



HOUSE OF LORDS

# Library Note

## **Women Facing Homelessness, Domestic Violence and Social Exclusion**

On 6 November 2014, the House of Lords is scheduled to debate the following motion:

“that this House takes note of women facing homelessness, domestic violence and social exclusion”

Information presented in this Note has been compiled to provide background reading for Members ahead of the debate. Although there is significant overlap between the issues, the Note has been divided into three separate sections. These in turn consider women’s homelessness, domestic violence and social exclusion. Each section opens with an introduction to the issue, including background and statistics, with the aim of providing some context, before setting out the government policy. The sections then conclude with commentary from charities, interested organisations and research bodies that have put forward further policy recommendations.

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3 November 2014  
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## I. Homelessness

### I.2 Background

Homelessness has a number of possible causes, many of which become interlinked in individual cases. Homeless Link<sup>1</sup> has said the “most common reasons people give for losing their accommodation is that a friend or relatives are no longer able to provide support or because of relationship breakdown”.<sup>2</sup> It observes that a “wide number of factors” are often at play. These can relate to an individual’s specific circumstances, for example “poor physical health, mental health problems, alcohol and drugs issues, bereavement, experience of care, and experience of the criminal justice system”. Homelessness can also be caused by ‘structural’ issues that include “poverty, inequality, housing supply and affordability, unemployment, welfare and income policies”.<sup>3</sup>

In its homelessness policy paper, the Government observed that “homelessness brings misery and uncertainty to individuals and families”. It was “also negative for society, leading to additional public service expenditure across government”.<sup>4</sup> In a report setting out the Government’s “joint approach to preventing homelessness”, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) stated that:

It can be difficult to separate causes from symptoms of interlinked patterns of addiction, offending and homelessness. Some of the possible causes of homelessness, like unemployment, can have much broader costs to society and the economy attached to them. The New Economics Foundation estimated an annual cost to the state of around £26,000 a year for a ‘job ready’ homeless person, or an estimated £550 million per year for ‘dealing with the effects of homelessness’, including health, crime, drugs and alcohol, social services, accommodation, lost economic output, tax and National Insurance, benefits and support costs.<sup>5</sup>

Homeless Link has observed the cyclical consequences of homelessness, stating that: “as someone’s problems become more complex, anti-social behaviour, involvement with the criminal justice system and acute NHS services become more likely”.<sup>6</sup> Communities can also suffer from homelessness through an increase in street drinking, begging and prostitution.

### Prevalence

Statistics published by the DCLG provide figures for the number of people who are defined as ‘statutorily homeless’ in England. These are individuals who are owed a duty to secure accommodation by their local authority. In the most recent DCLG statistical release, it is explained that:

The term ‘homeless’ is often used to refer to people who are sleeping rough. However, a household will be considered as statutorily homeless by their local authority if they meet specific criteria set out in legislation. Such households are rarely homeless in the

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<sup>1</sup> Homeless Link is a national membership charity for organisations working directly with homeless people in England—see more at: <http://www.homeless.org.uk/about-us#sthash.wBvfsalR.dpuf>.

<sup>2</sup> Homeless Link, ‘[Causes of Homelessness](#)’, accessed 24 October 2014.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> DCLG, [Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness](#), August 2012, p 6.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Homeless Link, ‘[Impact of Homelessness](#)’, accessed 24 October 2014.

literal sense of being without a roof over their heads, but are more likely to be threatened with the loss of, or are unable to continue with, their current accommodation.

Broadly speaking, somebody is statutorily homeless if they do not have accommodation that they have a legal right to occupy, which is accessible and physically available to them (and their household) and which it would be reasonable for them to continue to live in. It would not be reasonable for someone to continue to live in their home, for example, if that was likely to lead to violence against them (or a member of their family).<sup>7</sup>

The latest figures, for the period April to June 2014, revealed that “local housing authorities received 26,940 applications for housing assistance under the homelessness legislation of the Housing Act 1996”.<sup>8</sup> This was “5 percent lower than in the corresponding quarter in 2013”. The statistical release noted that, historically, “the number of decisions and acceptances tends to be lower in the second quarter than in the first and third quarters, and will also be affected by seasonal holiday periods, especially Christmas and the New Year”. Consequently, after seasonal adjustment, “the number of decisions was 27,410, less than 1 percent lower than in the previous quarter of 27,300”.

Of the 26,940 applications for assistance under the Housing Act 1996 made between 1 April and 30 June, the following decisions were made:

- 49 percent were accepted (referred to as ‘owed a main homelessness duty’).

Of the remainder:

- 26 percent were found not to be homeless;
- 18 percent were found to be homeless but not in priority need; and
- 8 percent were found to be intentionally homeless and in priority need.

Where a household is accepted the authority must ensure that suitable accommodation is available. The number of households found to be homeless through no fault of their own and in priority need was 2 percent lower than the same quarter in 2013. Where households are found to be intentionally homeless (down 5 percent from the same quarter 2013); not in priority need (down 6 percent from 2013); or not homeless (down 7 percent from 2013) the authority will, when appropriate, provide assistance and advice to help them find accommodation for themselves.<sup>9</sup>

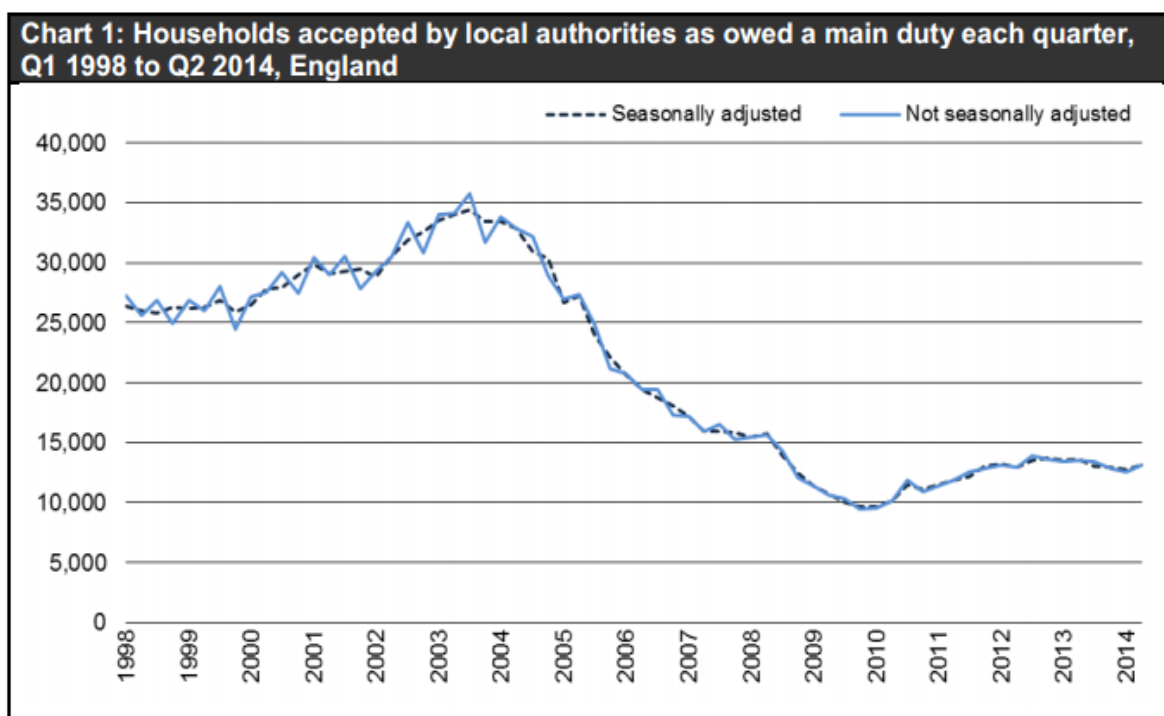
Chart 1 shows the number of acceptances in England since 1998. DCLG notes that “in 2013 the number of acceptances was 61 percent lower than the peak [in 2003] but 27 percent higher than the low four years before [in 2010]”.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> DCLG, [Statutory Homelessness: April to June Quarter 2014 England](#), 25 September 2014, p 2.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, p 3.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*, p 4.



Source: DCLG, [Statutory Homelessness: April to June Quarter 2014 England](#), 25 September 2014

DCLG also collects statistics on the number of households placed in temporary accommodation in England. This occurs where a “settled housing solution is not immediately available”.<sup>11</sup> For the latest available period:

The number of households in temporary accommodation arranged by local authorities under homelessness legislation on 30 June 2014 was 59,710. This was 6 percent higher than a year earlier. After seasonal adjustment, the number of households in temporary accommodation was 59,520, an increase of 2 percent from 58,430 at the end of the previous quarter.<sup>12</sup>

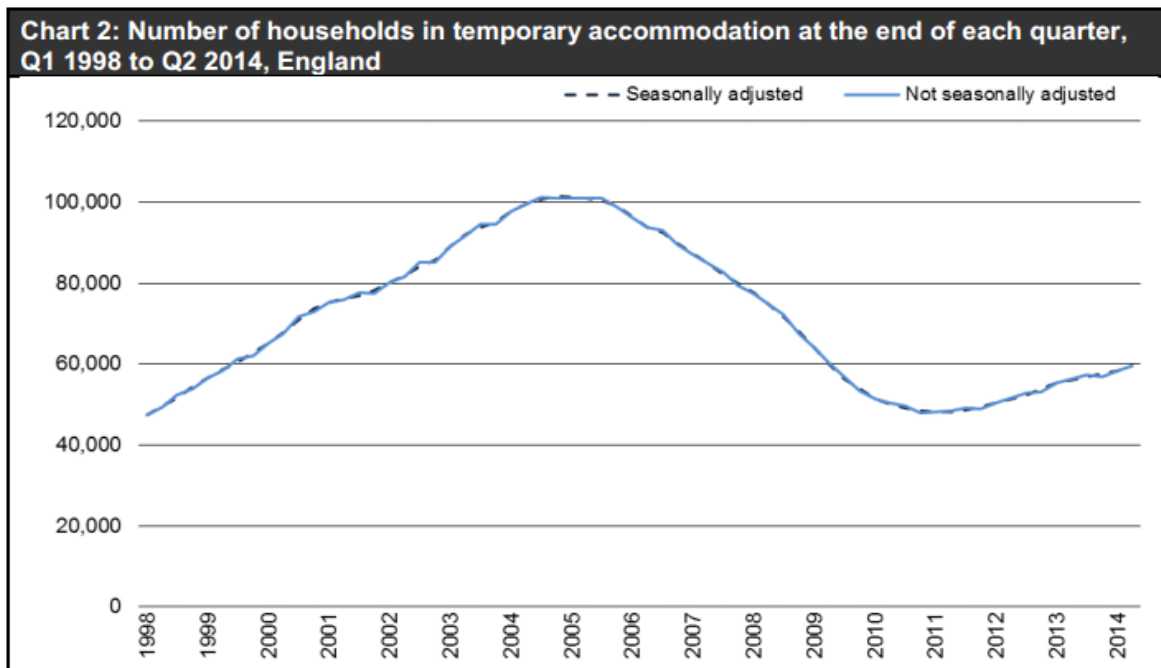
Chart 2 shows the number of households in temporary accommodation arranged by local authorities since 1998. DCLG states that it is important to note the “lag between changes in the number of acceptances and changes in the number of households in temporary accommodation”. It explained:

Chart 1 shows the increase in the number of acceptances that peaked in 2003 before falling off to 2009. Chart 2 shows that the number of households in temporary accommodation follows a similar pattern with a delay. The number of households in temporary accommodation peaked at the end of September 2004 before declining to a low of 48,000 at the end of 2010.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> DCLG, [Statutory Homelessness: April to June Quarter 2014 England](#), 25 September 2014, p 1.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*, p 7.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid*.



Source: DCLG, [Statutory Homelessness: April to June Quarter 2014 England](#), 25 September 2014

DCLG also collects statistics on the number of people sleeping rough in England. The last official survey estimated there were 2,414 rough sleepers in autumn 2013. Table 1, from the DCLG official statistics, shows this was “up 105 (5 percent) from the autumn 2012 total of 2,309 and 37 percent from 1,768 in 2010 when the first equivalent count took place”.<sup>14</sup>

	England total		London		Rest of England	
	Number	% change	Number	% change	Number	% change
2010	1,768		415		1,353	
2011	2,181	23%	446	7%	1,735	28%
2012	2,309	6%	557	25%	1,752	1%
2013	2,414	5%	543	-3%	1,871	7%

Source: DCLG, [Rough Sleeping Statistics England: Autumn 2013](#), 25 February 2014

It is argued that official statistics on statutorily homeless households do not provide the full picture of homelessness in England. For example, they do not capture those who may be homeless but do not apply to their local authority for assistance, or those who do not meet the criteria. Groups such as Homeless Link suggest “it is difficult to calculate the total number of homeless people in England because of the hidden nature of the problem”.<sup>15</sup> In December 2013, Crisis published its analysis of homelessness in England for 2012. Crisis used a broader definition of homelessness to take in ‘visible’ and ‘hidden’ forms. It found:

- An upward trend has remained evident in ‘visible’ forms of homelessness—including rough sleeping and statutory homelessness—over the past year, but with a slowed rate of increase.

<sup>14</sup> DCLG, [Rough Sleeping Statistics England: Autumn 2013](#), 25 February 2014, p 1.

<sup>15</sup> Homeless Link, [‘Homelessness in Numbers’](#), accessed 24 October 2014.



- Thus in 2012 rough sleeping in England rose 6 percent, as compared with 23 percent in 2011. In London, there was a rise of 13 percent in recorded rough sleeping in 2012/13, pushing the two year increase to over 60 percent. There are growing numbers of both UK and overseas nationals sleeping rough in the capital.
- After falling sharply for six years, the number of statutory homelessness acceptances has risen substantially (by 34 percent) over the past three years, but the increase in 2012/13 (at 6 percent) is lower than the previous year (14 percent). There is marked regional divergence, with the growth in statutory homelessness strongly concentrated in London and the South.
- There are sharply rising numbers being made homeless by the loss of private sector tenancies, accounting for 22 percent of all homelessness acceptances at national level in 2012/13. This is now the single largest cause of statutory homelessness in London.
- Temporary accommodation placements rose 10 percent during 2012/13, with B&B placements rising even faster (14 percent). ‘Out of district’ temporary accommodation placements have doubled since 2010. Use of both temporary accommodation and out of district placements remain overwhelmingly concentrated in London.
- ‘Hidden’ forms of homelessness—including concealed, sharing and overcrowded households—are also far more prevalent in London and the South than elsewhere. Census-based measures of overcrowding, for example, suggest a rate of 5 percent across England (a total of 1.06 million households), but 12 percent in London. Census overcrowding increased by 23 percent between 2001 and 2011, with a rise of 35 percent in Outer London.<sup>16</sup>

## Women’s Homelessness

In March 2014, the Government responded to a written question that asked whether it would publish data on the level of women’s homelessness in England. In response, Kris Hopkins, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, said that the Government collected “some information”, but had “no plans to collect any further information relating directly to homeless women”.<sup>17</sup> The statistical tables Mr Hopkins referred to in his answer showed that, at the end of the second quarter of 2014, of households accepted by local authorities as in priority need, 8 percent included a household member who was pregnant.<sup>18</sup> Of homeless households in priority need in the same quarter, 46 percent were a lone female parent household with dependent children and 10 percent were one person female households. In terms of those placed in temporary accommodation, 41 percent were female lone parent households with dependent children.

In March 2014, St Mungo’s, a community housing association, published the findings of its survey of homelessness among women. This found that:

Women make up 26 percent of people who accessed homelessness services in 2013, using approximately 10,000 bed spaces across the UK. 27 percent of St Mungo’s clients are women.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Crisis, *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2013*, December 2013, p viii.

<sup>17</sup> HC Hansard, 13 March 2014, cols 311–2V.

<sup>18</sup> GOV.UK, ‘[Live Tables on Homelessness](#)’, tables 773, 780 and 783, accessed 24 October 2014.

<sup>19</sup> St Mungo’s, *Rebuilding Shattered Lives: Final Report*, March 2014, p 9.

The report also referred to statistics produced by CHAIN in its report [Street to Home: Annual Report 2013](#) that suggested official statistics underreported the actual number of people sleeping rough. St Mungo's said this showed:

786 women were recorded sleeping rough in London in 2012/13, 12 percent of the total number. We suspect that the true number of women who are homeless is higher than these figures suggest. Women tell us that they take care to hide themselves when sleeping rough, meaning they are difficult to find for official counts. Many more will be 'hidden homeless', living outside mainstream homelessness accommodation. Instead, they may be sofa surfing, staying with family or friends, or trapped in abusive relationships because they have nowhere else to go. Others will be squatting or living in crack houses, or engaged in prostitution.<sup>20</sup>

Homelessness, St Mungo's argued, led women to become "among the most marginalised people in society". It added that women "often find themselves homeless after lengthy experiences of violence and abuse, mental ill health, substance use and more. These challenges are often interrelated and self-reinforcing, meaning it is difficult for women to progress in one area without also addressing the others".<sup>21</sup> Submissions received by St Mungo's, it said, reflected its "experience that women tend to enter homelessness and other support services at a later stage than men, when their problems have escalated significantly and they are less ready to begin their recovery journey". Some of the "complex and interrelated needs" of homeless women St Mungo's found were that:

- Shockingly almost half of our female clients have experienced domestic violence, and 19 percent had experienced abuse as a child, compared with 5 percent and 8 percent of men;
- A third of the women we work with said domestic violence had contributed to their homelessness, compared to 8 percent of men;
- Almost half of our female clients are mothers. 79 percent of these women have had their children taken into care or adopted. Many are traumatised by the loss of their children and struggle to cope with limited contact;
- 70 percent of women we work with at St Mungo's have mental health needs, compared to 57 percent of men;
- 27 percent of our female clients have a combination of mental health, physical health and substance use needs (26 percent of men);
- More than a third of our female clients who have slept rough have been involved in prostitution;
- Almost half of our female clients have an offending history and a third have been to prison. Over a third of women in prison have nowhere to live on release, women are more likely than men to lose accommodation while in custody;
- A survey of homeless women carried out by Crisis found that 37 percent have no qualifications.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> St Mungo's, [Rebuilding Shattered Lives: Final Report](#), March 2014, p 9.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid*, p 7.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*, p 4.

## 1.2 Government Policy

In its housing strategy, published in 2011, the Government set out its approach to homelessness. It described tackling homelessness as “a key priority for the Government”. It said:

We know that statutory homelessness acceptances are rising and there are signs that rough sleeping is increasing in key areas such as London. This makes action to grow the economy even more urgent.

It is vital that we prioritise the needs of the most vulnerable in order to prevent damage to individuals and communities, and to avoid higher costs for local services later on. It is far better for households—not to mention ultimately far more sensible financially for Government—to focus on preventing homelessness, as well as managing the consequences of an individual homelessness crisis when it happens.<sup>23</sup>

In 2012, the Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness published [Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness](#). This described the detail of the Government’s approach to tackling the issue. This included commitments to:

- Tackle troubled childhoods and adolescence: through interventions to turn around the lives of the most troubled families; and by promoting innovative approaches to youth homelessness;
- Improve health: including improving outcomes for homeless people with dual drugs/alcohol and mental health needs; and helping to ensure medical professionals discharging patients know who to approach for help [to] meet housing needs;
- Reduce involvement in crime: through support to the new Police and Crime Commissioners; improving offender access to private rented sector accommodation; and measures to help those on short sentences retain their tenancy;
- Improve skills; employment; and financial advice: through new housing demonstration projects which help claimants budget and manage rent payments; a commitment to explore a payment by results approach for those some distance from the labour market; and piloting community learning trusts;
- Pioneer social funding for homelessness: through a world first Social Impact Bond for rough sleepers and support to other local commissioners to turn social investment propositions into reality.<sup>24</sup>

The paper added that homelessness was “not a problem we can fix from the centre” and called on local authorities and their partners “to bring these commitments to life”. It set out “ten local challenges” for local authorities to take up:

- Adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services;
- Actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs;
- Offer a Housing Options prevention service, including written advice, to all clients;
- Adopt a No Second Night Out model or an effective local alternative;

<sup>23</sup> HM Government, [Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England](#), November 2011, p 46.

<sup>24</sup> DCLG, [Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness](#), August 2012, p 3.

- Have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support;
- Develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both clients and landlords;
- Actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme;
- Have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs;
- Not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation;
- Not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and then for no longer than 6 weeks.<sup>25</sup>

In June 2014, the Department for Communities and Local Government, Department of Health and Cabinet Office jointly announced further funding for local authorities to address homelessness. A press release stated that:

Over £65 million of funding from across Whitehall is being offered to councils and other organisations to tackle homelessness around the country. This government has increased spending on preventing homelessness and as a result homeless acceptances are lower than in 27 of the last 30 years [...]

The funding will be invested across five programmes:

- An £8 million Help for Single Homeless Fund that will improve council services for single people facing the prospect of homelessness;
- The £15 million Fair Chance Fund, an innovative “payments by results” scheme, that will provide accommodation, education, training and employment opportunities for around 2,000 of our most vulnerable young homeless people;
- A total of £41.5 million will be shared between Homelessness Change and Platform for Life;
- Homelessness Change funding to provide tailored temporary hostel accommodation for rough sleepers to get them off the streets and transform their lives through health, training and education facilities;
- Platform for Life funding to provide shared accommodation for young people at risk of homelessness so they have a stable platform for work and study;
- More than £580,000 to extend the Homelessness Gold Standard scheme, which helps councils to improve frontline housing services for homeless families and single people.

This is in addition to the £470 million of funding that the Government has maintained since 2010 to tackle rough sleeping and homelessness and the No Second Night Out scheme, which has helped thousands of people off the streets since its launch in 2011 and aims to ensure no-one spends a second night sleeping rough.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *ibid*, p 4.

<sup>26</sup> GOV.UK, [‘Press release: Government Expanding Support to Beat Homelessness’](#), 10 June 2014.

A response to a written question in May 2014 outlined what the Government was doing in relation to women's homelessness. Mr Hopkins said:

This Government has invested £470 million to prevent and tackle all forms of homelessness over the spending review period. The homelessness legislation in England provides one of the strongest safety nets in the world for families with children and vulnerable people who become homeless through no fault of their own.

The Government is committed to tackling and preventing all forms of homelessness and rough sleeping. We have:

- Invested nearly £2 million to stop unlawful practice of councils placing families in B&Bs for more than six weeks;
- Supported the roll out of 'No Second Night Out' schemes across England, helping 67 percent of rough sleepers off the streets after a single night;
- Invested £42.5 million to improve rough sleeper hostels;
- Made it easier for councils to help move homeless families out of temporary accommodation more quickly by using good-quality privately rented accommodation—backed up by a £1 billion investment to expand the rented sector; and
- Supported local authorities to deliver high quality housing solutions for vulnerable people through the Gold Standard scheme. Councils aiming for the Standard are supported by £1.7 million worth of training and other support.<sup>27</sup>

The answer also summarised Government actions with regard to women and domestic abuse. It said:

The dynamics of domestic abuse mean that accommodation can play an important role in the resolution of interpersonal abuse and conflict. This is why local authorities provide a range of support for victims of domestic abuse. Some victims will be accommodated in refuges, but Sanctuary Schemes and mainstream local authority accommodation may be an option for others, while some victims will pursue independent solutions with help and advice from support schemes as necessary.

This Department also funds UKRefugesOnline, a UK wide database of domestic violence services which supports the national 24 hour free phone domestic violence helpline. It enables those working with victims of domestic violence to identify appropriate services and potential refuge vacancies around the country so that victims can get the help they need as quickly as possible.<sup>28</sup>

In June 2014, Baroness Williams of Trafford, a Government spokesperson for Communities and Local Government, told the House of Lords that the Government recognised the importance of services for homelessness prevention and that the Government were “providing £580 million over five years”.<sup>29</sup> She said that early intervention was “very important because it stops minor problems from escalating into homelessness crises. In 2012–13, some 202,000

<sup>27</sup> HC Hansard, 1 May 2014, [cols 800–1W](#).

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> HL Hansard, 26 June 2014, [col GC174](#).

households were helped in this way". Baroness Williams then referred to cross-government working and the [Public Service Transformation Network](#), which she said was:

[...] a very important aspect of joined-up thinking in the provision of these services. As a local council leader, I saw many an instance of vulnerable people going to different organisations to see where they could get help. When one failed them, they would move on to the next. On cross-government working, the Government have brought together relevant departments, such as health and education, in order that the Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness can help to identify and then begin to tackle the multiple and complex needs of homeless women.

As I am sure noble Lords will know, the Public Service Transformation Network brings together local and national public service providers. Some of the councils which are tackling the way in which they approach domestic violence include Essex, Hammersmith and Fulham and Surrey; they are exemplars of this kind of public service transformation.<sup>30</sup>

She also spoke about the value of skills and basic training for women who were homeless and/or had been victims of domestic abuse. She noted that:

The STRIVE programme has been effective in this area. The treatment system works hard to respond to the needs of drug and alcohol-dependent women which, as noble Lords have said, can often be linked to both homelessness and domestic violence. It is alert to the changing patterns of use among women so that it can respond and promote recovery and reintegration.<sup>31</sup>

### 1.3 Commentary

In its most recent survey of homelessness in England, Crisis argued that the rise in homelessness figures was affected by a number of interacting economic and policy factors. The foreword of the report noted:

Failures in the housing system are playing a critical underlying role. House building remains at low levels, leaving a growing shortfall against new household formation. With already substantial levels of overcrowding, concealed and sharing households, many are left unable to find a room even to rent, never mind own a home of their own. The private rented sector is being relied on to meet housing demand yet is failing in too many instances—ending of an assured shorthold tenancy is now the leading cause of statutory homelessness in London.

Rising homelessness is a story not just of economic pressure but of political choices with the cuts to Local Housing Allowance, extension of the Shared Accommodation Rate, the removal of the spare room subsidy (sometimes referred to as the 'bedroom tax'), and overall benefit cap of particular concern and having real impacts across the country. In addition, services for those who are homeless are being cut, the safety net previously provided by social housing and the homelessness legislation reduced, with benefit sanctions risking severe hardship, including the threat of destitution.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Crisis, [The Homelessness Monitor: England 2013](#), December 2013, p vii.

St Mungo's also suggested that welfare policy and service funding changes were having an effect on the level and impact of women's homelessness:

Homelessness rises as a result of welfare changes may particularly affect women as they are most likely to be dependent on benefit income including housing benefit. Local Housing Allowance caps, the overall benefit cap and the extension of the shared accommodation rate to those under 35 have made it harder for women on low incomes to find housing that they can afford. The extension of the shared accommodation rate makes it likely that more vulnerable women will have to live with men they do not know, which means that they are at a greater risk of harm. As homelessness rises, funding for support services is being cut. Overall, homelessness services reported a 17 percent reduction in funding in 2013. The proportion of homelessness services which are targeted at women fell from 12 percent in 2011 to only 8 percent in 2013. There has also been a fall in specialist services targeting particular needs, for example services focused on people with mental health issues falling from 22 percent of all homelessness services in 2011 to 4 percent in 2013. This suggests an overall scaling back of provision to provide more basic and generic services.<sup>33</sup>

It also identified domestic violence and abuse as another driver of women's homelessness. It said:

Much of the complexity of homeless women's needs is rooted in histories of violence and abuse, often stemming from childhood. It was striking across the different contributions and themes just how many women's lives had been marked by physical and sexual violence, particularly within the home.

- 44 percent of our female clients in 2013 had been abused by their partners, and 19 percent had experienced abuse as a child. Among men, 5 percent had been abused by their partners and 8 percent had been abused as a child;
- In projects responding to those with the most complex needs, histories of abuse are even more prevalent; 89 percent of clients in our South London Women's Project have experienced abuse from a partner or family member;
- 32 percent of the women we work with said domestic violence contributed to their homelessness compared to 8 percent of men.

The trauma that results from experiences of childhood and domestic violence often erodes resilience to cope with later challenges. Women may turn to drugs or alcohol in order to self-medicate. Involvement in prostitution and offending may follow to fund substance use or indeed survival, resulting in criminalisation and imprisonment.<sup>34</sup>

St Mungo's made a number of recommendations in its report with a view to establishing "gender sensitive support for complex needs" in homeless services. It argued: "expecting women to simply fit into traditionally homelessness services which have been designed for homeless men is not good enough. Service providers must understand the particular needs of

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<sup>33</sup> St Mungo's, [Rebuilding Shattered Lives: Final Report](#), March 2014, p 9.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid*, pp 10–11.

homeless women, how these differ from those of men and (re)design or (re)configure services accordingly”.<sup>35</sup> Its recommendations were:

Recommendation 1: Services working with women who are homeless or at risk should be based on principles of holistic, gender sensitive support for complex needs. The report sets out eight principles.

Recommendation 2: The Minister for Women and Equalities should hold relevant government bodies to account for preventing and tackling women’s homelessness.

Recommendation 3: The Minister for Women and Equalities should be added to the membership of the Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness to ensure that it expressly considers women’s homelessness.

Recommendation 4: Each Local Authority should identify a senior member of staff to lead on women and homelessness, including improving and coordinating service provision and strategy, and monitoring progress on ending women’s homelessness.

Recommendation 5: Local authorities should ensure organisations that come into contact with vulnerable women recognise the risks of homelessness and are equipped to provide, or signpost to preventative support.

Recommendation 6: Innovative approaches to tackling women’s homelessness should be identified, tested and developed, specifically lead practitioner approaches; multi agency case management; and cross boundary initiatives.

Recommendation 7: Commissioners must ensure that local provision gives women a choice between women only or mixed services.

Recommendation 8: Commissioners should invest in cost benefit analysis of services aimed at preventing or resolving women’s homelessness, and of women only services in particular.

Recommendation 9: The Government should ensure that the Troubled Families Programme addresses the needs of girls who are at risk of homelessness in adulthood, identifying girls who need support.

Recommendation 10: Access to parenting support and perinatal interventions that have been shown to be effective in improving outcomes for children should be extended.<sup>36</sup>

The Government has indicated support for the first of these recommendations and that it would consider the remainder. In a House of Lords debate on women’s local services, Baroness Williams of Trafford, Government spokesperson for Communities and Local Government, told Members that:

It is a lengthy report but, basically, on recommendation 1 the Government absolutely agree that homelessness services need to be more than just about providing

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<sup>35</sup> *ibid*, p 5.

<sup>36</sup> St Mungo’s, [‘New Report Highlights “Sad Chronicle of Missed Opportunities” for Homeless Women’](#), 3 March 2014.



accommodation. All the issues that noble Lords have talked about have been acknowledged in terms of joining up services and support and a capital fund is available to improve some of the hostels. There were various contributions about joining-up the Minister for Housing with the Minister for Women and Equalities. That has certainly been the case. The Minister for Housing invited the Minister for Women and Equalities to be part of the group considering the report.<sup>37</sup>

## 2. Domestic Violence

### 2.1 Background

In February 2014, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published [Crime Statistics, Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2012/13](#). This was based on the 2012/13 self-completion module of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), which provided information “on the extent of, and trends in, intimate violence among men and women aged 16 to 59 resident in households in England and Wales”.<sup>38</sup> The ONS noted, in presenting these figures, that statistics on intimate violence were prone to under-reporting. The survey was, therefore, a means of covering crimes not reported to the police. It said:

Estimates of the prevalence of domestic violence (a narrower definition than domestic abuse) based on face-to-face CSEW interviews are regularly published but this crime type is particularly liable to under-reporting in face-to-face interviews. This is due to the issue of willingness to disclose incidents in face-to-face interviews. For example, only a small proportion (9 percent) of respondents (5 percent of men and 11 percent of women in 2012/13) who reported being victims of domestic abuse in the self-completion module had reported that they were victims of domestic violence in the last 12 months in face-to-face interviews.<sup>39</sup>

The definition of intimate violence in the survey included a “number of different forms of physical and non-physical abuse consisting of partner abuse, family abuse, sexual assault and stalking. The term reflects the intimate nature either of the victim-offender relationship or of the abuse itself”.<sup>40</sup> The headline findings of the survey were that:

- There were 7.1 percent of women and 4.4 percent of men who reported having experienced any type of domestic abuse in the last year, equivalent to an estimated 1.2 million female victims of domestic abuse and 700,000 male victims.
- Overall, 30 percent of women and 16.3 percent of men had experienced any domestic abuse since the age of 16, equivalent to an estimated 4.9 million female victims of domestic abuse and 2.7 million male victims.
- The decline in domestic abuse between the 2004/05 and 2012/13 CSEW surveys was statistically significant. However, the current figure (5.7 percent) continues a fairly stable trend seen since 2008/09.

<sup>37</sup> HL Hansard, 26 June 2014, [cols GC173–5](#).

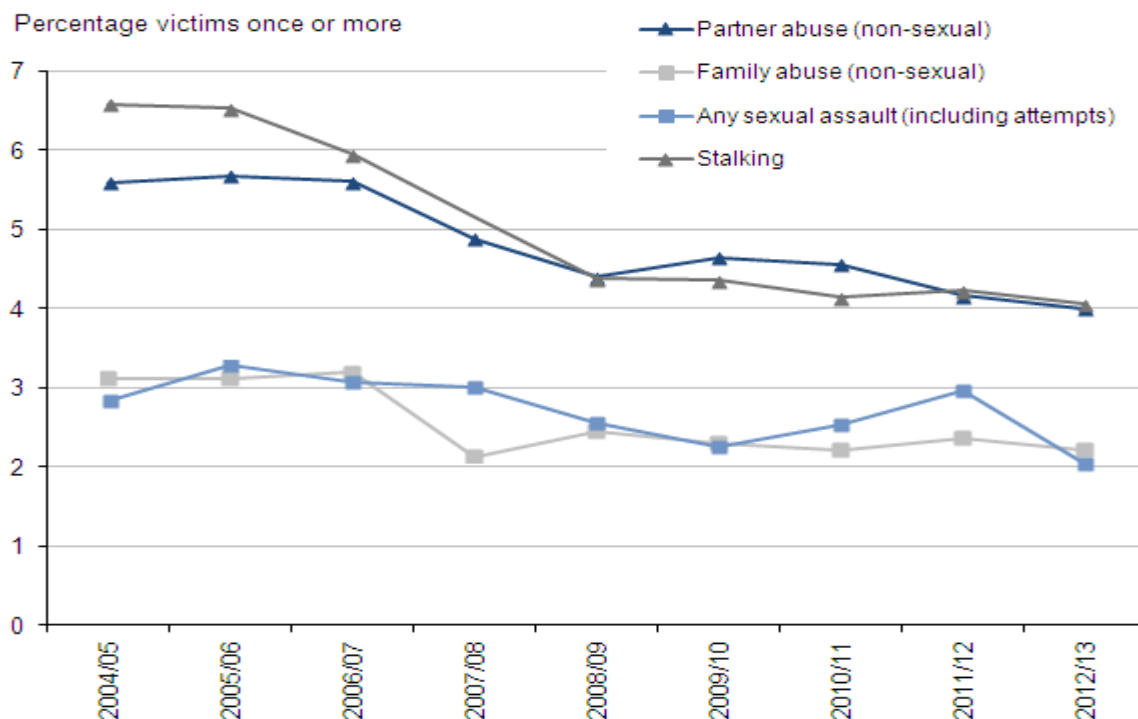
<sup>38</sup> Office for National Statistics, [Crime Statistics, Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2012/13](#), 13 February 2014, p 2.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid*, p 3.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid*, p2.

- Women were more likely than men to have experienced intimate violence across all headline types of abuse asked about.<sup>41</sup>

**Chart 3: Trends in the percentage of women aged 16 to 59 who experienced intimate violence in the last year, since 2004/05**



Source: Office for National Statistics, [Crime Statistics, Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2012/13](#), 13 February 2014

The survey also produced a number of findings concerning the personal characteristics of the female victims of intimate violence. These were that:

- Women aged between 16 and 19 and between 20 and 24 were more likely to be victims of any domestic abuse (11.3 percent and 12.5 percent of the respective population) compared with those aged between 45 and 54 and between 55 and 59 (4.7 percent and 2.7 percent respectively).
- Young women were also more likely to be victims of sexual assault in the last year; 7.0 percent of women aged between 16 and 19 compared with 1.8 percent of women aged between 25 and 34. In addition women aged between 20 and 24 were more likely to be victims of stalking (6.9 percent) compared with those aged between 45 and 54 (3.1 percent).
- Women who were separated had the highest prevalence of any domestic abuse in the last year (21.3 percent) compared with all other groups by marital status (such as married, cohabiting or divorced). This is perhaps unsurprising given the fact that the domestic abuse may have contributed to separation in some cases. The pattern was slightly different for sexual assault with single women (4.3 percent) being more likely to be victims compared with those who were married, cohabiting or

<sup>41</sup> *ibid*, p 1.

divorced. For domestic abuse and sexual assault, women who were married were less likely to report being a victim (2.7 percent and 0.7 percent respectively).

- Both women and men with a long-term illness or disability were more likely to be victims of any domestic abuse in the last year (11.3 percent and 7.0 percent respectively), compared with those without a long-term illness or disability (6.3 percent and 4.0 percent). This pattern was consistent across the sub-categories of domestic abuse with the largest difference occurring for stalking where 7.5 percent of women with a long-term illness or disability were estimated to be a victim of stalking compared with 3.4 percent of women without a long term illness or disability.
- Women with a degree or diploma were less likely than women with other qualifications to be a victim of any domestic abuse in the last year (5.2 percent of women with a degree or diploma compared with 9.0 percent of women with 'A level or equivalent qualifications' and 8.6 percent of those with 'GCSE or equivalent qualifications'). Women with no qualifications were not statistically different from other groups. Level of qualification might be closely associated with other measures that are also associated with domestic abuse, such as economic status and occupation, which may influence this finding.
- Nearly a quarter of women living in lone parent households were victims of domestic abuse in the last year (22.7 percent) compared with around 1 in 20 of those living in a household with other adults and children (5.3 percent) or a household with no children (6.3 percent). The sample of men in lone parent households was too small to undertake the equivalent analysis.
- Women living in households in the 20 percent most deprived areas of the England were more likely to be victims of domestic abuse (9.1 percent) than women in other areas (5.6 percent for the 20 percent least deprived areas and 6.7 percent in other areas). The prevalence of domestic abuse for men was not statistically different between these three area types.<sup>42</sup>

Figures showing the volume of police referrals and the subsequent numbers prosecuted for crimes of violence against women and girls are produced by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). The latest statistics for violence against women and girls (VAGW crimes), which includes domestic violence, rape and sexual offences (except pre-charge data), showed that “the highest level of police referrals of VAWG defendants for charging decisions” had been reached. In addition, the “volumes of VAWG crimes prosecuted in 2013–14 rose by 8,351 from 82,165 in 2012–13 to 90,516, over 10 percent rise, but not yet reaching the 2010–11 highest level”.<sup>43</sup> Among the findings from the specific statistics for domestic violence (DV) were:

In 2013–14 the overall pattern of DV prosecutions indicated, yet again, year on year improvements in prosecutions. Following concerns identified through the 2012–13 VAWG crime report, in relation to the fall in volume of DV cases, Areas focused on addressing the volumes of referrals from the police, prosecutions and convictions during 2013–14, through the VAWG assurance system, culminating in a rise in volumes across the whole process.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid*, p 12.

<sup>43</sup> Crown Prosecution Service, [Violence against Women and Girls Crime Report 2013–2014](#), July 2014, pp 5–6.

The volume of DV referrals from the police rose to 103,569 in 2013–14: a rise of 15,459 referrals (17.5 percent) from 2012–13. 72,905 (70.4 percent of these referrals) were charged. This reflects the highest volumes and proportions of cases recorded by the CPS and a rise of 12,716 charged defendants (21.1 percent) since 2012–13. All Areas indicated a rise in both referrals and charging, with a rise quarter on quarter during 2013–14. The average number of days to charge in 2013–14 was 4.57 days.<sup>44</sup>

## 2.2 Government Policy

In November 2010, the Home Office published a cross-governmental strategy to tackle violence against women and girls.<sup>45</sup> An [action plan](#) was published in March 2011, followed by a [progress review](#) in November 2011. The [action plan](#) was first updated in March 2012 and [again in 2013](#). In 2011, the Home Office [consulted](#) on expanding its definition of domestic violence. In March 2013, the new definition was implemented. The Home Office explained that its definition of domestic violence was:

any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

- Psychological;
- Physical;
- Sexual;
- Financial;
- Emotional

Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.<sup>46</sup>

In guidance, it was noted that “the Government definition, which is not a legal definition, includes so called ‘honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group”.<sup>47</sup>

In March 2014, the Government published a further update to its action plan. It reiterated its approach was based on:

- Clear strategic objectives focused on prevention, provision of services, partnership working, and justice outcomes and risk reduction;

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid*, p 23.

<sup>45</sup> HM Government, *Call to End Violence against Women and Girls*, 2010.

<sup>46</sup> GOV.UK, ‘[Domestic Violence and Abuse](#)’, accessed 24 October 2014.

<sup>47</sup> Home Office, *Information for Local Areas on the change to the Definition of Domestic Violence and Abuse*, March 2013, p 1.

- Commitment right across Government with activity co-ordinated across Departments overseen by an Inter-Ministerial Group chaired by the Home Secretary;
- Active engagement with local areas and voluntary sector partners to inform our policies related to violence against women and girls;
- Ensuring wider Government reforms support our approach to tackling violence against women and girls; and
- A commitment to almost £40 million of ring-fenced funding over the spending review period for specialist violence against women and girls services from the Home Office and Ministry of Justice.<sup>48</sup>

In terms of the strategic objectives, the paper set out the Government's priorities over the next twelve months. These were to:

[...] protect victims through early intervention rolling out programmes such as Clare's Law and domestic violence protection orders; support effective local approaches by giving local commissioners the information they need to tackle violence against women and girls; ensure that other programmes—such as tackling sexual violence against children and young people, gang related exploitation of girls and modern slavery support our approach to ending violence against girls and women.<sup>49</sup>

In March 2014, the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS, known as 'Clare's law') and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) were rolled out across England and Wales, following pilots. A written answer explained that:

The DVDS introduces recognised and consistent procedures where anyone can seek a disclosure about a partner's violent past. Those who have a legal right to know are provided with information that empowers people to make an informed choice about their relationships.

DVPOs are able to give direct protection to a victim of domestic abuse by banning the perpetrator immediately from the home for up to 28 days. This then allows the victim time to consider their options, including obtaining a civil injunction.

We have also put stable funding in place, ring-fencing nearly £40 million for specialist local domestic and sexual violence support services, rape crisis centres, and national helplines until 2015.<sup>50</sup>

In August 2014, the Home Office published a consultation on whether there was a need to strengthen the law on domestic abuse. This followed a report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) that reviewed police responses to domestic abuse.<sup>51</sup> A press release stated that the review found that:

[...] while most forces and Police and Crime Commissioners have said that domestic abuse is a priority for their areas, this isn't being translated into an operational reality. HMIC is concerned to find that, despite the progress made in this area over the last

<sup>48</sup> Home Office, [A Call to End Violence against Women and Girls: Action Plan 2014](#), March 2014, p 7.

<sup>49</sup> GOV.UK, '[Ending Violence Against Women and Girls in the UK](#)', 14 June 2014.

<sup>50</sup> HL *Hansard*, 11 March 2014, cols WA 365–6.

<sup>51</sup> HMIC, [Everyone's Business: Improving the Police Response to Domestic Abuse](#), March 2014.

decade, not all police leaders are ensuring that domestic abuse is a priority in their forces—it is often a poor relation to other policing activity.

HMIC found alarming and unacceptable weaknesses in some core policing activity, in particular the quality of initial investigation undertaken by responding officers when they are called to a scene. The report also identifies that officers may lack the necessary supervision, knowledge and skills effectively to tackle domestic abuse, and some have poor attitudes.<sup>52</sup>

In the consultation, the Government stated it intended to improve police operational practices to address some of the concerns raised in the HMIC review. However, it also sought views on whether “the law needs to be strengthened, with specific reference to the Government’s new non-statutory definition of domestic abuse”.<sup>53</sup> It noted that there was currently no statutory offence of ‘domestic abuse’. The paper said:

We have brought coercive and controlling behaviour within the non-statutory Government definition of domestic abuse. We have defined controlling behaviour as a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour. We have defined coercive behaviour as an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim. We now ask whether the law needs to be strengthened to make it clear that these behaviours are criminal when perpetrated in an intimate relationship to control someone or cause them fear.

There are arguments for and against making a specific domestic abuse offence. Victims of domestic abuse often fear the consequences of reporting their abuse for their families and even their perpetrators. Accessing the criminal justice system can be intimidating, particularly where a victim is likely to remain emotionally involved with their perpetrator. In making new laws we must carefully consider the concerns victims may have about accessing the criminal justice system. Creating a new offence may also be seen as duplicating existing legislation relating to stalking and harassment, and distracting frontline agencies from the fundamental operational changes that are urgently needed to use the existing framework effectively.

Conversely, the HMIC report on domestic abuse makes clear that the police fail to see domestic abuse, particularly in its non-violent form, as a serious crime. Acts that are clearly criminal are not referred for prosecution and [the] arrest rate varies widely. Creating a specific offence of domestic abuse may send a clear, consistent message to frontline agencies that non-violent control in an intimate relationship is criminal. Explicitly capturing this in legislation may also help victims identify the behaviour they are suffering as wrong and encourage them to report it, and cause perpetrators to rethink their controlling behaviour.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> HMIC, [‘The Police Response To Domestic Abuse Is Not Good Enough And Must Be Improved, Finds HMIC Inspection’](#), 27 March 2014.

<sup>53</sup> Home Office, [‘Strengthening the Law on Domestic Abuse—A Consultation’](#), August 2014, p 9.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid*, p 11.

A number of responses to the consultation have been published by interested stakeholders. Women's Aid stated that the current approach to domestic violence was "not working" and at the root was "a lack of understanding of the nature of domestic violence, coupled with the conflation of many different forms of violence within the term "domestic violence".<sup>55</sup> It recommended:

[...] the introduction of a new criminal offence that enables a prosecution to be brought on the basis of "a course of conduct" of coercive control against victims of violence/abuse (physical and non-physical) in intimate relationships. This was recommended by the 2009 ACPO review [...]. The new law therefore needs to include reference to the fact that the perpetrator should know, or reasonably ought to know that the course of conduct will cause the victim fear.

It is our opinion that the framework of the harassment and stalking legislation can be used to criminalise these behaviours. Whilst the Protection from Harassment Act (PHA) 1997 itself is not fit for purpose when looking at incidents that take place within an ongoing relationship, we believe that the same framework can be used when criminalising coercive control, a pattern of behaviour and psychological abuse.<sup>56</sup>

The response added that while it supported the criminalisation of coercive controlling behaviour, it had reservations about making the definition statutory:

We welcome the inclusion of coercive controlling behaviour in the new definition change in March 2013. However we would not support making the definition statutory. The conflation of family violence with violence in intimate relationships in the definition does not recognise that coercive control is an aspect of the latter and not the former. Without the legal framework to enforce it, we, and many others, believe that the change in the definition has not had the desired effect in practice.<sup>57</sup>

Refuge, in its response, stated that it understood the Government's proposal to introduce a new criminal offence in line with its non-statutory definition of domestic abuse but did not believe that this was "a sufficient or workable solution".<sup>58</sup> It explained:

We believe that greater effort must be made to implement existing laws. We know through our daily close contact with 3,000 abused women and children on any given day that very often police officers and other professionals within the criminal justice system do not respond to their calls for help with the seriousness and urgency deserved, even where serious physical harm has been perpetrated. This perspective has been confirmed by HMIC's recent report into the national police response to domestic violence. We are therefore concerned that creating a separate domestic violence offence (whether this is called 'domestic violence' or 'coercive control') could lead to it being treated less seriously, with the risk that even physical offences may be downgraded.

Refuge believes that domestic violence, or violence against women, should be treated as seriously as any other crime. The first step in ensuring that the criminal justice system

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<sup>55</sup> Women's Aid, [Women's Aid Consultation Response: Home Office Consultation on Strengthening the Law on Domestic Abuse](#), October 2014, p 4.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Refuge, [Refuge Response to Home Office Consultation, 'Strengthening the Law on Domestic Abuse'](#), 15 October 2014, p 7.

responds appropriately to victims is to implement, consistently and robustly, existing legislation. Currently it is possible to prosecute perpetrators who inflict non-physical forms of abuse, such as: psychiatric injury; threats; stalking; harassment; or false imprisonment. Yet successful prosecutions, particularly for psychiatric injury, are rare. There is therefore an urgent need for specialist training for criminal justice system professionals, to ensure they understand the basics of violence against women, which would include the fact that it is a form of gender discrimination and generally occurs within the context of ongoing control and repeated abuse.<sup>59</sup>

## 2.3 Commentary

In its annual survey of women's domestic violence services in 2013, Women's Aid found that there remained a "consistent need for refuge services for women survivors of domestic violence".<sup>60</sup> Its key findings were:

- 9,577 women and 10,117 children were supported during the year through refuge accommodation by responding organisations.
- On the census day (Thursday 27 June 2013) 155 women with 103 children were turned away from the first refuge they approached by responding organisations.
- Over 82,000 women and 14,000 children were supported during the year in non-refuge services.
- The number of women staying in refuge accommodation on Thursday 27 June affected by mental health issues was 47 percent (this has increased by over 10 percentage points since 2012).
- One in five children staying in refuge on Thursday 27 June 2013 have had to move schools.
- When asked if they were running services without dedicated funding, of 167 respondents answering the questions, 82 (48 percent) said that they were. Most of these services were children and young people (CYP) or services for black and minority ethnic (BME) women, but six refuge services were being run without dedicated funding.
- Of 80 respondents running services without dedicated funding, 47 (59 percent) were using their reserves to fund services.
- Of 145 respondents expecting to receive local authority funding during 2013/2014, 30 percent expected to get less compared to last year—17 percent did not know if they were getting local authority funding (even though the survey was conducted three months into the financial year).
- Numbers of specialist CYP workers in refuge services, and BME workers in services reduced over the year—whereas the numbers of volunteers increased.<sup>61</sup>

In September 2014, Women's Aid published a report that outlined its concerns for the future of specialist women's refuges. It explained:

Specialist domestic violence refuges have supported hundreds of thousands of women and children who are fleeing domestic violence and kept them safe. They are literally

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<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Women's Aid, [Women's Aid Annual Survey 2013](#), December 2013, p 41.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*, p 6.



life-saving services which provide safety and sanctuary and are established specifically to meet the needs of the women and children that need refuge.

A range of services are provided in a specialist refuge, including accommodation with 24-hour support, counselling and therapy both individually and in groups, specialist support for children and young people, support with accessing health and other universal services, housing and benefits advice, support with finding legal advice, and follow-up support once the woman and her children have left. The services are women-only, to ensure maximum accessibility, confidentiality and security. Refuges have developed over the past forty years and are built on decades of knowledge and experience that have led to innovation in ways of supporting women and children.<sup>62</sup>

However, the report stated that the “national safety net that protects women and children escaping violence is being unpicked”. It argued:

Specialist domestic violence refuges in England are experiencing a perfect storm of funding cuts and poor local commissioning which means that their services are disappearing or being replaced with non-specialist provision.

We are calling on the government to Save Our Services by committing to preserving the national network of specialist refuges and to exploring a new model of funding and commissioning for refuges which supports a sustainable service and high quality care. The number of refuge bedspaces is not enough to meet the need for refuge provision. Yet, the demand for specialist refuges provision remains, with 155 women and their 103 children being turned away from refuge in one day in 2013. It is the thousands of women and children fleeing domestic violence who desperately need specialist refuge provision who suffer when funding is lost and refuges closed.<sup>63</sup>

In March 2014, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Domestic and Sexual Violence published a report into women’s access to justice in domestic violence cases. The APPG found that:

- Many women experiencing domestic violence, including sexual violence in intimate partner relationships, do not have access to justice;
- The criminal justice system frequently fails to hold perpetrators of domestic violence to account. When sanctions are imposed they are often so limited and the violence so pervasive that perpetrators are able to continue abusing their victims;
- 89 percent of respondents to the APPG Inquiry felt there were barriers to women disclosing domestic violence to the police and/or other criminal justice agencies;
- Where criminal justice agencies fail to respond appropriately to domestic and sexual violence, women pay with their lives.<sup>64</sup>

The report made a number of recommendations, which covered the following aspects:

- I. **Data collection:** Greater understanding of domestic violence, its victims, and its perpetrators is crucial to tackling the issue. Data on arrests, prosecutions and hospital admissions are all necessary to build the most complete picture possible to target resources. Unfortunately inquiries from members of the All Party Group to

<sup>62</sup> Women’s Aid, [SOS: Save Refuges. Save Lives](#), September 2014, p 2.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid*, p 9.

<sup>64</sup> Women’s Aid, [‘APPG Inquiry into Women’s Access to Justice’](#), accessed 27 October 2014.

government departments have highlighted that data relating to domestic violence cases is not collected or available in a format that can be easily accessible and shared. We have recommended the Government review its data collection procedures as a first step to building a greater understanding of domestic violence.

2. **Training and awareness:** Our inquiry has shown that first responders in the police and justice systems are key to stopping abuse in its tracks and ensuring that the victim receives the support they need. We have recommended that all front line police officers and justice officials receive domestic violence awareness training to ensure a change of culture in the way victims, particularly women, are treated.
3. **Closing legislative loopholes:** Domestic violence is not an easy crime to understand; it is multi-layered and often misunderstood. The definition of domestic violence used by the Home Office highlights the psychological as well as physical harm an offender can cause. We recommend that government reviews the current legislation around domestic violence to close legislative gaps, such as giving consideration to criminalising coercive control and patterns of abusive behaviour.
4. **Effective prosecutions:** There is evidence to suggest that some police forces are placing less onus on a victim's witness statement and recognise the need to gather all-round good quality evidence. The use of body worn cameras by police when attending domestic violence calls is one example of effective policing in this regard. We recommend a move away from evidence solely based on victim testimony. The police should begin to build a case against a perpetrator the moment they walk through the door.
5. **Victim-centred approach:** The justice system needs to inspire confidence from all sides. Too often victims reported they felt unsupported and that the process was dehumanising. We recommend the government reviews ways to break down barriers to justice, increase information and communication with survivors about their case, invest in court facilities and access to technology so victims can testify remotely via video link.<sup>65</sup>

### 3. Social Exclusion

#### 3.1 Background

The [UK Labour Market: September 2014](#) statistical bulletin, published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), provides an overview of the latest data concerning women in the labour market. In terms of economic activity, the key findings were:

- For May to July 2014, 77.9 percent of men and 68.0 percent of women aged from 16 to 64 were in work. These employment rates for men and women were higher than those for a year earlier. The employment rate for men was lower than before the 2008/09 downturn, when it peaked at 79.0 percent in early 2008. However the employment rate for women was higher than before the 2008/09 downturn, when it peaked at 67.1 percent in March to May 2008.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>65</sup> APPG on Domestic and Sexual Violence, [Women's Access to Justice: From Reporting to Sentencing](#), 2014, pp 4–5.

<sup>66</sup> ONS, [UK Labour Market: September 2014](#), 17 September 2014, p 9.

- The number of women working full-time increased by 192,000 to reach 8.13 million, and the number of women working part-time increased by 152,000 to reach 6.10 million.<sup>67</sup>
- There were 889,000 unemployed women, 66,000 fewer than for February to April 2014 and 164,000 fewer than a year earlier.<sup>68</sup>
- The number of women unemployed for up to 6 months fell by 47,000 (9.0 percent) to reach 476,000. The number of women unemployed for between 6 and 12 months fell by 47,000 (23.9 percent) to reach 150,000. The number of women unemployed for over 12 months fell by 69,000 (20.9 percent) to reach 263,000.<sup>69</sup>

In December 2013, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) and New Policy Institute published their analysis of the current prevalence of poverty in the UK. It found:

- In 2011/12, 13 million people in the UK were living in poverty. For the first time more than half of these people lived in a working family.
- The proportion of pensioners in poverty is at its lowest for almost 30 years. The proportion of working-age adults without children in poverty is the highest on record.
- Average incomes have fallen by 8 percent since their peak in 2008. As a result, around 2 million people have a household income below the 2008 poverty line but are not considered to be in poverty today.
- In the last year, the labour market has shown signs of revival. Underemployment has fallen slightly from 6.4 million to 6.3 million and young adult unemployment appears to have peaked at 21 percent.
- The number of people in low-paid jobs has risen. There are now around 5 million people paid below the living wage.
- The movement in and out of work is substantial—4.8 million different people have claimed Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)—in the last two years.
- Following recent changes to the social security system, many people on means-tested benefits have reduced incomes. Around 500,000 families face a cut in housing benefit via the under-occupation penalty and a reduction in Council Tax Benefit. The number of sanctioned jobseekers with a reduced entitlement to JSA doubled in 2010 to around 800,000.
- The level of benefits for an out-of-work adult without children now covers only 40 percent of what the public considers to be a minimum standard of living. For families with children this figure is no more than 60 percent.<sup>70</sup>

The research also produced a number of findings in relation to women and poverty. These were that:

- Female employees generally earn less than their male counterparts, with the disparity growing higher up the earnings distribution. In 2012, full-time earnings at the 10th percentile (that is the level of pay required to earn more than the bottom 10 percent earn) were £282 per week for men and £254 per week for women. This amounts to a gap of £28 a week. At the median, the gap becomes more pronounced at more than £66 a week (£498 for men and £431 for women), before growing to a

<sup>67</sup> *ibid*, p 10.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid*, p 23.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid*, p 24.

<sup>70</sup> JRF and New Policy Institute, [Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion 2013](#), December 2013, p 1.

difference of £230 per week at the 90th percentile (£1,054 for men compared with £824 for women).<sup>71</sup>

- Total underemployment for women is slightly higher than for men at 3.2 million compared with just over 3 million. Within this, male unemployment was higher than female unemployment by 360,000 in the first half of 2013. The number of women lacking but wanting work was 410,000 higher than for men, and women working part-time but wanting full-time work was 130,000 higher than for men. All three types have increased for both genders when compared with both 2003 and 2008.<sup>72</sup>
- In 2012, around 27 percent of female employees and around 15 percent of male employees were paid below the UK living wage of £7.45 an hour. This represents an increase on the previous year for women and no change for men. This is the first increase in the proportion of low-paid women since the data series began in 2001.<sup>73</sup>

The importance of pay was highlighted by the Living Wage Commission, chaired by John Sentamu, the Archbishop of York, in its report on low pay and poverty in the UK. It stated that “for low wage earners in middle to high income households, the majority of whom are women, pay represents a crucial opportunity for independence and is therefore a key driver of a more equal society”.<sup>74</sup> The report estimated 2.9 million women were being paid below the Living Wage, an amount calculated by the Living Wage Foundation according to the basic cost of living in the UK.<sup>75</sup> The Commission added that “research from The Work Foundation and TUC shows that there are three times more young women employed in low-paid, low-skilled jobs than 20 years ago, though this partly reflects the fact that more women have entered the workforce” and that “the number of women paid below the UK Living Wage has also risen more quickly than the number of men paid below the same amount”. It observed that there “were 267,500 more women paid under the UK Living Wage at the end of 2013 than in 2011, nearly double the increase in men, 143,000. This accounts for an 8 percent rise in the number of women, compared to a 6 percent rise in the number of men. It shows that the gender inequality in low pay is growing, rather than contracting”.<sup>76</sup> Information released by the Government about the minimum wage stated that women accounted for 59 percent of minimum wage jobs.<sup>77</sup>

The Fawcett Society, in a 2012 report that examined the impact on women of government policies, stated that “even before the recession, despite steady progress in realising women’s economic rights, women in the UK continued to experience entrenched economic inequality”.<sup>78</sup> It pointed to the following indicators in support of this assertion:

- Women experience a full-time pay gap of 14.9 percent;
- 64 percent of low paid workers are women;
- 40 percent of ethnic minority women live in poverty;

<sup>71</sup> *ibid*, p 46.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid*, p 36.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid*, p 44.

<sup>74</sup> Living Wage Commission, [Working for Poverty: The Scale of the Problem of Low Pay and Working Poverty in the UK](#), February 2014, p 10.

<sup>75</sup> Living Wage Foundation, ‘[What is the Living Wage?](#)’, accessed 27 October 2014.

<sup>76</sup> Living Wage Commission, [Working for Poverty: The Scale of the Problem of Low Pay and Working Poverty in the UK](#), February 2014, p 19.

<sup>77</sup> GOV.UK, [National Minimum Wage Rate Recommendations from 1 October 2014](#), October 2014.

<sup>78</sup> Fawcett Society, [The Impact of Austerity on Women](#), March 2012, p 5.

- Women's average personal pensions are only 62 percent of the average for men;
- 92 percent of lone parents—a group more likely to live below the poverty line—are women;
- The costs of childcare in the UK are amongst the highest in the world, heavily limiting women's choices to take up paid work.<sup>79</sup>

In October 2014, the World Economic Forum published [The Global Gender Gap Report 2014](#). This placed the UK 26 out of 142 countries in its global rankings for gender equality, ahead of fellow European countries Luxembourg (28), Spain (29) and Austria (36) but behind countries such as Belgium (10), Germany (12) and France (16). Scandinavian countries made up the top 5: Iceland (1), Finland (2), Norway (3) and Sweden (4) were followed by Denmark (5). The United States ranked 20. The report noted of the UK that:

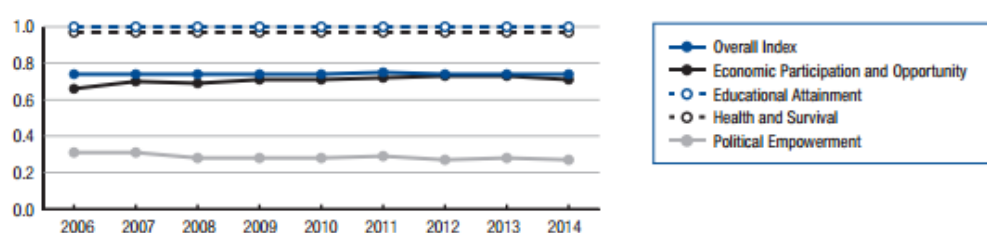
In the United Kingdom (26), the score has decreased compared to last year but has slightly improved compared to 2006. The UK is the third highest-ranking country in terms of length of maternity leave (273 calendar days), and is also among the five countries with the highest mean age of women at the birth of the first child (30 years old).<sup>80</sup>

The table 2 below provides further information with regard to the UK's adjudged performance across different indicators since 2006.<sup>81</sup>

**Table 2: Gender Gap Index since 2006: United Kingdom**

	OVERALL		ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION		EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT		HEALTH AND SURVIVAL		POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
<b>Gender Gap Index 2014 (out of 142 countries)</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>0.738</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>0.714</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>1.000</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>0.970</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>0.270</b>
Gender Gap Index 2013 (out of 136 countries)	18	0.744	35	0.732	31	0.999	92	0.970	29	0.275
Gender Gap Index 2012 (out of 135 countries)	18	0.743	33	0.730	27	0.999	93	0.970	29	0.274
Gender Gap Index 2011 (out of 135 countries)	16	0.746	33	0.722	1	1.000	91	0.970	23	0.293
Gender Gap Index 2010 (out of 134 countries)	15	0.746	34	0.721	1	1.000	90	0.970	22	0.293
Gender Gap Index 2009 (out of 134 countries)	15	0.740	35	0.706	1	1.000	72	0.974	22	0.280
Gender Gap Index 2008 (out of 130 countries)	13	0.737	42	0.692	1	1.000	69	0.974	21	0.280
Gender Gap Index 2007 (out of 128 countries)	11	0.744	32	0.695	1	1.000	67	0.974	12	0.307
Gender Gap Index 2006 (out of 115 countries)	9	0.736	37	0.664	1	1.000	63	0.974	12	0.307

Trend 2006–2014



Source: World Economic Forum, [The Global Gender Gap Report 2014](#), October 2014

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> World Economic Forum, [The Global Gender Gap Report 2014](#), October 2014, p 21.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*, p 363.

## 3.2 Government Policy

In 2012, the Government published its social justice strategy, *Social Justice: Transforming Lives*.<sup>82</sup> It set out the Government's approach to social justice, a term it said was about "making society function better—providing the support and tools to help turn lives around".<sup>83</sup> It explained that the strategy provided a "challenging new approach to tackling poverty in all its forms", based "not on a narrative about income poverty alone". It explained the Government believed "that the focus on income over the last decades has ignored the root causes of poverty, and in doing so has allowed social problems to deepen and become entrenched". Consequently, the strategy was based on a new set of principles:

1. A focus on prevention and early intervention;
2. Where problems arise, concentrating interventions on recovery and independence, not maintenance;
3. Promoting work for those who can as the most sustainable route out of poverty, while offering unconditional support to those who are severely disabled and cannot work;
4. Recognising that the most effective solutions will often be designed and delivered at a local level; and
5. Ensuring that interventions provide a fair deal for the taxpayer.<sup>84</sup>

It added that social justice was "closely related to another Government priority: to increase social mobility". Its social mobility strategy, it said, was "about ensuring people are able to move up the social ladder, regardless of background; this Social Justice Strategy is about ensuring everybody can put a foot on that ladder".<sup>85</sup>

The social justice strategy highlighted the importance of recognising the multiple disadvantages that interact and how these contribute to social problems. It noted that:

On a wider definition, analysis from household survey data found that 11 percent of adults (5.3 million people) in the UK experience, at any one time, three or more of six areas of disadvantage (education, health, employment, income, social support, housing and local environment). This population is constantly changing, with people moving in and out of disadvantage and poverty according to the impact of these economic, social and environmental factors.

It is clear that the number of people facing multiple disadvantages which damage their life chances, and those of their children, is unacceptably high.<sup>86</sup>

With regard to women, the strategy said the Government acknowledged that gender (among other factors) played a part. However, it said that the Government's approach focused on areas of disadvantage, rather than factors such as gender:

We know that in some cases these disadvantages can be exacerbated by factors like ethnicity, gender or disability. For instance, disabled people are substantially more likely

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<sup>82</sup> HM Government, [Social Justice: Transforming Lives](#), March 2014, Cm 8314.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid*, p 4.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid*, p 8.

to experience material deprivation than people who are not disabled. This strategy does not focus on these factors as themes—rather it looks at the areas of disadvantage and how best to tackle them. This is not to ignore the role that factors like these can play in contributing to multiple disadvantages, however, and the importance of changing that picture.<sup>87</sup>

However, the strategy did refer to specific actions for women the Government would take concerning domestic violence and women offenders.<sup>88</sup>

In response to a written question in 2012 about the impact of the Government's deficit reduction plan on women, Lynne Featherstone, the then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Women and Equalities, set out the ways in which the Government was ensuring "the most vulnerable", including women, were being "protected". She said:

Reducing the deficit this Government inherited requires difficult decisions to be made as this is the only way back to a strong economy that creates opportunities for the next generation and supports world class public services. However, the Government are ensuring that economic reforms are implemented fairly, with the most vulnerable protected. For example:

- Raising the personal tax free allowance will lift 2 million of the lowest-paid workers out of income tax altogether, more than half of whom (59 percent) are women;
- Allocating an additional £300 million for child care support under universal credit on top of the £2 billion already spent under the current system will help around 80,000 more families with children to work their chosen hours; and
- Extending the entitlement to 15 hours a week of free early education will benefit 260,000 of the most disadvantaged two-year-olds.

Beyond getting the public finances under control, the Government are also laying the foundations for a stronger, more prosperous Britain with women at the heart of the economy by:

- Removing barriers for women in the workplace through improving transparency, extending the right to request flexible working, introducing flexible parental leave, and ensuring more women progress into the boardroom;
- Providing resources to identify and train 15,000 new mentors to support anyone setting up and growing a business, including 5,000 specifically for female entrepreneurs, and providing £2 million over the next three years to support women entrepreneurs in rural areas; and
- Establishing a Women's Business Council to ensure Government get the best advice on how to maximise women's potential to drive economic growth.

In addition, because women's safety is a priority for this Government, we are ensuring that economic reforms do not compromise protection for victims. For example, we are:

- Ring-fencing nearly £40 million of stable funding up to 2015 for specialist local domestic and sexual violence support services, rape crisis centres, the national domestic violence helplines and the stalking helpline;

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<sup>87</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.*, pp 21 and 53.

- Allocating £1.2 million over three years to improve services for young people affected by sexual violence and exploitation, including from gangs; and
- Continuing to provide legal aid for the victims of domestic violence to apply for protective injunctions and continue to waive the financial eligibility limits in these cases.<sup>89</sup>

In November 2013, the House of Commons debated an opposition motion that proposed that the Government was failing to deliver an economic recovery for women. Nicky Morgan, the then Economic Secretary to the Treasury, spoke on behalf of the Government. She told MPs that:

Thanks to the changes that we have made, and thanks, most importantly, to the hard work of women and men across the UK, our economy is turning a corner. The UK is now on the path to prosperity. The deficit is down by a third, gross domestic product is rising, and more people—including women—are in work than ever before. The more men and women who are taking home wages at the end of the month—especially when 25 million people’s wages are being boosted by our increase in the tax-free personal allowance—the higher will be the standard of living that we can expect to see in households across the country.

[...] there are now more women in work than ever before [...] I shall tell the House that there are nearly 450,000 more women in employment since the Government came to power, and nearly 300,000 fewer economically inactive women. We should be celebrating the fact that there are now so many women in the labour market. Not only are there more women in the workplace, but the pay gap is shrinking, having fallen by nearly 1 percent last year. It now sits at just 9.6 percent.<sup>90</sup>

Nicky Morgan also stated that the Government had acted to improve child care policies, which would benefit women. She said:

For any mothers and fathers to succeed in the workplace, we need to have the right policy in place to support them. The Labour Party is right to draw attention to the importance of parental leave and child care, but let me remind the Opposition that we were the Government who recognised the current system of leave and pay for parents as being not only old-fashioned and inflexible, but as playing a role in reinforcing the idea that women are the primary carers of children. Our new system will give real choice to families, and, from 2015, will allow working parents to share leave once the mother feels ready to end her maternity leave.

I remind the Opposition that we were the party that made sweeping changes on flexible leave and that they were the party that presided over child-care costs rising to the second highest level in the developed world. We are working hard to address that and to make child care more affordable for parents across the United Kingdom.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>89</sup> HC Hansard, 27 March 2012, [cols 1017–8W](#).

<sup>90</sup> HC Hansard, 19 November 2013, [cols 1167–8](#).

<sup>91</sup> *ibid*, [cols 1169–70](#).



In 2010, the Government published its first assessment of how its decisions were impacting on different groups, such as women.<sup>92</sup> In 2013, the Treasury published its analysis of the spending review. It stated:

The Government remains committed to creating a fairer society and to the promotion of social mobility. The Government is therefore taking difficult decisions in the fairest way possible and consistent with the promotion of equal opportunities. It is protecting services for the most vulnerable and focusing resources where they are most needed and most effective. Throughout the Spending Round, the Government has taken care to consider the impacts of the tough decisions that have been made on groups with particular needs in society.<sup>93</sup>

With regard to gender, the analysis stated that the Government was “committed to ensuring that people are not disadvantaged because of their gender”. It added that it had made a number of policy decisions that were relevant to women. These included:

[...] a focus on reducing the barriers that prevent women from returning to work. The introduction of tax-free childcare, announced in Budget 2013 is expected to help parents, particularly women, return to work after parental leave. The change will be phased in from autumn 2015, and will support working families and single parents by providing up to 20 percent of childcare costs, up to £1,200 per child each year for working parents of children under five, and in time under twelve.

In this Spending Round, the Government has also made decisions which protect access to services more likely to be used by women. For instance, the Spending Round provides an additional £2 billion from the NHS for local health and social care services, which will enable local authorities to maintain access to adult social care. This will form part of the £3.8 billion pooled budget for health and social care, which will be shared between local authorities and the NHS to improve outcomes and deliver better services more efficiently.<sup>94</sup>

In June 2013, the Women’s Business Council, set up by Government in 2012, reported on how women’s contribution to the economy could be maximised. It found that:

There is enormous untapped potential in the female population which would support growth. Over the past 50 years, the increased participation of women in education and the labour market has been a significant contributor to the economy. By equalising the labour force participation rates of men and women, the UK could further increase GDP per capita growth by 0.5 percentage points per year, with potential gains of 10 percent of GDP by 2030. We need to address this mismatch to unlock women’s contribution for the UK to optimise its economic potential.

[...] There are over 2.4 million women who are not in work but want to work and over 1.3 million women who want to work more hours. There has been substantial social and economic change over the past 50 years, as more and more women have gained higher qualifications, entered into the workforce and started to break into senior positions. Yet the case remains that while girls and young women outstrip boys and men

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<sup>92</sup> HM Treasury, [Impact on Equalities: Analysis to Accompany Spending Round 2013](#), June 2013, para 1.2.

<sup>93</sup> *ibid*, para 1.1.

<sup>94</sup> *ibid*, paras 2.5–7.

in educational attainment they are, in comparison, under-represented in many key areas. There is still a gap in employment (67 percent of working-age women are employed, compared to 76 percent of men) and women are much more likely to be in low-paid jobs (women's average hourly earnings are 19.7 percent less than men's). This represents a loss of investment that the UK must recoup.<sup>95</sup>

In November 2013, the Government Equalities Office published its action plan, based on the Council's recommendations. Maria Miller, the then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and Minister for Women and Equalities, said in the foreword that the plan was a continuation of actions the Government had already taken:

[...] to address the barriers faced by women and girls in the labour market and in business. We are making lasting structural changes to ensure our workplaces match the needs of women in modern Britain, including introducing shared parental leave to give families more choice and control, extending the right to request flexible working to all, increasing child tax credits for lower income families, and extending the free entitlement to early education. We have also acted to encourage and support more women to start their own business, through mentoring, financial help and cutting red tape.<sup>96</sup>

Actions set out in the plan included:

- Improved guidance on careers which will include raising aspirations and challenging stereotypes;
- Help for parents to ensure their children make well-informed career and subject choices;
- A new drive on science, technology and engineering, building on "Tomorrow's Engineers week" [...];
- Support for those with caring responsibilities to stay in work where they wish or to set up their own small business;
- A new business champion for older workers.<sup>97</sup>

In June 2014, the Women's Business Council released a review that provided an update on progress since it reported. Ruby MacGregor-Smith, Chair of the Council, wrote that:

Despite launching our strategy against a backdrop of unprecedented economic struggle, we remained committed to demonstrating the benefits of women's contribution to the UK economy.

And we are pleased to see that we are making progress. Last year we reported there was an estimated 2.4 million women not working but who wanted to. That figure now stands at 2.3 million women, as more and more women have taken up employment over the last year, which is really encouraging news. Since we published our report in 2013, we now see the highest ever employment rates for women and a near zero gender pay gap for the under 40s working full time.

Things are certainly moving in the right direction. We are pleased with the Government's response to our report and welcomed the release of the Government

<sup>95</sup> Women's Business Council, [Maximising Women's Contribution to Future Economic Growth](#), June 2013, p 8.

<sup>96</sup> Government Equalities Office, [Women and the Economy: Government Action Plan](#), November 2013, p 4.

<sup>97</sup> GOV.UK, [Women and the Economy: Government Action Plan](#), 7 November 2013.

Action Plan, published on 7 November 2013, which demonstrated a real commitment to delivering the Council's recommendations.<sup>98</sup>

### 3.3 Commentary

A number of organisations have voiced concerns about the impact of Government spending decisions on women. In 2012, the Fawcett Society said that it was:

[...] extremely concerned about the impact of austerity on women's equality in the UK. Our analysis—and the conclusions of independent research bodies and academics—has highlighted that the cumulative effect of fiscal measures taken to reduce net public spending will have a disproportionate effect on women, making many women poorer and less financially autonomous. The knock-on effects of this will be to turn back time on a range of indicators of women's rights and equality.<sup>99</sup>

The Women's Budget Group, an "independent, voluntary organisation made up of individuals from academia, non-governmental organisations and trade unions", has analysed the gender impact of the budget each year since the early 1990s. The group were critical of the 2014 budget, highlighting that:

- The majority of tax giveaways such as increases in the personal tax allowance, which alone cost £12bn a year, will go to men and those on higher incomes. This is equivalent to the £12bn additional cuts to social security benefits (the brunt of which are borne by women) to be made in the first two years of the next parliament.
- The cap on social security spending (£119.5bn for 2015–16) will have more impact on women who rely on benefits more than men. It will also do nothing to address the root causes of increased need.
- Sweeping reforms in pensions and savings do little to help women with low incomes and increase risks of poverty for many pensioners in the future.
- Increases in childcare support are welcome but in order to sustain quality and control prices, this help should come in the form of direct public provision of childcare (like early education provision).<sup>100</sup>

The group was particularly concerned about the impact of policies on spending on public services, arguing that:

Further austerity measures are cutting the social security and public services on which so many women rely. Austerity has been imposed through a balance of 90 percent spending cuts versus 10 percent tax increases, a major divergence from the announcements in 2010 of an 80:20 percent divide, already challenged by the Women's Budget Group as disproportionately affecting women. According to the House of Commons library, some 80 percent of the revenue raised and expenditure saved

<sup>98</sup> Women's Business Council, [Maximising Women's Contribution to Future Economic Growth: One Year On](#), June 2014, foreword.

<sup>99</sup> Fawcett Society, [The Impact of Austerity on Women](#), March 2012, p 3.

<sup>100</sup> Women's Budget Group, [Budget 2014—Giveaways to Men, Paid for by Women](#), May 2014.

through changes to personal taxes and social security since 2010 will come from women.

£12bn additional cuts per annum in social security benefits are planned for introduction over the first two years of the next parliament, equivalent to the £12bn a year revenue foregone due to rises in the personal tax allowance compared to pre-2010 plans. Moreover, the social security ('welfare') cap will include new help for childcare. It will therefore curb benefit spending and redistribute it between recipients, from poorer benefit recipients to higher income families claiming for childcare, while doing nothing to address the root causes of increases in needs.<sup>101</sup>

It was also worried that women were still not getting the same opportunities in the labour market as men:

Women's unemployment is still 50 percent higher than its pre-crisis level (men's is 41 percent higher) while long term unemployment continues to rise overall and at a faster rate among women than men. Employment levels have increased for women and men, although women's employment rate has only just now recovered to its pre-crisis level, after a severe interruption to its previous upward trend.

Concerns remain regarding the quality of employment. While full-time employment has been increasing, 86 percent of the net gain in employment since 2008 has been part-time, a significant proportion of which is involuntary, especially among women. There has also been a steep rise in self-employment for both women and men, especially among the over 50s. While this may in some cases reflect the development of new small businesses, in others it could be linked to the lack of available jobs.

Private sector job creation has not produced the well-paid and stable employment that the public sector offered: the gender pay gap is far higher in the private sector and there are three times as many young women doing low-paid jobs than 20 years ago. Meanwhile real earnings have not recovered and while the gender pay gap declined marginally between 2011 and 2013, this may have more to do with decline in male earnings which fell by 1.6 percent in real terms (hourly earnings) since 2011 than an improvement in women's earnings, down 1.1 percent.<sup>102</sup>

In a separate analysis of the labour market for women, published in August 2014, the Fawcett Society profiled the labour market for women. It observed that:

The labour market statistics paint a decidedly mixed picture. While levels of economic inactivity have dropped to record lows among women, levels of full-time employment are only now beginning to reach pre-crisis levels and there are still 946,000 women out of work. Growth has come largely from part-time jobs, temporary work and self-employment and often in low-wage, feminised sectors of the economy. Employment in the private sector has increased by 1.9 million, while public sector employment, where women make up nearly two-thirds of the workforce, has declined by 372,000 since its peak in 2010.

<sup>101</sup> Women's Budget Group, [The Impact on Women of Budget 2014: No Recovery for Women](#), March 2014, p 2.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid*, p 3.

These trends have significant implications for women and gender equality. Levels of temporary working and underemployment—as measured by those working part-time because there is no full-time work—remain high. Female under-employment, for example, is nearly twice the level it was at start of the crisis in 2008 and the phenomenon of “zero hours” contracts is ushering in a new era of insecure work amongst a substantial minority of the low-paid—the majority of whom are women.

Earnings are significantly lagging behind inflation. This is true of both average wages and the national minimum wage (NMW), which even with the planned increase to £6.50 in October 2014 will only reach 2005 levels in real terms. The low—and in real terms declining—levels of wage growth mean that many on low pay, two-thirds of whom are women, are experiencing a significant decline in their standards of living.

Against the backdrop of these trends, one of the headline indicators of gender equality in the labour market, the gender pay gap, widened last year for the first time in five years. It now stands at 19.1 percent for all employees. This is a worrying development that, at least in part, is likely to be driven by the shape of the emerging recovery, including the high levels of under-employment, growing levels of women entering into self-employment, which is typically poorly paid and the shift of jobs to the private sector, which has a significantly higher gender pay gap than the public sector.<sup>103</sup>

It suggested seven “priority areas for action” to improve women’s participation and place in the labour market:

- Protecting and lifting the incomes of those on low pay;
- Increasing the availability of quality, well-paid and senior part-time roles;
- Tackling the widening gender pay gap;
- Protecting the employment rights of the lowest paid workers;
- Ending the use of zero-hours contracts;
- Increasing the availability and quality of childcare;
- Changing attitudes to ensure both men and women are responsible for caring.<sup>104</sup>

Concerns about women’s place in the labour market have also been raised by the Young Women’s Trust. In 2014, it published its findings of the first phase of an inquiry into young women not in education, employment or training (NEETs). The report was based on a survey of 859 18–24 year old NEETs, which was funded by Starbucks; ten focus groups of 60 women; an online survey; and input from a panel of experts. Sian Williams, Chair of the panel, said:

The number of people in England not in education, employment or training (NEET) is high. However, despite common assumptions about who is NEET, there are many more women than men in this position and this has been the case for more than a decade. Women are NEET for longer and the impact is deeper, with the effects sometimes lasting for a lifetime [...]

Contrary to popular assumptions, only a quarter of women who are not in education, employment or training are mothers, but those who are, face even more barriers to working.

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<sup>103</sup> Fawcett Society, [The Changing Labour Market 2: Women, Low Pay and Gender Equality in the Emerging Recovery](#), August 2014, p 3.

<sup>104</sup> *ibid*, p 19.

Young women who are NEET can be exploited, just as men can. But a zero hours contract or a job paying under the minimum wage is harder to avoid or escape when you have fewer choices in the first place, and harder to cope with if you have children to provide for and look after. Women are stuck and they are stigmatised. We shouldn't be willing to accept this. Economically too, it makes no sense to deny women who want to work the opportunity to do so.<sup>105</sup>

The report said the Trust would collect more evidence in order to provide detailed recommendations in 2015. However, based on evidence it received in the first phase, it said NEETs would like:

- Fewer assumptions and less discrimination in the workplace;
- Accessible jobs that pay enough;
- Tailored, non-gendered, careers advice and ongoing support by services like Jobcentre;
- Work that truly accommodates caring responsibilities;
- Feeling someone cares and can offer emotional support as well as practical advice, such as an individual project worker, friend or family member; and
- More opportunities for young women to be given a chance.<sup>106</sup>

The Women's Budget Group has asserted that unless there was an economic plan put in place, with gender and social equality at its heart (Plan 'F'), there would be "no recovery for women". Its 'Plan F' would in effect see:

- Paid care workers (who are mainly women) receive better training, better pay, better employment rights, better job security;
- Unpaid carers looking after family and friends (who are mainly women) receive more support from public services and social security benefits, enabling them to take paid employment, if they wish to do so;
- Both private sector and public sector employers recognize a duty of care to invest in the development of high quality care services;
- The roll-out of cuts to public services would be halted. By the end of 2013, the IFS estimated that only 31 percent of planned cuts would have been achieved;
- Universal Credit would be reformed to ensure that women with employed partners gain from earning—as it stands, many families in this situation will lose payments at a higher rate than in the current situation if they start earning;
- The national minimum wage would be raised to a higher proportion of median wages;
- Social security measures that are destroying women's links with their families and communities, such as the bedroom tax and the benefits cap, would be repealed;
- More tax revenue would be raised from wealthy people and companies;
- And investment in social housing would be supported, rather than subsidizing lending for mortgages that does not address the slow pace of building and the consequent housing price hikes.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>105</sup> Young Women's Trust, [Totally Wasted: The Crisis of Young Women's Worklessness](#), 2014, p 1.

<sup>106</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> Women's Budget Group, [The Impact on Women of Budget 2014: No Recovery for Women](#), March 2014, pp 34–5.