



Home Office

Permanent Secretary

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Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP
Chair, Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

31 January 2025

Dear Sir Geoffrey,

National Audit Office (NAO) report – Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls

As you may be aware, on 31 January the National Audit Office (NAO) published its report reviewing the Home Office's progress in tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG). The review focused on the development and delivery of the Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy published by the previous government in July 2021. It covered:

- i) How the Home Office has learned from its previous experience and those of stakeholders to build consensus around the strategy;
- ii) How well aligned and coordinated activities are, and the extent to which the Home Office and other departments have well developed and funded plans to achieve the strategy's objectives and outcomes; and
- iii) How the Home Office tracks progress and identifies what works and adjusts programmes and funding allocations accordingly.

The report makes a series of important recommendations and my Department will draw on these to inform our new and ambitious cross-government VAWG strategy.

As you know, the scale and prevalence of VAWG makes tackling these crimes a top priority for this Government to address. The Government has set out an ambition to halve VAWG in a decade with a view to reforming the police response to these crimes, strengthening the criminal justice system, and empowering victims by providing access to specialist support when they need it. It is important that there is cross-government delivery and accountability and a 'whole of system' response to tackling VAWG in order to achieve transformational impact.

Our focus will be on shifting the dial when it comes to halving VAWG, but also being bold with our commitments and delivering across government through the Safer Streets Mission.

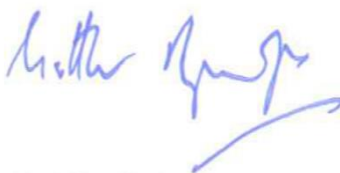
I am writing to assure you and the Committee that work is already underway to address the NAO's recommendations. I have set out some high-level examples in the table below.

NAO VAWG Audit Report Recommendation	Home Office progress update
<p>1) Establish a shared vision for how the government's target to halve violence against women and girls will be met, by:</p> <p>i) Agreeing a common definition of violence against women and girls across government and policing and identifying the data that will be used to measure this;</p> <p>ii) Developing a system-level plan for halving violence against women and girls that is informed by an evidence-based theory of change, places greater emphasis on prevention and is clear what all delivery partners must contribute.</p>	<p>The Government adopts a single consistent definition of VAWG. The police, who are operationally independent, have adopted their own definition. This does not impact the way VAWG crimes are recorded nor the way in which the Government measures progress. We have been and will continue to work closely with policing partners, including the NPCC and College of Policing, to align the policing definition of VAWG to the Government's, including as part of future funding discussions.</p> <p>The Safer Streets Mission is the vehicle to drive delivery across government to halve violence against women and girls, halve knife crime, and restore confidence in the policing and justice system to record levels. It is an opportunity to deliver transformative change to society, addressing both harm and confidence in parallel by taking a whole-system approach.</p> <p>The Home Office, on behalf of the Safer Streets Mission, is undertaking a six-month review of the available evidence on tackling VAWG, which includes an evidence-based theory of change which will be used to inform development of a new VAWG Strategy to be published later this year.</p>
<p>2) Strengthen accountability for delivering against the government's target by:</p> <p>i) Establishing a cross-government team, based in the Home Office, to lead on the implementation of the new strategy;</p> <p>ii) Reviewing existing governance structures and adapting these to align incentives and sharpen accountability for delivering; and</p> <p>iii) Coordinating available funding for tackling VAWG, including through considering a joint spending review bid for the strategy.</p>	<p>This Government's new missions-based approach, including the Safer Streets Mission, is providing stronger cross-government coordination and senior leadership on complex issues such as tackling VAWG. This includes improved governance through a new Safer Streets Mission Board and VAWG Ministerial Group. The new VAWG Ministerial Group has already met twice and is a powerful way to align activity and hold key partners and stakeholders to account for delivering on their responsibilities in tackling VAWG, as well as shaping the content of the new VAWG Strategy.</p> <p>We are also expanding engagement with experts, including through several thematic roundtable meetings chaired by Minister Phillips and Minister Davies-Jones from MoJ. They will also chair a VAWG Strategy Advisory Board that will meet regularly until the Strategy is published.</p>

	<p>The Safer Streets mission board is a cabinet committee that will ensure the whole of Government is focused on the reducing harms and building confidence in the institutions that keep us safe.</p> <p>A core part of Board's function will be to drive our unprecedented mission to halve violence against women and girls in a decade.</p> <p>The new VAWG Ministerial Group has met twice and will be a powerful way to hold key partners and stakeholders to account for delivering on their responsibilities in tackling VAWG, as well as shaping the content of the new VAWG Strategy.</p> <p>The Safer Streets Mission will be working closely with HMT Treasury and Departments to coordinate the approach to the spending review on VAWG and the other Mission pillars.</p>
<p>3) Embed learning and evaluation through the new strategy by:</p> <p>i) Developing and embedding a long-term evaluation plan into the strategy backed by appropriate resources; and</p> <p>ii) Encouraging local innovation, particularly on preventing violence against women and girls, and learning from this to identify opportunities to scale up effective interventions.</p>	<p>The Home Office will continue to incorporate robust evaluation alongside delivery of VAWG interventions. Recognising the evidence base on VAWG is limited internationally, a key part of our work in this area is to generate and build on evidence, fill gaps in evidence and build on best practices. We will base the new VAWG Strategy on what works and the best possible evidence available to us, both in the UK and internationally.</p>

My Department will continue to monitor progress against the NAO's recommendations. We remain committed to driving positive change and delivering transformative impact to tackle violence against women and girls.

Yours sincerely,



Sir Matthew Rycroft
Permanent Secretary