

**24 August 2020**

**Fortnightly Update from the Domestic Abuse Sector**

**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 70% increase in calls in the week commencing 10<sup>th</sup> August compared to the same period last year.** W/c 10<sup>th</sup> August was highlighted as extremely busy across many national helplines, and the sector will conduct analysis into possible reasons for this.
3. **Karma Nirvana reported a 250% increase in cases reporting forced marriage concerns between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> August, an average of 17 new cases per week.** This may be connected with schools reopening and could highlight increased vulnerability of young people at this time.

**Funding and Policy Updates**

4. **Covid-related funding has been extended beyond 31<sup>st</sup> October by MoJ until the end of March 2021, which is hugely welcome.** Home Office and MHCLG have yet to confirm dates of their funding extensions, these are anticipated by the next DAC call on 7 September.
5. **The Sector remains concerned about the prospect of a separate domestic abuse strategy vs one integrated Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.** This 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 an update once Ministers have responded to updated advice.
6. **The MoJ has announced their Victim's Funding Strategy will be developed to align with the Spending Review.** MoJ have been engaging with the Sector to enable successful funding bids, and to understand the role of specialist support for victims from BAME backgrounds and for disabled victims.
7. **The CPS has clarified on rape review 'success measures'.** Contrary to some media reports police and CPS will not be given specific numerical targets for referrals or charge volumes, and each case will be tried on its own merit.
8. **The next DAC Covid-19 meeting will take place on 7<sup>th</sup> September**