



Domestic Abuse Commissioner

NICOLE JACOBS

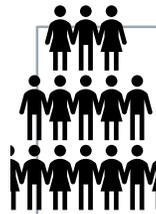
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“The focus of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner will be to stand up for victims and survivors, raise public awareness and hold both agencies and government to account in tackling domestic abuse.”

- VICTORIA ATKINS, MINISTER FOR SAFEGUARDING AND VULNERABILITY. 18 SEPTEMBER 2019

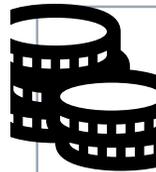
Background



Domestic Abuse affected 2.4 million adults in the last year



The police recorded 1.3 million incidents of domestic abuse in the last year



Domestic Abuse cost society £66bn in the year ending March 2017



1 in 5 children live with domestic abuse



There were 60,000 convictions for domestic abuse-related offences in 2017-18

Purpose

The Problem

- The prevalence of domestic abuse remains too high, and the national and local response (while in some areas improving) is inadequate to the scale and complexity of the problem.
- The response represents a “postcode lottery” with significant variation across England and Wales.
- Not only does the specialist domestic abuse support available vary in both quantity and quality, but the wider community response from health, housing, education or social care varies considerably.

The Domestic Abuse Commissioner

- Nicole Jacobs was appointed Designate Domestic Abuse Commissioner in September 2019.
- The Commissioner will play a key role in holding local and national Government to account in order to improve the response to domestic abuse and shining a light on both good and poor practice and policy.
- All statutory agencies and Government Departments will have a legal duty through the Domestic Abuse Bill to cooperate with the Commissioner and respond publicly to any of her recommendations within 56 days.

Priorities of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner

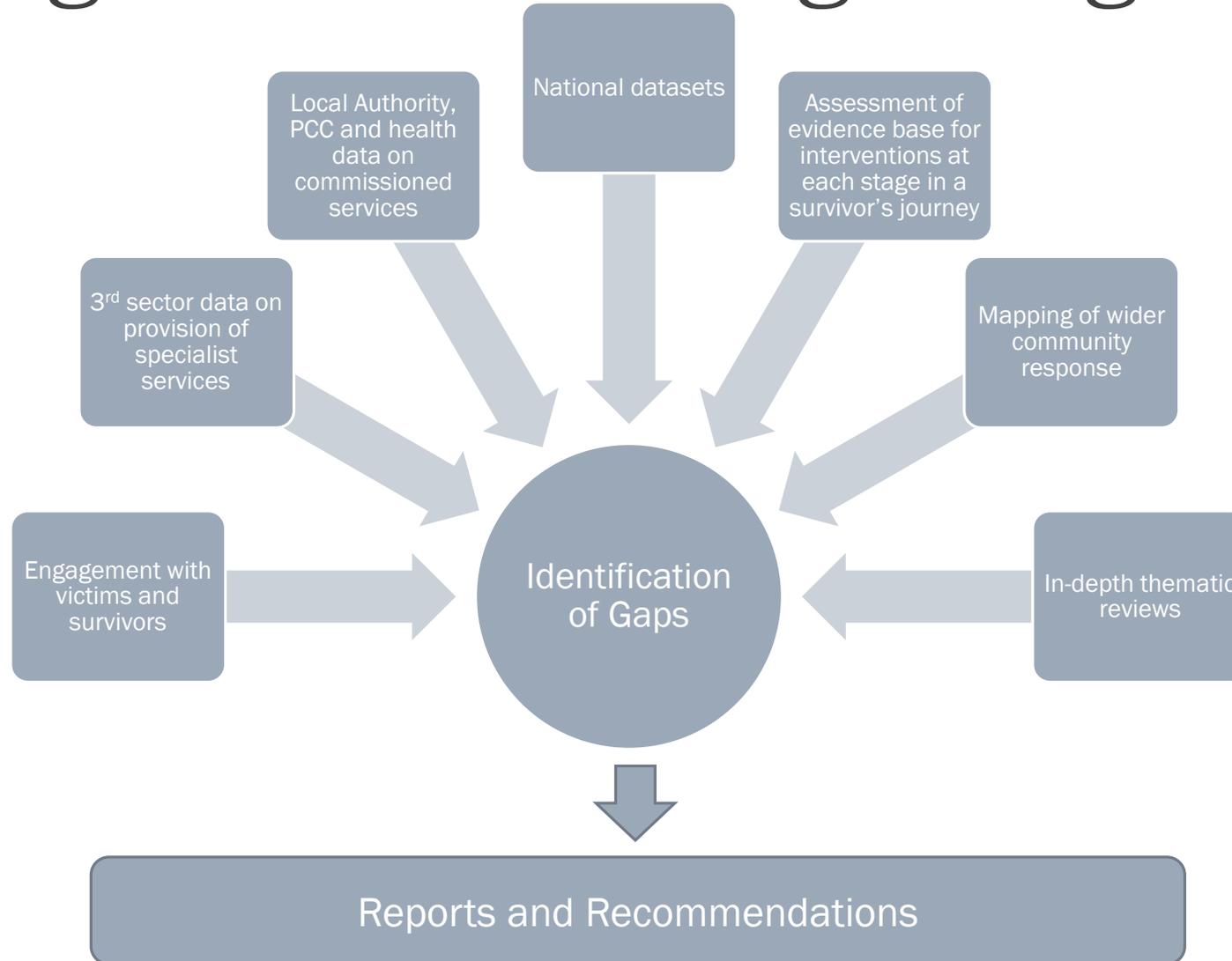
Priorities - Overarching

- To represent and magnify the voices of victims and survivors of domestic abuse.
- To continue to develop a framework for mapping domestic abuse services nationally.
- To conduct mapping for domestic abuse services nationally and to subsequently lay reports before parliament and make recommendations.
- To end the 'postcode lottery' for survivors of domestic abuse.
- To improve the national response to domestic abuse and hold both local and national Government to account

Priorities - Timely

- To monitor the impact of Covid-19 on domestic abuse, and support relevant third sector organizations as they coordinate their response to the crisis.
- To ensure the Domestic Abuse Bill is as robust and inclusive as possible.

Mapping and Monitoring: Long-term



The Domestic Abuse Bill

The Domestic Abuse Bill

- This landmark piece of legislation, first introduced July 2019 and re-introduced in March 2020, has just completed Committee stage in the Commons, where it underwent intense line by line scrutiny.
- Key elements of the Bill are to:
 - Establish the Domestic Abuse Commissioner as a statutory office holder
 - Create a statutory definition of Domestic Abuse to ensure it's properly understood, considered unacceptable and challenged across agencies and in public attitudes
 - Provide for a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Domestic Abuse Protection Order
 - Place a duty on local authorities in England to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation

The Domestic Abuse Bill (continued)

The Domestic Abuse Bill

- Prohibit perpetrators of abuse from cross-examining their victims in person in the family courts in England and Wales
- Create a statutory presumption that victims of domestic abuse are eligible for special measures in the criminal courts (for example, to enable them to give evidence via a video link)
- Place the guidance supporting the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (“Clare’s law”) on a statutory footing

The Commissioner's Priorities for the Domestic Abuse Bill

The Commissioner's Priorities For the Domestic Abuse Bill

- The Bill is lacking in provisions for community-based services, we need greater inclusion for community-based services that can help end the postcode lottery – funding is disparate, and few places have breadth of responses we would like to see.
- The Bill does not go far enough for BME and migrant women. No recourse to public funds should be lifted. A non-discrimination clause would help re-iterate migrant women's issues. Equally a 'firewall' between the police and immigration enforcement would enable more migrant victims of domestic abuse to report to the police.
- Children are victims of domestic abuse in their own right, and this should be recognised in the definition of domestic abuse within the Bill. If this not acknowledged in the Bill local services may feel less of a duty to protect children – and already in practise there are insufficient services for children.

Toplines from Weekly Call

- The response to the pandemic shown the huge commitment and resilience of individuals working around the clock to support those subjected to domestic abuse, at a time when they need it most.
- There has been a surge in demand for support during the Covid-19 pandemic, but particularly for remote or more discrete forms of support – with increases across helplines, webchat, and website visits;
- Cases are increasingly complex– with some helplines reporting a tripling of average call length as call handlers respond to a range of issues and provide emotional support rather than focusing on practical advice (particularly where referral routes are not open);
- Marginalised and minoritized women have been disproportionately affected, with greater increases in demand seen amongst specialist services (such as those that are run by and for BME, disabled or LGBT+ people) at a time when these services are poorly funded and often lack the infrastructure to move to remote working; and
- There has been a reduction in referrals from statutory agencies such as schools and GP practices as they have been largely shut, but increases in engagement and calls from concerned neighbours, families and friends.