



House of Commons
Home Affairs Committee

Follow-up to the Committee's Report on Domestic Violence, Forced Marriage and Honour-Based Violence

Oral and written evidence

9 March 2010

Ms Davina James-Hanman, Director, Greater London Domestic Violence Project and Mr Nazir Afzal, CPS National Director for Community Liaison; Mr Alan Campbell MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Crime Reduction, Home Office

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The Home Affairs Committee

The Home Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Home Office and its associated public bodies.

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Tom Brake MP (*Liberal Democrat, Carshalton and Wallington*)
Mr James Clappison MP (*Conservative, Hertsmere*)
Mrs Ann Cryer MP (*Labour, Keighley*)
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Mr Gary Streeter MP (*Conservative, South West Devon*)
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Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Home Affairs Committee, House of Commons, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 3276; the Committee's email address is homeaffcom@parliament.uk.

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Oral evidence

Taken before the Home Affairs Committee on Tuesday 9 March 2010

Members present
Keith Vaz, in the Chair

Tom Brake
Mrs Ann Cryer
David T C Davies
Mrs Janet Dean
Gwyn Prosser

Bob Russell
Martin Salter
Mr Gary Streeter
Mr David Winnick

Witnesses: **Ms Davina James-Hanman**, Director, Greater London Domestic Violence Project and **Mr Nazir Afzal**, CPS National Director for Community Liaison, gave evidence.

Q1 Chair: Good morning. Could I refer everyone present to the Register of Members' Interests where the interests of Members of this Committee are noted. This is a one-off session which will look at the Committee's recommendations following our inquiry into domestic violence/forced marriage and honour-based violence, which we published in 2008. The purpose of this session is to look at our recommendations to see whether in fact any of our recommendations have been implemented by the Government, after they were received very warmly at the time. Could I welcome to the dais Mr Afzal, the Director for West London for the Crown Prosecution Service, and Davina James-Hanman, who was our special adviser to the inquiry which we conducted last year. Could I start with you, Mr Afzal. We recommended the raising of the age of sponsorship for a spouse visa from 18 to 21. Is there any evidence that this has actually reduced the level of violence that has been encountered as a result of complaints that were made on the last occasion?

Mr Afzal: In terms of evidence I think it is too early to be able to point to any specific evidence that I can present to you today. Certainly I have spoken to several members of the third sector and police officers, particularly over the last week in preparation for today, and they tell me that it has, in their view, had a very positive effect in terms of the people who would ordinarily have been forced into marriage at an earlier age. It has sent out, seemingly, a message to some families and to some communities that they need to be taking this a little bit more seriously than they have done. However, there has been an increase in relation to fraud involving birth certificates obtained abroad for individuals who are trying to pretend that they are 21 when they are not.

Q2 Chair: There has been a consequence for members of the Muslim and Jewish communities which has become apparent to some Members of this House who have large ethnic populations. It is a very serious step to raise the age for those coming into this country. The Jewish and the Muslim communities complain that it has caught a whole lot of people who would not normally be caught in those circumstances. Has it been worth it?

Mr Afzal: It has been worth it. Yes, there have been people who have claimed, "We have nothing to hide. We are open about it. This is a proper arranged marriage with full consent on all sides," and they have been caught out by it. I think the very first victims were a British and Canadian couple who were 19 and 20, so, yes, there will be some people, who are absolutely fine about their relationship and there is no issue, who have been caught out by this. There are several hundred women who the third sector say—

Q3 Chair: You have evidence that several hundred women who would have been subjected to violence have not been subjected to violence because of the raising of the age?

Mr Afzal: This is from third sector groups. Whether there is violence or not, I do not know, but certainly they have told me that several hundred women have not been forced into marriage because they have been given the opportunity to wait until beyond 21, to access support services, or whatever else needs to be done, in order to be able to give informed consent to a relationship, so it has had an impact as far as they are concerned on forced marriage.

Q4 Chair: One of the features of our last report was our concern about Islamabad and Karachi in particular. Are you confident that the entry clearance officers in posts abroad are aware of the concerns of this Committee and the Government about admissions of people without interviews?

Mr Afzal: Absolutely, the Forced Marriage Unit has been very good in raising awareness internationally and particularly amongst consular officials. My view and the view of everybody working in this field is that that awareness exists.

Q5 Bob Russell: Ms James-Hanman, from your experience, how long is the Government now taking to process indefinite leave to remain applications from ladies with no recourse to public funds?

Ms James-Hanman: There is currently a pilot that is ongoing that the Home Office launched on 30 November and it will not conclude until the end of this month, so my findings are necessarily

tentative. However, I think perhaps unusually for this Committee, I would like to pay tribute to the UKBA for the progress that they have made over the past year and particularly over the last few months. They have made several changes in both the process and the speed of applications, with the net effect that now the figure for refusals for initial applications has fallen from one in three to one in nine, which is very much welcomed. The pilot requires them to make their decisions inside 20 days and at the moment the vast majority, although not all of them, are being made within that time-frame.

Q6 Bob Russell: So good progress is being made?

Ms James-Hanman: Yes.

Q7 Bob Russell: Are refugees being properly reimbursed for the costs of taking in such destitute women?

Ms James-Hanman: No, the pilot provides some financial support for women for the first 20 days that they are housed in a refuge, and inside those 20 days they have to submit their indefinite leave to remain application, and then they are recompensed for a further 20 days whilst the UKBA makes that decision. However, there are large numbers of women without recourse to public funds who fall outside the narrow criteria because it is only for women on a spousal visa who are within the two years, and of course there are large numbers of women with no recourse to public funds who are here not on a spousal visa, and for those women refugees are not being adequately recompensed.

Q8 Bob Russell: So the last part of your answer, which I do not want to summarise incorrectly, is that for women with no recourse to public funds the Government's pilot is making progress but there are areas where more progress needs to be made and some areas where there has been no progress?

Ms James-Hanman: The pilot is limited in its application, and for that group of women some progress has been made, but it is still a struggle for refugees to make an application for indefinite leave to remain inside 20 days.

Q9 Bob Russell: If you were making a suggestion to this Committee for us to make recommendations to the Government—and if you are not able to do it now, could you write in with it—how would you improve the situation both where further progress is to be made and where no progress at all has yet been achieved?

Ms James-Hanman: I would be happy, with the Home Office's permission, to provide you with a copy of the final evaluation and the emerging findings reports, and therefore you will be able to make further recommendations based on that. In particular, I think the first 20 days is insufficient and probably needs to be raised to about 30 days. Also access to immigration lawyers is one of the key reasons why women are unable to submit their applications within that 20-day period. For some women in some parts of the country you are talking

about a four to five-hour round trip to the nearest immigration lawyer and it may take two to three weeks to even get an appointment.

Q10 Chair: One of the problems that we identified last time was that spouses who had been the subject of domestic violence who wished to complain to the Home Office are treated as third parties, and therefore if they have information to suggest that somebody has entered the country to get married in order to gain entry, and they want to get them out because it is clearly a marriage that has not been properly conducted, the UK Border Agency simply do not reply to the spouse who has written in. Has that improved? We raised this with Lyn Homer and we gave a specific example of a woman who had been writing to try and get her husband out for some time and they were taking no notice of it?

Ms James-Hanman: I am afraid I do not know about that particular aspect but I would be happy to make further enquiries.

Chair: We have the Minister so we will ask him but I just wanted to know if you could find that out.

Q11 David Davies: Mr Afzal, Ms James-Hanman, do you know if the immigration officers in places like Karachi are now insisting on having lone interviews with applicants for spouse visas and if they are whether that evidence is presented to and acted upon by judges if the case goes to appeal?

Mr Afzal: Both of those are correct, they are and it is acted upon.

Q12 Mrs Dean: The Committee recommended that Ofsted inspect schools on their performance in tackling domestic violence and forced marriage. Do you know how successful this has been? Has it been incorporated into the school inspection regime and the inspection regimes of other agencies?

Ms James-Hanman: The recommendation for Ofsted is included within the national Violence Against Women and Girls strategy and some limited conversations took place—I was on secondment to the Home Office whilst this strategy was being drawn up—and some limited contact was made with Ofsted. I believe however that subsequent to my departure last November further work has taken place and a revised inspection regime will be published this autumn. Similarly, limited contact was made with other inspectorates and I do not know whether that work has been taken forward since I left.

Q13 Martin Salter: Mr Afzal, in 2008 when we did our initial inquiry, we raised concerns that children missing from school listed as not in education may have in fact been at risk of forced marriage and that this was masking a broader and deeper problem. We also raised concerns that some schools and local education authorities—and Davina will remember this—were refusing to put up posters in particular. Can you give us an update on both of those issues?

Mr Afzal: Since the Forced Marriage Act came into force there have been minimum standards which have been applied to all agencies, including

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education. I think there are still many organisations that see the minimum standards as aspirational rather than what they are meant to be, and it is a significant view of some organisations working with victims and survivors that there are still educational institutions that do not buy into it and there are organisations that are not as open about discussing this matter and are perhaps not using the kind of information that is available from government. That said, there is greater awareness now than there was two years ago. I think the work that this Committee started around identifying missing children in education and DCSF's work has been effective, too. Certainly the DCSF have a better scale of this, but there are still, in my view, significant sensitivities around this issue. There are still many schools that have productions of *Oliver* for example in which Nancy is not killed by Bill Sikes because they feel it is not a subject that children should be exposed to, when in fact we all know from experience that there will be a child in every class that is going through this experience at home, and I think that kind of sensitivity is putting people at risk.

Q14 Martin Salter: Could I ask Ms James-Hanman for your experience of any changes in terms of implementation and willingness to recognise this as a problem because what worried us about the Derby situation was that it did seem that councillors, probably from Muslim backgrounds, but certainly with religious sensibilities, were wanting to pretend that forced marriage did not exist and were using their position in order to put pressure on the schools and on the education authority not to do what they needed to do.

Ms James-Hanman: My necessarily anecdotal experience is that there has been some progress but there is still a long way to go. I hope very much this issue forms part of the revised inspection regime for Ofsted. Only yesterday I was holding a focus group with forced marriage and honour-based violence survivors in West London and every participant there had gone to a school where they were still not putting up posters or displaying information.

Chair: Could I welcome Ann Cryer who was at the Speaker's Conference. Mrs Cryer, as we know, has done a huge amount of work in Parliament throughout her career here to raise the issue of domestic violence and forced marriages.

Q15 Mrs Cryer: Thank you. I have also been on the committee stage of the Children, Schools and Families Bill and the question has come up of children having to be withdrawn from classes that may discuss forced marriage and domestic violence, et cetera. I think that has been tidied up a bit in that parents cannot withdraw children after the age of 15 whereas before they could withdraw them up to school leaving age. The other item in that Bill that is of interest—and I just wonder what your thoughts are—is it now being compulsory for home educators to register that they are educating their children at home, which I think could highlight some of the problems where children are being taken back perhaps to Pakistan or Bangladesh, not necessarily

for a forced marriage, just for cultural reasons, and now they will not be able to use the excuse of educating them at home because they will have to register and demonstrate that they are educating them at home. It might well have saved the life of that little girl who died from starvation a few weeks ago. I wonder if you could comment on that.

Mr Afzal: I am a strong supporter of home education where it is actually happening. The experience that you have articulated is those cases where it has been used as an excuse or some kind of device to hide something else, namely the fact that young women are being used as domestic labour, which happens unfortunately too often, or that they have been spirited out of the country. Anything that can provide more protection for people in that situation is to be welcomed.

Q16 Mr Streeter: Mr Afzal, at the same time as we were doing our own inquiry into this subject, the CPS were looking at this in four regions in the country and they produced a report in December 2008 making a number of recommendations, including specialist training for prosecutors at a national level. Have those recommendations been put into practice and are they making a difference?

Mr Afzal: Our specialist training for prosecutors in every area of the country will be complete by 16 March.¹ We have done that. We have introduced the flagging system on our case management system which will be in place by 1 April of this year.² We have ensured that there are experts and access to experts and closer working with police and third sector colleagues as well. We certainly feel that we have responded to what we learned from that experience, but at the same time there are things that other people need to respond to around ensuring that potential victims are given better care. I think that is something that is still work in progress.

Q17 Mr Streeter: I get the impression from your evidence this morning that you almost feel that we are still barely scratching the surface of this issue. Would I be right in thinking that we have not quite got to grips with it yet?

Mr Afzal: Since November of last year of course, local authorities for example can bring third party applications for forced marriage protection orders. I became aware of a case very recently where a 16-year-old girl was clearly in need of a forced marriage protection order but became so hysterical that they had her sectioned under the Mental Health Act. There are serious issues around awareness across agencies. As I said, we are not yet at the stage where minimum standards are being applied as minimum standards rather than as ambitious targets, which I think some people still think they are. There will be victims and potential victims that

¹ The witness later stated that, due to some people being unable to attend on existing dates we will now hold one extra session in April to complete training for all specialist HBV prosecutors and that Guidance to all prosecutors on dealing with these cases will be disseminated by March 2010.

² The witness later stated that, flagging—will not be “in place” by April 2010 as it was already “in place” for the pilot—its national use will start in April 2010.

are being missed. I prosecuted recently in the case of Tulay Goren, who was the 15-year-old girl who went missing 10 years ago. It took us 10 years to bring her father to justice because of the wall of silence that surrounded that family. We never found her body. I keep asking myself how many other unmarked graves are there around this country where people who are supposed to be protecting their child have not even reported the fact that their child is missing.

Q18 Mr Winnick: “Honour-based” violence of course is a very odd description for outright thuggery and indeed murder, so “honour” is very much in quotes. It is not honour; it is dishonour, totally, from beginning to last and it is a disgusting and evil practice. As far as the information pack on such violence, what should it actually contain, particularly for those coming into the UK for the first time?

Mr Afzal: I think it needs to be able to identify what services are available to them. When we prosecuted the murderers of Sabia Rani, who arrived in this country in December 2005, the West Yorkshire case, in the five months that she was in this country before she was murdered she had never left home. She went straight from the airport to the home. She had no access to any services at all, no ability to use any language service, no contact with anybody else other than the people who were responsible ultimately for her death. It needs to have access to services. It needs to be able to give them the number of a hotline, whatever that might be—and there are issues around hotlines which you may want to ask me about. I think that is a basic that they should have. It is perhaps somebody having regular contact with them so it is not simply them contacting the authorities if there is something amiss but somebody actually contacting them to get some feel for whether something needs to be done.

Ms James-Hanman: Can I echo what Nazir has said. On behalf of the Home Office I conducted focus groups with over 300 survivors in preparation for the strategy, and many victims spoke to us not just as victims of honour-based violence but also of forced marriage, some black and minority ethnic victims of domestic violence, and trafficked women, about how once they get to the UK they are virtually imprisoned within the property, and, as a consequence, the only opportunity to get information to them is before they get into the UK, and that is absolutely critical for a range of victims, not just for victims of honour-based violence. Whilst it may be impractical to give it to every single woman entering the UK, we should also think about advertising in airports and perhaps also putting short films on relevant flights into the UK, as is already being done quite successfully for drug mules, and I know films are in development around forced marriage and trafficking as well.

Q19 Mr Winnick: That leads on to my next question to both of you. How far within the wider communities involved, bearing in mind obviously at the end of the day it is a very few who carry out or try to carry out such crimes, can one get across that

this is totally unacceptable and there is nothing honourable and the whole concept of what occurs is dishonourable?

Mr Afzal: Certainly my experience is the types of behaviours we are talking about are often very brutal. When they brutalise particularly young women they are sending a message wider than that particular family to other women, and so we have to be very robust in our prosecution (which we are) and we have to be robust in terms of multi-agency working. I think the most effective thing we do is the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) system, because when you identify risk you can operate in that environment knowing everything that needs to happen. We have to use everything at our disposal. I have been working very closely with faith leaders. There is no faith issue here. No faith allows this to happen, so we work closely with faith leaders to get them to articulate messages, and we work closely with young people. There are some excellent projects around the country where young people talk to other young people about this issue giving them opportunities to change or to disclose. I think that ultimately this is an issue about attitude and that people have been waking up over the last couple of years, but we are still some distance away.

Q20 Tom Brake: I just wanted to ask Mr Afzal what was the question we should ask you about telephone hotlines because there is clearly a problem there?

Mr Afzal: They are very effective where they work and so there have been some great examples.

Q21 Chair: Do you mean the lines are not working?

Mr Afzal: They work as in physically work but they have been championed locally, so in Cleveland, in Cambridgeshire and Hampshire, which you would not imagine were hotbeds of honour-based violence, all of them have fantastic police hotlines which have had hundreds of queries and the like. There is a national hotline which was set up by the Forced Marriage Unit at the Home Office and Karma Nirvana in Derby. That was set up in April 2008, but there are some issues around its funding so it is not able to operate in the evenings and weekends, for example, which is when most people might be able to ring it. There is a strong case, and again I pick this up from those who are working with victims and survivors, for a national hotline to replace all the local hotlines because there are still many areas, and I do not know about West Yorkshire—

Q22 Chair: Is there one in London?

Mr Afzal: Exactly. I do not think there is. I think people are reliant upon—

Q23 Chair: Is that not a bit bizarre?

Mr Afzal: West Yorkshire, the West Midlands. It is bizarre. The areas which you would imagine have the largest volumes of these types of behaviours do not have area-wide hotlines.

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Q24 David Davies: Mr Afzal, we have heard from female members of minority communities like Jasvinder Sanghera but less so from male members. Within the communities where this is an issue, are there lots of male role models who are saying this is totally wrong and we have to change as a community?

Mr Afzal: “Lots” might be an exaggeration but, yes, there are plenty of men who are speaking out now yet they themselves are being threatened. You can go on to the blogosphere and see people threatening me. Men have to be—and I am not speaking for myself—very bold and courageous to come out and they need to have safety in numbers, I guess, to speak out about this subject. I do think there are more and more. Very recently I was talking to the Islamic Cultural Centre here in London and they are working with 90 others around the country to send out some strong messages on this subject which would not have entered their radar a year or so ago.

Q25 David Davies: Your own commitment to this is something which is well-known and we are very grateful for that. May I ask within the same sphere something slightly different? There was a law passed on female genital mutilation four years and since then the specialist unit set up by the Met has apparently only investigated one person and prosecuted none, and yet one of the other pressure groups has said that this issue is affecting tens of thousands of women in the UK at the moment. Would you agree with this? What is going wrong here? Why are people not being prosecuted?

Mr Afzal: All of those things are right. I think the Department of Health had figures. I am not going to misquote them but there are something like 60,000 young women at risk from FGM as we speak. You are absolutely right that there are issues around evidence gathering, there are issues around not being able to prosecute successfully³ and there are obviously international jurisdictional issues as well, to some extent. However, I can reassure the Committee that we hope to have some prosecutions on this very, very shortly and we have accelerated the work we are doing here, working with our police partners, because we recognise that this is something that has not been pursued with as much vigour as it should have been.

Q26 Gwyn Prosser: Mr Afzal, we have been told that the number of protection orders issued has been more than the Ministry originally anticipated, but that in some areas there was a reluctance to come forward either because of fear of the courts or, more importantly, concern about upsetting the sensitivities of local communities. That latter area probably is where we should be more active. What can we do to overcome these barriers?

Mr Afzal: It is a good news story in the sense that in the first year they had 86 and that is double what we anticipated. I think we have reached 100 now since it was enacted just over 14 months ago. Last week they

obtained one in relation to an eight-year-old girl. It is successful where it is applied and it works very effectively, but I think there are big issues, as you rightly point out, about local authorities’ awareness of the fact that it is available and seeking assistance. This is where the third sector can be extraordinarily useful because they have a lot more knowledge than I do, than the local authorities do and any statutory agency does. I do not think the relationships there are as strong as they could be. Going back to what I said about the multi-agency approach, we ought to sit around a table every time any individual, that eight-year-old, or whatever, comes to our attention and be able to decide what needs to happen and how soon it needs to happen.

Ms James-Hanman: A lot more work needs to be done on female genital mutilation than has been done to date. Certainly in the consultation that we have done with survivors on this issue, they tell us that education is the way forward rather than the criminal justice system, although I think that can be useful in sending out a strong message.

Q27 Tom Brake: In drawing up the Violence Against Women and Girls strategy you ran a three-month consultation which received a fantastic 9,000 responses. Were there any major recommendations or suggestions that came out of that that it has not been possible to move forward on because there are objections from any government departments or perhaps just a lack of focus or lack of resource to pursue them?

Ms James-Hanman: If you look at Annex B of the strategy you will find that there were 16 key themes which arose during the consultation. What was remarkable to me was the consistency. With the exception of only one of those, there was absolute consistency between service providers, members of the public and survivors over what should be taken forward, and that was remarkable. The one area where there was still some contention over what should be done was over information sharing, with some people wanting more and some people wanting less. Of the 16 key themes that emerged, a number of them did not find their way into recommendations for the final strategy, which was deeply disappointing to my sector. In particular, that would be specialist women-only services; secure, sustainable funding for the voluntary sector; an increase in help and support for children affected by violence; the enforcement of existing laws rather than the creation of new ones, in particular reference to breach of bail conditions and the enforcement of harassment laws; better publicity of services and funding to deal with demand; and measures to tackle the widespread culture of disbelief. Of the 300 survivors with whom we consulted dismally few women were believed the first time they disclosed. There was also widespread support for self-defence for abused women and girls, which is another recommendation that has not been taken forward. I would also point out that diversity was almost wholly absent from the strategy. There were some minor recommendations for black and minority ethnic women but that appeared to be the totality of

³ The witness later stated, that it is not a situation where we are prosecuting unsuccessfully, rather that no cases have been brought to us for prosecution.

the Civil Service understanding of the meaning of diversity without any attention being paid to the other strands. Whilst we consulted with a wide range of survivors, many of them have no recommendations which address their actual needs and that is in particular, although not exclusively, with reference to trafficked women, women in prison, disabled women, street sex workers, traveller women, refugee and asylum seeking women, all of whom have attended our groups and, not to put too fine a point on it, ripped open their barely-healed scars to share with us their experiences in the belief that they would be listened to by government and that their views would be acted upon, which failed to materialise in the strategy. There were also parts of the Home Office that did not contribute to the strategy, so there is nothing around the needs of either victims or perpetrators who also have substance abuse issues and nor was the issue of girls in gangs picked up upon.

Q28 Tom Brake: So that is a fairly bleak assessment of the uptake of those recommendations? Is that how you would describe it?

Ms James-Hanman: Yes. It was quite shocking to me to go to central government and discover how much silo thinking was still embedded in the Civil Service. As someone who has worked in partnership development work around this issue for the past two decades, some of the conversations I was having was like being in a time machine and going back 15 years or more. The idea is very much about protecting your own patch rather than problem-solving and I think that the Civil Service is now exporting that out to the local level, which is quite disruptive. A good example is the production of the commissioning guidance for local service providers. This properly falls within the DCLG's patch and yet the guidance has been produced by the Home Office. The Department of Health has produced its own separate guidance for local commissioners and the GEO is planning a third set of commissioning guidance, so rather than assisting local partnerships to act together they are disrupting the work that has already been developed.

Q29 Mrs Cryer: Nazir, can I just ask you about the fact that the Forced Marriage Unit multi-agency guidelines are now on a statutory footing? Do you feel that that has had a large impact on professionals and the way they take these subjects seriously?

Mr Afzal: I do, in the sense that I have noticed over the last 15 months or so a massive training programme up and down the country, conferences that you have organised and others have organised, and practitioners are coming, largely because I think they realise there might be a financial liability if they do not apply the minimum standards and if they are sued on them, which is, of course, something that worries me if that is the only motivation. Nonetheless, they are keen to come along, they are keen to develop and to learn and to train. I see that and I am very happy that that is happening, but at the same time I am not entirely sure that there is a

total buy-in. I go back to what I said earlier. I still think that people see it as an ambition rather than something they should be delivering.

Q30 Mrs Cryer: There are 86 FMPOs that have been given out by courts. I think that is just a tiny amount of the number and the effect that it is having on various cases. I am having virtually no cases brought to me about forced marriages now, whereas two or three years ago it was every other week I was getting girls coming to me. I think the fact that there is the possibility of these orders being made is having an effect—

Mr Afzal: Absolutely.

Q31 Mrs Cryer: —and so do you agree that it is having an impact on the wider community?

Mr Afzal: I think people think that there are other people that will listen to them and will act upon their concerns and they do not have to go to you, their Members of Parliament; they can go to agencies that will help them deliver or keep them safe, so I do think it is having that impact. At the same time one of the things we are seeing is the hidden victims. We have talked about missing children education. The suicide and self-harm rates are alarming, particularly amongst South Asian women. We know that there are major issues now in relation to disability, people who are disabled or are suffering from learning difficulties who are forced into marriage. We are aware of forced marriages in relation to sexuality. It is not just on *EastEnders*; it happens in real life. People are forced into marriage to try and protect, in their view, the fact that somebody might have a different sexuality from the one they anticipated. We are identifying hidden victims and that is a level of understanding that we have never had before, and I think at least having minimum standards is giving us the opportunity to look for these hidden victims.

Q32 Mrs Cryer: Is there a quick-fix solution to that?

Mr Afzal: This goes back to what I said about firstly a multi-agency approach. The ACPO police guidelines were the first of their kind anywhere in the world. The Forced Marriage Act is the first of its kind anywhere in the world. The work we are doing in the CPS is the best and hopefully the first of its kind anywhere in the world, so we are leading the way and all of that has to be said, but at the same time we are just at the beginning; we are just starting life; we need this multi-agency approach. What Davina said a moment ago about believing the victim is absolutely key here because when somebody has to come forward to disclose how they are suffering they have to be prepared to give everything up—everything that they have ever known—and if the first contact is not meaningful, ie, “I don't know what you're talking about. Come back tomorrow”, you have escalated the risk, so that first contact is key, which is why wider awareness is important.

Q33 Mrs Cryer: Less than a year ago one of the chief gatekeepers of my community actually said to me in great confidence, and I am sure he believed in what

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he was saying to me, “You know, Ann, it’s like this: these girls come to you and talk about forced marriages. They are not forced into marriage. It is just that there is a problem in our community about divorce and therefore they call divorce due to a forced marriage and it excuses it”, and I said, “Look: I just don’t want to hear this”. It just was not the case. Perhaps I could ask Davina a question about a way forward. How could victims be involved in the oversight of violence against women and girls and could they be involved in the proposed annual independent review of progress?

Ms James-Hanman: I think they absolutely should be. I think it is essential that we listen to service users about what they need from services, and I think sometimes there is a hesitancy by service providers thinking that survivors are going to demand the world, but what survivors in our focus groups have told us over and over again is that they want to be believed, they want to be treated with dignity and respect, and that they want to be given assistance to get to safety, which are hardly outrageous demands. The Victims Commissioner, who is currently being appointed, has been charged with producing an independent review on an annual basis, and I hope very much that he or she does include consultation with victims as part of that process. Survivors who attended our focus groups found it an exceptionally empowering experience and many of the organisations who organised the groups on our behalf have continued to run group events because women who attended the groups said that they enjoyed the experience of meeting with other survivors so much.

Q34 Bob Russell: Can I just take you back to the answer you gave to Mr Brake earlier about the catalogue of failures of joined-up thinking in government between those various agencies? Is there anything, when you write in to the Committee, you would recommend in terms of how we could get those various agencies to work together rather than, from what you were saying, quite deliberately working against each other?

Ms James-Hanman: One of the things I accidentally facilitated, in the sense that it was an accident and I found out it was helpful, was getting civil servants out of the Home Office and into the communities they were trying to make policy for, and I think there should be much more of that. A couple of civil servants came along to some of the focus groups that we ran and it was to their knowledge the first time they had ever spoken to a victim.

Q35 Chair: Thank you. Marks out of 10 for the Government on what they have done since our report, Ms James-Hanman?

Ms James-Hanman: Seven.

Q36 Chair: Mr Afzal?

Mr Afzal: 8.5.

Chair: To avoid this becoming something like *Strictly Come Dancing* I think we had better bring this session to an end. Thank you very much. You are welcome to stay and hear the Minister who will be giving evidence now.

Witness: **Mr Alan Campbell MP**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Crime Reduction, Home Office, gave evidence.

Q37 Chair: Minister, thank you very much for coming to give evidence to us today. We are looking at the recommendations of the Committee on honour-based violence and forced marriages. This is a brief session. We are not producing a report; we just want to look at progress that has been made. As you know, the Forced Marriage Unit deals with 300-400 cases a year but a recent study by the Department for Children, Schools and Families says there are in fact 5,000-8,000 cases nationally. It is a big discrepancy, is it not?

Mr Campbell: Good morning, Chair. Thank you for inviting me on what is again a very important issue for the Committee. Yes, it is quite a big discrepancy. The DCSF estimate came from working with the Forced Marriage Unit but also the national organisations and then looking at what happens across 10 local authority areas and extrapolating from there. I think there is probably scope within that for double counting, particularly if cases have been raised locally and counted locally but also nationally. What we have set alongside that, as you have pointed out, is around 1,700 cases which the Forced Marriage Unit are aware of from their actual reported cases. Let me say that collecting reliable

data and getting to reliable estimates is a priority but it is also very difficult, particularly when you are talking about a hidden problem.

Q38 Chair: The Home Office information campaign launched this February against teen partner violence recognised that 16-18-year-olds are the most vulnerable group. Why have you not already acted to change the definition of domestic violence to include 16-18 year olds, as we recommended in 2008?

Mr Campbell: We may not have acted but we are acting in that there is a group that has been working on definitions and they are due to report to the inter-ministerial group shortly. We want to make sure that stakeholders and interested parties also have a say and therefore it is a piece of ongoing work that will go on into this year, but there is, of course, an issue around the definition because it will have implications for services and service provision too, and we have to be clear that, while we want to act upon that recommendation, the services are there to provide the support that bringing in 16-18-year-olds would mean.

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Q39 Mr Streeter: When we looked into this issue in 2008 we were concerned about the desperate shortage of domestic violence perpetrator programmes. We were told that the Probation Service was conducting research to determine the extent of under-capacity and we wondered what was happening to that, and then we had a letter from the Lord Chancellor of 6 March, which I am sure you have seen, in which he tells us that following a period of structural change within NOMS the research which we have asked to see was not progressed as originally envisaged. You can imagine that the Committee is rather disappointed about this. Can you explain why there has been a change of heart?

Mr Campbell: Yes. This is primarily a matter for the MoJ and I am aware that the Lord Chancellor has written to the Chair of the Committee. My understanding is that it is around the structural change which has taken place across the Probation Service but also within the Department. I do not think it is all necessarily bad news because there is quite a lot of progress which has been made around offending in general, but you will be aware, and members of the Committee will be aware, that there have been significant changes in the way in which offender management is now organised. It is about making sure that the structures are in place, it is about making sure that risk offending assessment takes place, and therefore all of this does create, shall I say, an amount of flux within this and if the MoJ say that they have not gone ahead with it that is a decision which they take.

Q40 Mr Streeter: The VAWG strategy pledges to provide additional places in 2010–11 in terms of perpetrator programmes. Can you tell us how many places will be provided and whether that will be delivered?

Mr Campbell: I will have to contact you with the numbers that you are asking for. There is some evidence that community-based programmes first of all do work and they are being rolled out, if you like, faster than the other agencies might be doing that, and therefore it is a commitment which we have given and we intend to work to keep that commitment, but I cannot give you the numbers that you are looking for.

Q41 David Davies: Mr Campbell, the new Children, Schools and Families Bill before Parliament is going to make what I think was called citizenship a few years ago but is now called personal, social, health and economic education (it used to be general studies when I did A levels but there we are) a statutory part of the school curriculum, and it is going to include mention of domestic violence and forced marriage. Can you assure us that there will be no opt-out for faith schools?

Mr Campbell: Yes, I can assure you that no school will opt out. It may have been called various things in the past but I think there is a clearer recognition now of what we need to do and there will not be an opt-out for schools. We do accept that different schools that have a different ethos will need to take into account parents and the wider community in

which they sit as an important part of that, but that does not mean that they will be able to opt out and it does not mean that we will not be proceeding with this in September 2011.

Q42 David Davies: I do not want to touch on a sensitive issue, but normally, quite rightly, when we talk about, for example, Islamic extremism, we always preface it by reminding everyone that it is only a tiny minority of extremists who get involved in this activity. We certainly do not want to alienate people. In terms of domestic violence, do you think it is important that we send out the message that the vast majority of men do not go around beating up women and that we should perhaps make this clearer because I do not detect that enthusiasm to make that point whenever domestic violence is mentioned? I think it is important not only because it is true but also because there is a study that suggests that if you want to reinforce people's behaviour you need to show them that they are following what the majority of people are doing.

Mr Campbell: I think inevitably when issues like this are discussed, particularly in the media, there is a tendency to concentrate on the amount of victims and the amount of attacks that take place, forgetting, as you say, that many people never get caught up in that.

Q43 David Davies: I am talking about the school curriculum here.

Mr Campbell: I see, but I would want to qualify that by saying that there is a problem with domestic violence and there has been for a very long time.

Q44 David Davies: With respect, there is a problem with Islamic extremism but the majority of Muslims are not involved in it. There is a problem with domestic violence but the majority of men are not involved in it. Should we not just make that clear when we are writing this curriculum?

Mr Campbell: Yes, but I think it is important that you look at the extent to which particularly women and girls, although not exclusively, are the victims of domestic violence; the figures are staggering, and therefore I would not want to send out any message that did not draw attention to the scale of the problem, which is why the strategy is so important.

Q45 David Davies: So the majority of men are abusers, are they?

Mr Campbell: No, that is not what I am saying. What I am saying is that we have to be careful to send out that balanced message and a correct message, and that also, as you say, and it was certainly one of the key recommendations of the report, the emphasis should be very much on prevention here. We need a strong enforcement message and to make sure the powers are there, but it is very much about prevention too, which is why schools are so important.

Q46 Mrs Cryer: Can I ask you, Minister, with regard to this catching young people in time so that they are warned that things may happen in their lives that

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may be very unpleasant, do you think it is satisfactory that parents can still withdraw their children from what are known now as PHSE classes? I know it is not your department and therefore I do not want to put you into a difficulty, but it does concern me that the very children who perhaps need information about forced marriages, about domestic violence, may well be those very children whose parents will be withdrawing them. I know they cannot do this beyond 15 now,⁴ but it does concern me that even at 15 it is getting a bit late to give them these warning signs that things may go wrong in their lives.

Mr Campbell: May I say, as you have said, that it is not my department, so let me be circumspect in what I am saying, but as a parent of teenage children I would welcome the fact that, uncomfortable though it may be, there is discussion of a wide range of issues in schools in a balanced and proportionate way, and, of course, schools may want to tailor the message. I do not think it is right for us to dictate exactly what is taught in schools at what time and on what day, but they may want to tailor that message without getting away from the central themes. If you are suggesting in some way that there might be some other motive for parents to opt out of those lessons, that they would not want their children to be discussing those issues because it is too close to home, then I am sure that may be something that some schools would take note of when they were looking at who was in class and who was not.

Q47 Tom Brake: The Select Committee recommended that Ofsted inspect schools' performance on domestic violence and forced marriage. What progress has been made on this?

Mr Campbell: I think good progress, and I think in two regards, Mr Brake. One is that Ofsted does have a responsibility to inspect schools on their equality duties, and these are issues that certainly would, I think, be discussed in the context of that. Schools are also, of course, inspected in terms of the processes which they have, and therefore they will also be inspected as to what they do with regard to safeguarding, so if there are any children that are seeking information or want to impart information or suggest in any way that they are vulnerable because of their home life or what is happening to them outside, then schools should be held accountable for that too and that will be part of the inspection regime.

Q48 Tom Brake: Would you expect Ofsted, when they are going round the schools, to be monitoring whether, perhaps in particular areas, there are posters displaying information about who to contact on honour issues or forced marriage issues?

⁴ The Department later stated on behalf of the witness that, at the moment parents can withdraw their children from the non-statutory elements of SRE up to the age of 19. The Children, Schools and Families Bill contains a provision to qualify the parental right of withdrawal so that parents cannot withdraw their children after the age of 15. But this is still subject to parliamentary approval and if approved won't come into force until September 2011.

Mr Campbell: Again, I think there has to be a degree of leeway for schools. I know some schools do that and others are already doing it and some schools are reluctant to do that. To some extent it is a matter for the schools themselves but I am sure Ofsted will take into account the degree to which schools are proactive in these regards, and that may be the nature of the school but, of course, it is not always schools in some areas that you might associate with these issues that are the ones that need to be looked and it needs to be part of the curriculum. I have a school in my area which is doing some excellent work around forced marriage and issues related to that and yet we have a very small number of people from ethnic communities that you would expect perhaps to be the ones that might be caught up in this.

Q49 Martin Salter: Minister, following on from Mr Brake's question, you said it was a matter for the individual school but you also said that the schools have a responsibility to deliver equality obligations across the board. How do we square that and why? At some point someone has to hold the ring and it has to be central government. There is not anybody else, I would suggest. How are you grappling with that issue, because it is not enough just to say it is a problem for the school?

Mr Campbell: No, I think that is an issue for colleagues in DCSF, if I may say that without trying to duck the issue, but I do not think it is so much a matter of content; I think it is a matter of how they do it in the context in which these issues are taught. For example, if we are looking at PSHE again, topics would include abusive relationships, they would include bullying, they would include forced marriage, they would include arranged marriage, and therefore I think we have been up-front about what we would expect the curriculum to contain, but we would not want to be too prescriptive in the day-to-day manner in which it was actually taught. Different schools will bring a slightly different ethos and perspective to it but I would not be recommending or suggesting that there was a wholesale movement away from that because I agree with you; I do think centrally we do have an obligation to make sure that these issues are being discussed.

Q50 Martin Salter: We highlighted, and it got a lot of coverage at the time, the pressure that is exerted on some schools by governors from a particular background who were quite keen not to display any information in the way that Mr Brake describes, but it is probably fair to say that the Committee was not so exercised as to whether it was posters; it was whether or not vulnerable young people had access to advice and support networks. Can you shed any light on pressure that is coming from central government or is there any contact between your Department and DCSF to ensure that the advice and support flow of information is maintained and increased?

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Mr Campbell: In terms of the issues we are talking about, there is, of course, activity which takes place at government level, so we have the inter-ministerial group to ensure that every department that has a part to play in tackling domestic violence, for example, does play its part. As the Chair mentioned earlier, there is the teenage relationship abuse campaign which is running currently. These are things which have come from central government. There is the obligation of Ofsted to consider the way in which schools take safeguarding issues into account and hold schools to account in that way.⁵

Q51 Gwyn Prosser: Minister, earlier this morning we took evidence from Ms James-Hanman, who has been intimately involved in these issues for some years, and the Chair asked her to give marks out of 10 for progress since our report was published, and she gave what I thought was a very generous seven out of 10. More importantly, she said that one of the greatest obstacles to making progress was what she described as the silo mentality which still existed between government departments. In your discourse this morning you have a number of times referred to other departments, “It is nothing to do with me, gov”, et cetera. What can we do to break down that silo mentality, because when I came into Parliament in 1997 one of the first meetings I went to with a minister, and I will not mention his name, was on one of the great campaigns to break down these silos and start having integrated, connected government.

Mr Campbell: First, let me say I am happy and relieved to take a seven, because that does suggest that we have made progress but that there is more work to be done, and that is a serious point that I would want to make. I do think we are trying to break down that silo mentality that you talk about. The Violence Against Women strategy, for example, is a cross-government strategy. That is how we set it out at the very beginning and that is how we are continuing at present. It is not about one department looking to another and saying, “It is your responsibility”, but there are some areas that fall within the remit of some departments and others which obviously fall within the remit of others. That is why the inter-ministerial group is very important, but also, in between the inter-ministerial group’s work, the work at official level which is done on a day-to-day basis on these issues is in a sense where the real work is done. There are other silos, I think, Mr Prosser, that I would want to mention; it is not just a government issue. One of the strengths of the Violence Against Women strategy from the very beginning was the way in which we were outward-looking. First of all we looked to say, “You tell us what the issue is. Let us not tell you from the centre what we believe the issue is”, but also to bring on board what I think is a genuine coalition of the willing on these matters. I was at the launch of the consultation and there was a lot of scepticism that we were just going round this again and that everybody would rush off to their bunkers or their

silos and there would be no progress. I hope that in many regards that is no longer the view and I think we have got some credit for that, but I am not suggesting to you that there is not more work to be done.

Q52 Gwyn Prosser: On a specific issue, one of the recommendations of our Committee was to resolve this issue whereby so-called third parties—it might be MPs or GPs or others—were seeking to intervene or get information even on what looked like an abusive arrangement were not included in the debate. What has happened? What has the Department done to get over that hurdle?

Mr Campbell: First of all, we did include people in the debate because they were very much part of the consultation which included forced marriage and a lot of other issues. One of the results that came out of that was that advice was sent out to MPs and their staff as to how they should react if someone came forward to report, for example, forced marriage, and the advice that we give broadly is to disclose it to the Forced Marriage Unit, in terms of third parties’ concern about reluctant sponsors, for example, and they would then take it up with UKBA, and that from a Member of Parliament point of view I think is an important step forward.⁶

Q53 Chair: Can I ask about the independent review that has been carried out into the strategy that you mentioned, the need for an annual parliamentary debate on this issue, and what you think the role of the Select Committee should be in that process?

Mr Campbell: Chair, there will be an annual review because the inter-ministerial group will conduct an annual review, but I accept that that is not going to satisfy everyone and I think that is quite right, so we have two additions to that. When we do get a Victims Commissioner appointed we hope that the Victims Commissioner will monitor the work of the Violence Against Women Strategy Group, but I would be not only pleased but delighted if the Home Affairs Select Committee could bring their attention to this issue. Without wishing in any way to crawl to the Committee, I think the report which we are discussing was a major milestone on these issues and I think to return to this is absolutely right and I hope that the Committee will do it on a regular basis. I can assure you, as you well know as a former Minister, that it does tend to focus your mind.

Chair: Mr Campbell, I can assure you that this Committee has no problem with ministers crawling to this Committee. We rather like it, do we not?

Q54 Bob Russell: Minister, the Forced Marriage Protection Orders came into force in November 2008, approximately 16 months ago. Since their

⁵ The witness later stated that, in summer of 2009, DCSF Ministers sent a reminder to schools about their safeguarding responsibilities in cases of forced marriages.

⁶ The witness later stated that, UKBA and the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) routinely share information on all referrals concerning forced marriage. The FMU will make contact with reluctant sponsors to keep them informed and discuss their options. In relations to GPs and other professionals, the multi-agency practice guidelines issued in summer 2009 provide advice on how to refer cases to FMU.

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introduction has the Government's Forced Marriage Unit received fewer case referrals or more case referrals?

Mr Campbell: More than expected, Mr Russell, in that in the first year there were 86 and that is almost twice as many as had been anticipated, and I am able to tell you that by the end of January 2010 the number was 117.⁷

Q55 Bob Russell: Is it worthwhile?

Mr Campbell: I think it is very worthwhile and I think when you talk to practitioners it is extremely worthwhile. Obviously, the proof of any pudding of a change is in the eating and I think when you talk to the people who actually have to deliver on these issues they think it is clear, it is straightforward. I think the police have been proactive. I think the Forced Marriage Unit has played an important role here, and therefore, while again it is ongoing work because we have to ensure that there is clarity and people do know what is expected, particularly in terms of orders, I think it is worthwhile. There is another point, of course, Mr Russell, outside of the orders, which is that by focusing on this issue, by introducing, for example, statutory guidance across the piece, I do think it helps to improve not just capacity but focus for all of the agencies and organisations that have a role.⁸

Q56 Bob Russell: Continuing that line of question and answer, is it too early then to assess the impact of the orders on preventing forced marriages?⁹

⁷ The witness later stated that, the response to the Committee covered the number of Forced Marriage Protection Orders (FMPOs) made rather than the cases referred to the Forced Marriage Unit.

⁸ In 2009 there were 1682 instances in which the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) gave advice or support related to possible forced marriage. This is an increase on the 1618 instances dealt with in 2008. While not appropriate in every case, the FMU have seen the real impact that the Forced Marriage Protection Order can have through their use in cases that we have dealt with over the past year—in particular being used to prevent victims being removed from the UK or securing their return from overseas.

⁹ *One Year On: initial impact of Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2009 in its first year of operation—* www.justice.gov.uk/publications/docs/one-year-on-forced-marriage-act.pdf

Mr Campbell: I would need to reflect on that. There obviously has to be a timescale which allows for reflection. I would point out, however, that the early signs are promising and we do talk about statistics and the Committee, quite rightly, likes statistics upon which they can rely and which are verifiable, but we talk about 86, we talk about 117. These are individual human beings and therefore on a day-to-day basis they are making a difference at least in those cases.

Q57 Bob Russell: And for just one person it is worth it, I agree. Finally, are third parties now able to apply for Forced Marriage Protection Orders and, if so, how does that process work?

Mr Campbell: Third parties would still need the leave of the court if they were not an interested party, is my understanding. That is not as bureaucratic as it sounds because the practice in court is to deal with that issue and to deal with the order consecutively, and therefore there is not a delay. Of course, since the report we have, I think in November 2009, introduced local authorities, so they are able to intervene in their own right. Anyone can be a third party and apply for a FMPO.

Chair: Minister, this is probably the last time that you will be appearing before this Committee with the General Election due shortly. On behalf of the Committee I want to thank you for the way in which you have assisted us in our various inquiries. You have always been very transparent, very frank. We have asked for letters and facts and figures and you have always come back to us within the deadline. We are very grateful for that. We may not agree on everything, of course. That is not the purpose of select committees, to agree with everything the Government says, or indeed anything the Government says, but you have always been very helpful in what we have asked you to provide. There may be some factual information that we need from you and we would be most grateful if this could be provided by some time next week. We will write to you today. In the meantime, thank you very much.

Memorandum submitted by Alan Campbell MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office

Further to my appearance before the Committee last week, I have asked the Ministry of Justice for the information you requested about an increase in the number of programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence.

As can be seen from the table below, there has been an ongoing increase in both the targets for the delivery of domestic violence perpetrator programmes by the probation service and the actual number of completions delivered.

PROBATION DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMMES

	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10	2010–11
Target	1,200	2,079	2,397	2,794	3,207 provisional
Actual Completions	1,825	2,560	2,927	tbc	—

We have delivered on our commitment to provide further places which are reflected in the targets and this will continue in 2010–11.

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