



All-Party Parliamentary Group on
Domestic Violence and Abuse



All-Party Parliamentary Group on
Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

As the APPGs on Domestic Violence and Abuse and Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse, we warmly welcome the publication of the Government's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy and we would like to thank Jess Phillips MP for attending our joint meeting on Wednesday 14th January, to discuss the Strategy in detail. We welcome the Minister's commitment to regular evaluation of the Strategy's implementation, and stand ready to work with the Government on identifying and achieving the milestones that will be key to its successful implementation and the mission to halve violence against women and girls.

Our purpose as APPGs is to facilitate engagement between Parliamentarians and leading voices in the sector - including survivors of domestic abuse - and critically, to hold the Government to account on securing change, ensuring safety, and improving support for survivors. We look forward to working with Ministers across Government throughout the life course of this Strategy and ensuring that the expertise of the sector and the voices of survivors remain at the heart of its rollout.

Domestic abuse is a national emergency. At least one woman a week is killed by a current or former partner, a harrowing figure that must be addressed urgently. We also know from survivors supported by our members, that the effects of domestic abuse are far reaching, and can continue to affect the lives of victims, including children, long after the abuse has ended; including within statutory settings like the family courts, and the benefits system which are far too often used by perpetrators to control and cause further harm. As is recognised in the Strategy, crucial to the success of this will be training for those in statutory settings to change the culture and improve understanding of domestic abuse, to stop perpetrators taking advantage of state systems and better protect victims, including children. While we are pleased that the Strategy includes actions to improve training on VAWG for the police, teachers, youth workers, youth offending teams, work coaches and criminal justice practitioners; we urge that this should be extended to the judiciary. We are pleased to see culture change at the heart of this Strategy, which will be essential to addressing the root causes of VAWG and building a future free from abuse.

Whilst the ambition of this Strategy is welcome, more needs to be done to address the funding crisis that the specialist domestic abuse sector is currently facing. With long-term chronic underfunding, valuable and lifesaving services across the country, particularly by and for organisations, are facing a funding cliff-edge. The delivery of this Strategy will drive increased demand for specialist voluntary sector services, as more victims and perpetrators are identified. The funding of £550m over three years for supporting victims is welcome, as are the commitments to fund specific new initiatives, however, the sector will continue to require large-scale multi-year investment to allow services to recover, respond to current challenges

and be ready to meet increased demand. Without this investment, these services will not be able to support the implementation of the Strategy, and survivors will not receive the support they desperately need.

The Government's Strategy to deliver a whole-system response could not be more urgent and we are encouraged to see welcome interventions from the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, The Ministry of Defence and the Department for Education. As was discussed with the Minister, culture change will be essential for this Strategy's success, to ensure tackling VAWG is viewed as the responsibility of all departments. We would like to see further discussion with the Department for Work and Pensions to evaluate the effects of the benefit cap and freezing of local housing allowances on survivors' ability to move on from refuge and rebuild their lives with the dignity that they deserve. We also welcome the clear intention to embed prevention measures, as well as a focus on men and boys - to interrupt cycles of abuse and the rising levels of misogyny. We are pleased with the Strategy's emphasis on addressing the root causes of abuse and holding those who cause harm accountable, and recognition of both the "patchwork of provision" that currently exists across our country, and the need to respond to perpetrators in a range of settings beyond the criminal justice system. We support the plans to launch a new helpline in 2026 for young people concerned about harmful behaviour and to undertake a major national research programme on teenage relationship abuse. The commitment to creating a statutory definition of child to parent and caregiver abuse is a clear step forward and will be key to improving understanding and strengthening frontline responses to this type of abuse.

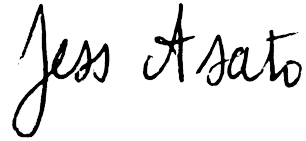
The introduction of a requirement for the police to gain victims' consent to share information with immigration services is a step towards ensuring migrant survivors can report abuse without fear of deportation, which we do welcome. This measure represents a shift to prioritising the safety of migrant and asylum-seeking women above all else. However, in lieu of a complete firewall - which we continue to call for - we urge the government to work with specialist-led by and for services to ensure robust accountability mechanisms are in place across police forces to deliver this measure effectively and safely and to ensure that victim consent is given freely. Given that migrant women are disproportionately represented in data for violence against women and girls, effective delivery of this mechanism should prioritise empowering victims to report and rebuilding trust between the police and marginalised women and to begin to address the harm of hostile immigration policies.

As we have discussed with the Minister, integral to the success of the Strategy will be a strengthening of specialist commissioning at local level, considerate of local needs, and we are pleased to see this recognised through a commitment of a 'radical transformation of the commissioning landscape'. We look forward to working with Ministers to ensure the new commissioning framework protects and enhances frontline specialist voluntary sector services, particularly those led 'by and for' Black and minoritised women. There already exist many examples of exceptional work being delivered by specialist services and we urge the Government to learn from the best practice which already exists within them. We will continue to

highlight these examples of best-practice through our APPGs, as well as the voices of survivors, who are at the heart of all we do.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Apsana". The letters are cursive and connected, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Apsana Begum MP,
Chair of the APPG Domestic Violence and
Abuse

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jess Asato". The letters are cursive and connected, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jess Asato MP,
Chair of the APPG Perpetrators of Domestic
Abuse

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gabby Bertin". The letters are cursive and connected, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Baroness Bertin
co-Chair of the APPG Domestic Violence
and Abuse