



**domestic
abuse
commissioner**

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Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP
Home Secretary
2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4JA

Dear Home Secretary,

I would like to warmly welcome you to your new role as Home Secretary. Since my appointment as the first Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales in September 2019, I have had the privilege to act as an independent voice for victims and survivors of domestic abuse, drawing on my 30 years' experience in domestic abuse services, policy and intervention. I have used my statutory powers, as set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, to hold both agencies and the previous government to account in tackling domestic abuse, as well as working collaboratively wherever possible to help improve the support provided to the 2.1 million victims and survivors of domestic abuse every year and to hold perpetrators to account.

I have valued our previous engagement at events and meetings prior to your recent appointment, and I very much look forward to continuing this work with you in your new role.

Opportunities for change

I applaud the work you have already undertaken over the course of your parliamentary career to address issues of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls, including during the passage of the Domestic Abuse Act itself. I have no doubt this experience will prove invaluable as you face the challenges and opportunities presented by your new role.

I fully support this Government's overarching commitment to halving VAWG in ten years. This is, rightly, an ambitious aim that will require full commitment and collaboration at every level and branch of Government – as well as fully engaging and harnessing the expertise, experience and insight of the specialist VAWG sector – to achieve. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to draw your attention to a recent briefing I shared with Officials in your Department. This sets out my key issues, priorities and recommendations for the Home Office, which, if implemented in full would support significant progress towards the halving of violence against women and girls in our society.

I also welcomed the wide range of specific manifesto commitments addressing domestic abuse, which I would be pleased to work with you to deliver. In particular, I agree wholeheartedly that

perpetrators must be much more robustly held to account for their actions, and that police forces must have the powers they need to track and tackle the problem of VAWG. Furthermore, I agree this must be underpinned by holding the police themselves to the high standard that the public deserves, and welcome your commitment to strengthening police vetting and misconduct procedures to ensure this. I am of the view that this must include regular, thorough vetting and re-vetting, as well as a duty to record, risk assess and respond upon a complaint against a serving officer.

My briefing is attached to this correspondence for your reference, and I have provided your colleagues across Government with similar briefings that cover their Department's responsibilities. It highlights that domestic abuse represents a significant proportion of police time, and this can only be expected to increase – yet convictions for domestic abuse have fallen by 43% since 2014/15, with the latest figures showing just 6% of police-recorded domestic abuse resulting in a charge and 5% in a conviction. At the same time, statutory agencies such as policing increasingly rely on specialist domestic abuse services to provide lifesaving support, including safety planning, advocacy, counselling and refuge. Despite this, victims face a patchwork of provision in accessing this support, with local commissioning practices particularly failing the most marginalised victims and survivors. Amongst these are migrant victims and survivors on particular visa types, as well as those without status, who cannot access public funds and, [justifiably](#), fear information-sharing between statutory services and immigration enforcement. I strongly welcomed Labour's support of an information-sharing firewall during the passage of the Domestic Abuse Act and Victims and Prisoners Act. I look forward to working with you to achieve this shared aim at the earliest opportunity.

My briefing further details the way in which extremely poor data, including recent changes to [Home Office Counting Rules](#), currently prevents the Home Office from properly monitoring criminal justice outcomes and holding agencies to account. It remains impossible to accurately track cases through from police report to conviction, meaning police, CPS and court data cannot be compared and the postcode lottery in the justice response for victims and survivors is furthered.

I have also set out my concerns in relation to failures and inconsistency in the implementation of protective measures, effective collaboration between criminal justice agencies, provision of behaviour change programmes, the under-utilisation of insights from Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews, and limitations of current approaches to risk assessment and MARAC processes. May I please urge you to read this document in full and give my recommendations your careful consideration. I believe that they are an imperative step towards achieving ambitious change that victims and survivors both need and deserve.

Domestic abuse: a whole Government response

As you will know, the impact of domestic abuse reaches well beyond the justice system and causes untold harm to victims and their families. By the Home Office's own assessment, it costs society approximately £81bn in a single year.¹ I believe that responding to domestic abuse is everybody's business; every part of the local community and every statutory agency has a role to

¹ Based on 2016 analysis, adjusted to 2023/24 prices.

play, in partnership with specialist services – this is the Coordinated Community Response, of which I am a strong advocate.

As you've set out in your manifesto, tackling domestic abuse effectively, including halving VAWG in a decade, will require the whole of government's apparatus, working together to fully harness levers of change. The Home Office as the overall lead Department for domestic abuse, as well as its wider work on justice, immigration and public safety matters, is critically placed to pave the way forwards, drive improvements and support other Departments to play their part. To this end, I will also be writing to a number of other Departments across Government to highlight the ambitions I have for their response to domestic abuse, as well as setting out my specific areas of interest, policy concerns and recommendations relevant to their portfolios.

Working together

Under the previous government I worked with Home Secretaries and Home Office Ministers through 1-1 meetings, fora such as the VAWG Ministerial Steering Group, and regular engagement with Officials. I would warmly welcome the opportunity to strengthen this engagement, and remain available to you and your colleagues across Government to engage and advise on all issues relating to domestic abuse – as well as to facilitate, wherever needed, invaluable connections to the specialist sector and to victims and survivors themselves.

As an independent Commissioner, my team and I are here to support, advise, and challenge. My small team of domestic abuse experts develop policy, conduct research, and collect practice insight to ensure that we can be at the forefront of thinking and understanding of what victims and survivors need. Our engagement with Officials focuses in particular on the Inter-personal Abuse Unit, which endeavours to facilitate our interaction with wider Home Office teams. I would welcome your support in emphasising to your Senior Officials that every Home Office team must take responsibility and play their own role in realising the ambition to halve VAWG in a decade, and your encouragement of intra-departmental as well as cross-Departmental working to this end.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss with you further at your earliest opportunity and look forward to working with you closely to transform our response to domestic abuse.

Yours sincerely,

Nicole Jacobs

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicole Jacobs". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales