

7 September 2020

Fortnightly Update from the Domestic Abuse Commissioner

Background

1. Every fortnight, Nicole Jacobs chairs a conference call with national helpline providers, second tier organisations, and Government Departments to share emerging trends, facilitate cross-sector working, and to escalate issues as required.

Helplines

2. **Call volumes into national helplines continue to exceed pre-Covid levels, with the National Domestic Abuse helpline run by Refuge reporting a 28% increase in calls in the week commencing 31 August.** This is the lowest average daily calls and contacts for some time, this is likely to be down to the bank holiday. Respect's Men's advice line web chat and Galop's web chat experienced a 50% increase from the week before.

Funding and Policy Updates

3. **The Home Office perpetrator funding application window has been extended to 29th September 2020**, which is hugely welcome, although there are still concerns about the longevity of this funding beyond March 2021.
4. **The Sector welcomes the Home Office's intention for a stakeholder meeting on the VAWG Strategy in the near future, as concerns remain about the prospect of a separate domestic abuse strategy rather than one integrated and comprehensive Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. A separate domestic abuse strategy would undermine a gendered understanding of domestic abuse and artificially separate it from wider forms of overlapping and intersecting forms of VAWG, such as sexual violence or so-called 'honour-based' abuse. The Home Office will provide a date for the stakeholder meeting shortly.**
5. **Data is now available from the National Police Chief's Council's Domestic Homicide Rapid Review, piloted in response to concerns about the impact of lockdown on domestic homicide. Over a 17-week period, (23 March - 19 July 2020) the study recorded 71 deaths of which 51 met definition of DHR, results were highly gendered with 47 women killed by men, 14 men were murdered, 91% of suspects were male. The main project will run until March 2021 and will investigate patterns and trends such as disproportionate impact on BAME victims.**
6. **The extension of custody time limits should help ease limited court space, currently there are 102 courts running and there is a steady week on week increase in cases being heard.**
7. **Special Measures provision was extended at the end of August to the South East and will be extended nationally in the coming weeks. Provision will enable**