are perpetrators of violence against others. Of particular relevance to the issue of violence against intimate family members is the work with female sexual offenders. A standardised approach to the assessment of the type and level of risk these women present is being developed. This will form the basis of a risk management strategy.

Another group of women who may be at risk of violence from men are sex workers. Sex Workers in Prison (SWIP) is a 12-month pilot project in 5 women's prisons. It offers a package of training and information development to enable staff working in prisons to support the resettlement needs of women who are engaged in street-based sex work. Working in partnership with sex worker support projects, SWIP aims to assist women by breaking down barriers that may prevent them accessing support. It is hoped that the project will strengthen partnership between specialist support projects and the prisons. This will enable the voluntary/community sector service providers to develop both a practical and strategic role within the prisons and ensure that women are better able to access support both pre and post release. Many women's prisons are now in the process of writing a strategy to support women involved in sex work and the SWIP project is expected to complement this development.

3: Increasing the representation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) women

Like all women, Black, Asian and minority ethnic women play a crucial role within their communities. Their contribution needs to be better recognised and supported. Genuinely supporting these women means taking action to ensure they have opportunities to work and to participate in wider public life.

Since 1997 the Government has:

- Introduced legislation (in 2002) that provided for positive measures to be taken by political parties and made lawful all-women short lists;
- Established a Councillors Commission to identify the barriers and incentives to people becoming councillors and to encourage greater diversity.

Since July 2007, the Government has:

- Announced in the Equality Bill that we will extend positive action so that employers can take into account, when selecting between two equally qualified candidates, under-representation of disadvantaged groups, for example women and people from ethnic minority communities;
- Announced that we will also extend the permission to use women-only shortlists in selecting parliamentary candidates to 2030. Whilst we will not legislate to allow for ethnic minority shortlists at this stage, we will pursue non-legislative measures to increase the number of ethnic minority elected representatives in both Parliament and local councils;
- Announced in the Equality Bill that we will look at a range of legislative and non-legislative measures to encourage public bodies to use their purchasing power in a way that encourages better equality performance by private-sector businesses. This could help as many as 30,000 people from ethnic minorities per year into work;
- Held a major national event for regional Black, Asian and minority ethnic women activists aimed at increasing civic participation and published new findings on Black, Asian and minority ethnic women's routes into becoming councillors;

- Announced a package of measures in February 2008 to support local Government to promote cohesion and tackle community tensions. This follows the announcement in October 2007 of £50 million investment;
- As part of the Equality Public Service Agreement (PSA) announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review, Government made a new commitment to address under-representation in public life for women and ethnic minorities over the period April 2008 to March 2011;
- Launched a Task Force to provide practical ways to increase the numbers of Black, Asian and minority ethnic women councillors.

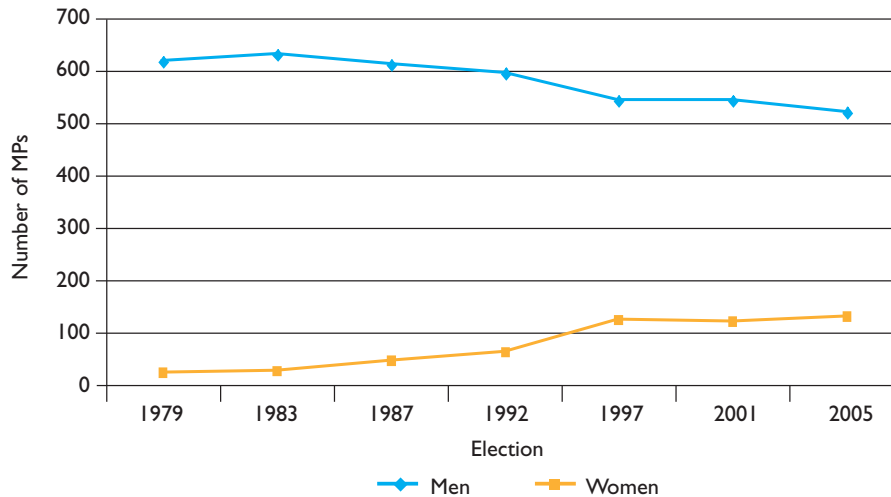
By the end of this Parliament the Government will have:

- Published a report aimed at supporting more Black, Asian and minority ethnic women into social enterprise, to participate more fully in economic and civic life;
- Made provisions to extend domestic positive action provisions to the broader limits permissible under European legislation within the Equality Bill.

Civic Participation

Women are under represented in both public and political life. They make up under one in five of the House of Commons and only 29.3 per cent of local councils and the picture is even more under-representative for Black, Asian and women from other ethnic minorities. There are only two Black women MPs and there has never been an Asian woman MP, despite there being 2.3 million Black, Asian and minority ethnic women in England.

Women in Parliament



Source: Parliament statistics

Note: As at 2007 there are 126 female

Women make up 20% of MPs compared with 9% before 1997. However progress is slow. The Equal Opportunities Commission 2006 survey predicted that it will take up to 200 years – or another 40 elections – at current rates of progress to achieve an equal number of women in Parliament.

This Government believes that for democracy to work it must be representative and has taken measures to redress this imbalance.

Since 1997 the Government has:

- Introduced the Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002 that provided for positive measures to be taken by political parties and made lawful all-women short lists. For the parties making use of it, the legislation is having an impact. Women make up 27 per cent of Labour MPs compared with 14 per cent of Liberal Democrat MPs and 8.8 per cent of Conservative MPs.

Since July 2007, the Government has:

- Announced plans on 6 March to extend the period of time during which parties can use all-women short lists for candidate selection for local, national and European elections to 2030.

By the end of this Parliament the Government will have:

- Convened a Speaker's Conference to debate and consider a number of important issues including the representation of women and ethnic minorities in the House of Commons;
- Extended domestic positive action provisions within the Equality Bill to the broader limits permissible under European legislation which includes public appointments and officeholders.

Key Facts

1976 Shreela Flather is elected first Asian woman councillor in Britain

1987 Diane Abbott is elected first black woman MP

1998 Baroness Uddin is the first Muslim woman in the Houses of Parliament

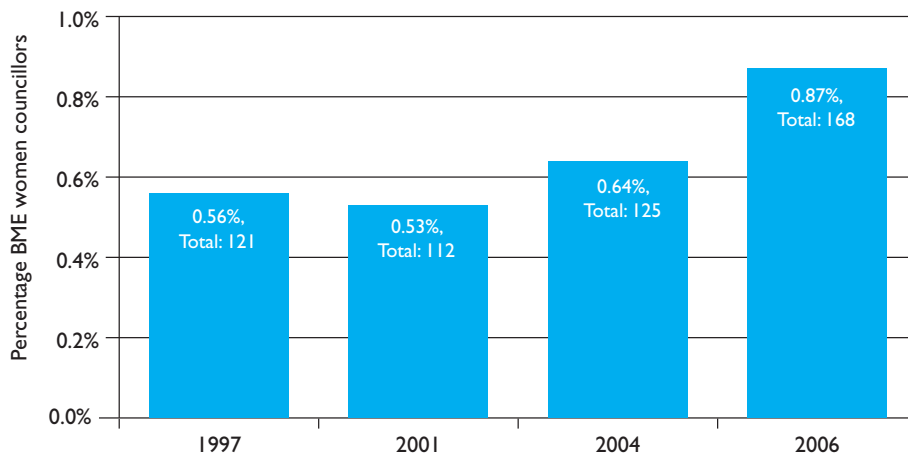
2003 Baroness Amos is the first black woman appointed to Cabinet

Local Councillors

Many of the services that touch on people's everyday lives are delivered at a local level by Local Authorities. Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) women are particularly under-represented in local government. Given that there are almost 20,000 councillors in England, and these women comprise more than 5 per cent of the population there would need to be almost 1000 BAME women to be representative. As the graph below shows, the current position falls dismally short of that.

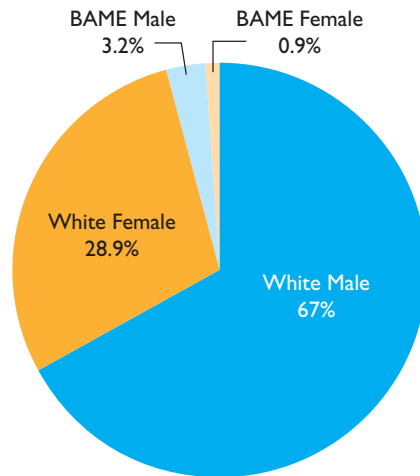
At current rates of progress true representation could take more than 130 years to achieve.

BME women councillors (England)



Source: National census of local authority councillors in England

Ethnicity of Councillors in England



Source: These statistics are based on 2006 National Census of Local Authority Councillors in England data. The next census will be conducted later this year and will provide an accurate up to date picture.

In England, only 4.1% of councillors come from an ethnic minority background compared to 10.9% of the population.

Since 1997 the Government has:

- Set up the Councillors Commission, established by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG). This important initiative, chaired by Dame Jane Roberts, examined the issue of under-representation with a view to developing recommendations to encourage a more diverse and broader range of people to become councillors so that communities are better represented.

Since July 2007 the Government has:

- Hosted in October 2007, the Government's largest annual gathering in the Houses of Parliament for regional Black, Asian and minority ethnic women. This put centre stage the need for more women from different communities and diverse experiences to become councillors;
- Published new information about Black, Asian and minority ethnic women's position in public life and promoted a workshop to test out practical measures to increase the number of councillors from different communities;

- Commissioned new research from the Fawcett Society, to examine Black, Asian and minority ethnic women's routes into, through and out of public life, as part of our support for the Councillor's Commission. The research was published on 19 May 2008. The Government Equalities Office also produced a series of factsheets on women's representation in public and political life to explain why action is required;
- Commissioned Operation Black Vote in October 2007 to produce a report on the options for increasing the percentage of elected political representatives from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. Currently, just 2.3% of MPs are from non-white backgrounds compared with just over 8% of the overall UK population. The report was published in May 2008 and identifies several practical measures that can be put into place to increase the number of those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds elected into political office;
- Announced a taskforce on 19 May 2008 to take practical action to increase the numbers of Black, Asian and minority ethnic women councillors. The cross-party taskforce is chaired by Baroness Uddin, the first female Muslim woman Peer, and has representation from all regions in England, in addition to Wales and Scotland.

By the end of this Parliament the Government will have:

- Published in July the Government's response to the Councillors Commission report, 'Representing the Future', alongside the Community Empowerment White Paper 'Communities in Control'. Ministers will be taking forward a range of actions including those applicable to supporting BAME women as councillors;
- In association with the Local Government Association published new data by autumn 2008 on the numbers of BAME women councillors.

Successful activity to encourage under-represented groups including BAME women to stand as councillors is most likely to take place at local level and be tailored to local needs. We also believe that this activity has most benefit if linked to other civic activities, such as the existing Take Part framework. We plan to develop this further by supporting a programme of Take Part local pathfinders. These programmes will build skills, knowledge and confidence so that people, particularly those from more disadvantaged groups, have more opportunities to become civic activists, lay governors

and community leaders. These proposals are developed in the Community Empowerment White Paper.

The Black, Asian and minority ethnic Women Councillors Taskforce will take practical steps such as provide mentoring; hold outreach events in communities across the country, linked to regional media campaigns, to make the role of councillors more widely known and better understood; work with organisations such as the Local Government Association, Operation Black Vote and the Fawcett Society to develop awareness training, establish networking groups; working with local councils, and political parties training.

We will explore using the local government Performance Framework to progress equalities by encouraging local authorities and their councillors to improve the diversity of representation among members. We are working with the Audit Commission to consider how the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) can best consider how well a Council's leadership reflects their community as one element of the review of their capability and capacity.

We will be looking at how to provide more effective support to councillors to enable them to carry out their role, such as making better use of information technology so that councillors who have caring responsibilities would be able to participate in meetings and vote remotely. The Commission recommended that meetings should be more welcoming and user-friendly and that timings of meetings should be more flexible which we would encourage.

The 2006 national census of local authority councillors found that women and BAME councillors were particularly interested in the chance to gain a formal qualification. We are therefore setting up a review that will be undertaken over the next three months to identify relevant qualifications and modules for the accreditation of civic roles, including those of councillors, and how they might be built upon for the future.

To ensure greater transparency in data collection, the Minister for Women and Equality is working with Local Government Analysis and Research (LGAR) to ensure that we have robust data on BAME women councillors in the autumn. This will strengthen the evidence base and provide a clearer breakdown of information.

Community Empowerment

In the July 2007 report on the Ministers for Women's priorities, we highlighted the importance of community empowerment. Many people who would like to get involved and have a say in what happens in their communities are not aware of the opportunities. Some may not realise that their skills and experience could be used to inform local services; others may not know how easy it can be to get involved.

Since 1997 the Government has:

- Published the Together We Can Action Plan in 2005 which set out the Government's commitment to empower citizens to work with public bodies to set and achieve common goals.

Since July 2007 the Government has:

- Announced on 19 October publication of an action plan for community empowerment, which includes a commitment to consult with partners on a national campaign to demonstrate the opportunities people have to make a difference at the local level;
- Launched the "Women Take Part" campaign in October 2007. For the first time the campaign identifies what exists to help women become active in local decision making, such as becoming school governors or tenants association leaders; what works and what needs to happen to make a lasting change. A conference was held in May 2008 to explore these issues, and the discussion will feed into a report. The aim is to provide a template which enables women to build upon existing support models and networks to participate in civic life.

By the end of this Parliament, the Government will have:

- Published findings of the Women Take Part research in order to encourage more women to become active in local decision-making;
- Published the Community Empowerment White Paper 'Communities in Control' in July, including proposals for a Take Part local pathfinder programme.

Public Appointments

Key Facts: Public Life²

As at 31 March 2007:

- there were approximately 18,500 individuals serving on the boards of over 1,200 national and regional public bodies;
- 34.4% of all public appointments were held by women;
- 5.7% of all public appointments were held by members of minority ethnic groups. Of these around 40% were women; and
- 4.9% of all public appointments were held by disabled people. Of these around 40% were women.

Since 1997 the Government has:

- Run a national outreach campaign to encourage more women into public life during 2002, led by the Minister for Women. This included producing a practical information guide, Get a (Public) Life, on why action is necessary to increase the number of women in public life;
- Developed the public appointments vacancies website which provides a single source of information about public appointments vacancies at national, regional, and local levels across England and the UK (www.publicappts-vacs.gov.uk).

Since July 2007 the Government has:

- Held a major event which focussed on women in public appointments, bringing together women's organisations, headhunters and government departments;
- Launched a project with the Women's National Commission (WNC) which included:
 - a diversity programme to connect women's organisations to the public appointments advertising process;
 - new women in public life webpages on the WNC website.

2 Cabinet Office Public Bodies 2007

By the end of this Parliament Government will have:

- Set targets to increase the diversity of public appointments in respect of gender, disability and ethnicity;
- Reviewed the Commissioner for Public Appointment's remit with her to consider whether a specific power to encourage diversity in the range of persons available for selection for appointments should be within her remit;
- Extended provisions on positive action in the Equality Bill including public appointments.

Judiciary

A strategy to widen the diversity of the judiciary, agreed by the Lord Chancellor, the Chairman of the Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC) and the Lord Chief Justice, encompasses people from a wide range of under-represented groups, including women from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic communities. A programme of work already underway is likely to bring positive benefits for BAME women.

Since 1997 the Government has:

- Introduced major legislative changes to judicial appointments via the Constitutional Reform Act 2005, which created the JAC to bring more independence and clarity to the appointments process;
- Agreed a judicial diversity strategy in 2006 with the judiciary and JAC, to widen the range of people eligible to apply for judicial office, encourage a wider range of individuals to apply, support diversity through fair and open selection processes, and ensure the working environment for judges supports a diverse judiciary;
- Introduced salaried part time working for judicial office holders in 2001. It has made a positive contribution to the Ministry's development of the judicial terms and conditions infrastructure, and, along with career breaks and family friendly benefits, it offers an enhanced career package to new and serving judicial office holders;
- Run a one-year regional pilot scheme, organised by the MoJ and the Judicial Studies Board in 2007 involving Circuit Judges mentoring District Judges to assess the benefits that mentoring could bring to judicial office holders. The effectiveness of the pilot is currently being assessed. Consideration is being given to rolling out the mentoring scheme nationally.

Since July 2007, the Government has:

- **Promoted judicial service** in publications read by lawyers from diverse backgrounds, through articles and advertisements, and through attendance at awareness-raising events;
- **Worked directly with solicitors** to encourage them to apply for judicial office, via our Solicitors' Initiative;
- **Worked with trilateral partners** (the JAC and Judicial Office) on a range of work to drive forward the Judicial Diversity Strategy, including producing a handbook for diversity and community relations judges, membership of the JAC Diversity Forum, identifying funding for the roll-out of the mentoring scheme, engaging with the Judicial Office's review of their judicial work-shadowing scheme and supporting work on the judicial database to ensure a solid evidence base for judicial diversity.

By the end of this Parliament, the Government will have:

- Introduced legislative changes to widen the eligible pool for judicial office, through the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007. The period of qualifying time will be reduced from seven and ten years to five and seven years respectively, and a new eligibility requirement will be introduced – for post qualification legal experience. The changes will also allow – for the first time – Fellows of the Institute of Legal Executives, registered Patent Attorneys and the Institute of Trade Mark Attorneys (a large number of whom are women) to apply for certain judicial posts.

Muslim Women

There are at least 800,000 Muslim women living in Britain today and strengthening their role is critical to building strong and cohesive communities. Some Muslim women do not have the confidence or skills to speak up in their communities. Others face practical barriers, such as balancing family life with other roles. And wider public debate often reverts to stereotypes and preconceptions. However, the evidence is that Muslim women want to get into the work place and also have a voice in shaping their communities.

Since 1997 the Government has:

- Held an event in May 2006 at No 10 for Muslim women from across the UK. This event was set up to hear directly from Muslim mothers about the issues affecting their families and communities. The feedback report of the meeting was published on 20 September 2006;
- Announced the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund in 2005 to support faith communities build capacity within their communities and to develop projects that would enable them to participate more fully in society. A key priority of the Fund was to support women and young people. £7.75 million was awarded in February 2006; of this £208,965 went to Muslim women's initiatives.

Since July 2007 the Government has:

- Launched the National Muslim Women's Advisory Group (NMWAG) established by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. This group of women, who are in positions of leadership or are working with communities, will act as role models. The specific purposes of the group are to:
 - Act as ambassadors for Muslim women at grass roots and represent their views and concerns to Government;
 - Provide leadership to communities and act as positive role models for Muslim women in society;
 - Support Muslim women to engage more with the media on a wide range of issues. This will enable more positive media coverage and help dispel myths around the role of Muslim women in society.

- Published in January 2008 a document on effective initiatives to strengthen the role that Muslim women can play in their communities. The case studies showcase the work that Muslim women are doing across the country to empower and encourage women to participate in community life;
- Funded projects through the Community Leadership Fund that have unlocked the potential of Muslim women, enabled their voices to be heard and empowered them to engage with young Muslims.

By the end of this Parliament, the Government will have:

- Worked with the National Muslim Women's Advisory Group (NMWAG) to devise and deliver an action plan to empower Muslim women. The NMWAG will be working on projects on three priority areas over the next year:
 - improving the theological understanding of Muslim women in society
 - raising the profile of Muslim women role models across communities
 - increasing the civic participation of Muslim women on decision making bodies.

Economic Participation

For many BAME women, the opportunity to work can bring greater independence, choice and social interaction. Greater financial independence also brings benefits to the entire family and to communities. The skills gained through employment can also provide a strong platform for civic and political involvement. Working together also increases cohesion by dispelling stereotypes.

At 52.8%, the employment rate of BAME women remains 17.5% points below the overall female rate. Of this overall rate, there is a wide variation in employment rates, from 65.3% for Black Caribbean women to 28% for Pakistani women and 29.5% for Bangladeshi women.³ The rates for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women have increased significantly since 2001 when they stood at 21% and 16.6% respectively⁴.

Since July 1997 the Government has:

- Launched Partners' Outreach for Ethnic Minorities (POEM) a scheme targeted at helping into work the non-working Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Somali partners of low-income earners. Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are the main focus of this help;
- The pilots started in Spring 2007 and by May 2008 almost 2000 partners had been helped into work through POEM.

3 Employment figures: Labour Force Survey (LFS) Q3 2007

4 LFS

Since July 2007 the Government has:

- Hosted In September 2007 an event, 'Closing the Gaps', to bring together ethnic minority women from across the UK to discuss, debate and problem solve issues around employment. The aim was to create a closer connection between ministers, policy makers and ethnic minority women. Discussion centred on how to change the culture within organisations; taking issue with discrimination at the early stages of education and careers advice; and how to support mothers who want to train but may lose out in the benefits system;
- Commissioned a review of the existing policy and strategies to promote ethnic minority women's employment;
- Made the Working Neighbourhoods Fund, a new fund worth £1.5 billion, available over three years for local councils and communities to develop more concentrated community-led approaches to getting people in the most deprived areas back to work. It replaces the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and incorporates the Department for Work and Pensions' Deprived Areas Fund to create a single local fund. Over 50% of all ethnic minority people of working age in England live in funded areas and, as minority ethnic women are over-represented in disadvantaged areas, this fund will further benefit their chances of moving into work.

By the end of this Parliament, the Government will have:

- Engaged Local Authorities in receipt of the Working Neighbourhoods Fund in order to promote the importance of an ethnic minority employment agenda;
- Taken forward the implementation across Government of the recommendations of the Business Commission on Race Equality in the Workplace that have been accepted by the Government.

Social Enterprise

Although employment levels overall among ethnic minority women are lower than for the female population as a whole, levels of entrepreneurial activity are much higher. The Government is committed to promoting enterprise as a model in which all women can engage economically and set up the Women's Enterprise Task Force last year to develop ideas and proposals to accelerate levels of female entrepreneurship. In addition, the Government has established an Ethnic Minority Business Task Force, which met for the first time in November 2007. Its aim is to increase ethnic minority participation in enterprise. The latest employment figures⁵ indicate a rise in self-employment among ethnic minority women, up by 2.0% compared to 0.7% for men.

The social enterprise model can help women to become more economically independent, to participate more fully on their communities, enhance community cohesion and build stronger communities. Two-thirds of Muslim women are economically inactive (66 per cent), compared with about a quarter of all women (26%)⁶. Similarly, the gap between male and female mainstream entrepreneurial activity is wide: 7.9% of men and 3.6% of women are mainstream entrepreneurs⁷. However, the gap between men and women when it comes to social entrepreneurialism is smaller – 3.6% of men compared to 3% of women. Social enterprise is also appealing to minority groups. Proportions of social entrepreneurs in mixed origin Indian, and black African and Caribbean populations are higher than amongst the white British population.⁸ Many women want to be a force for good and can achieve this through social enterprise.

Since July 1997 the Government has:

- Commissioned in June 2007 Social Enterprise London to carry out a study into the barriers to and motivations of Black, Asian and minority ethnic women in setting up social enterprises. Government is currently considering the findings of this study and is working with the sector to agree the most effective course of action to support more BAME women into social enterprise.

5 LFS, Q3, 2007

6 LFS 2006 and DWP 2007

7 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor UK Social Enterprise Summary 2006

8 IBID

Since July 2007 the Government has:

- Launched a new Enterprise Strategy on 12 March 2008 that proposes a number of measures that will support women entrepreneurs and provide them with the knowledge and skills that will allow them to see enterprise and business ownership (including social enterprise) as a real choice for them.

By the end of this Parliament, the Government will have:

- Published a report aimed at supporting more Black, Asian and minority ethnic women into social enterprise, to participate more fully in economic and civic life.

Social enterprises are businesses with primarily social or environmental objectives, often reinvesting surpluses in the business or community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners. They come in many shapes and sizes from community-owned village shops to large development trusts.

As an example: Community Cleaning Services (CCS) was set up by Muslim women as a social enterprise to tackle the social exclusion of Muslim women in Tower Hamlets. CCS now employs 12 Bangladeshi Muslim women who are trained in Health and Safety and how to become professional cleaners, and are given time off from work to attend ESOL classes. Any profits are ploughed back into the business to create opportunities for the community.

The Ministers for Women and Equality will continue to support their colleagues across Government, and in particular in CLG and the Department for Work and Pensions, to increase the representation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic women in public life and in the work place.

Annex A

Consultation by the Women's National Commission on the Minister for Women's Priorities

Following the announcement of the Minister for Women's priorities, the Women's National Commission was invited to run a consultation gathering the views of women and organisations that represent them, on the priorities. The major part of the consultation was run on-line through a survey website allowing a greater number of respondents to participate and give their views online. This e-consultation ran from 25 July to the 14 September 2007 and we published the consultation widely, to our partners and beyond. For each priority the following questions were asked.

- A) *What is the top issue to be addressed under this priority?*
- B) *How might we take this forward, give a practical measure that can be taken to make a real difference in:*
- *The short term (5 years)*
 - *The next generation (25 years)*

Respondents were given a 100 word limit for each answer, to ensure their responses were concise and practical. As well as consulting on the three priorities, the consultation also asked:

If you disagree with any of these priorities, what would you suggest we focus attention on instead?

A total of 243 responses were received through the on-line consultation, 74 of which were from individuals, with the remainder from organisations. The organisations that responded were wide-ranging in their interests, for example, we had responses from trade unions such as Unite the Union and Unison who together represent well over one million women, international development organisations such as Oxfam, and a mix of other larger and smaller organisations such as Barnados, Engender, Fawcett, Crisis, National Board of Catholic Women, Prowess, Muslim Voice UK and Carers UK.

As part of the consultation process the Women's National Commission held a roundtable event attended by the Minister for Women, Harriet Harman, and a number of expert stakeholders. The consultation also corresponded with an event we had planned in Llandudno in North Wales, at which we focused on these priorities; and Julie Morgan MP hosted a consultation event in her Cardiff North constituency during this period, which was attended by 60 people. These events allowed stakeholders to discuss the priorities in greater detail and provide a more personal, direct

view on the priorities. Detailed contributions to the on-line consultation were also received from Engender in Scotland, and from the Northern Ireland Women's Policy Group.

Officials from the GEO also met with members of our Asylum and Immigration Group, the Violence Against Women Group, and the Muslim Women's Network, to hear what they had to say on the priorities.

The range and number of organisations that responded provided a clear indication of the interest and enthusiasm of stakeholders and their eagerness to be involved in the consultation process.

As well as considering how we can respond to some of the clear themes that came out of the consultation, we are will be publishing a report summarising the consultation process and the responses received.

Baroness Gould of Potternewton
Chair of the Women's National Commission

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