Second, put primary prevention at the heart of the response. Men's violence against women and girls is not inevitable, it is the result of structures, institutions and attitudes which perpetuate women's inequality in society. Changing this requires working with our sector to challenge myths and stereotypes, equip communities to speak out about men's violence and abuse and challenge perpetrator behaviour, and provide children and young people with the knowledge and tools to end men's violence against women and girls for good. We do acknowledge the investment this government is making in domestic abuse and stalking perpetrator work, but much more is needed to address structural inequalities and to develop a meaningful analysis of sexual violence and abuse prevention. For example, it requires reforms across government to truly tackle gender inequality (such as equal pay, shared parental leave, fair housing and social security policies, and employment, education and training for women and girls) and intersectional inequalities driven by race, faith, migrant status, disability, sexuality, gender identity, class status and age, to ensure women are equal.

Third, deliver equal access to rights and entitlements for all women and girls. Whilst VAWG impacts all women and girls, Black and minoritised women, migrant women, Deaf and disabled women, LGBT+ survivors and others facing multiple forms of discrimination have generally less avenues to support, safety and justice and less opportunities to access them. If your government's strategy and response gets it right for the most marginalised survivors, it will get it right for all. Most urgently, the government must accept the House of Lords' amendments to the Domestic Abuse Bill on the protection and support of migrant survivors, long fought for by organisations led by and for Black, minoritised and migrant women such as Southall Black Sisters, and the Step Up Migrant Women coalition led by Latin American Women's Rights Service. We further urge the government to review its response to the amendments which reflect the reality of domestic abuse experienced by disabled women. It must also now ratify the Istanbul Convention which was signed nearly 9 years ago; there must be no further delay to ensuring women and girls can rely on these 'gold standard' protections.

Fourth, secure the future of the support services women and girls need. Our expert services continue to face a funding crisis, with short-term, insecure funding that fails to meet demand from the survivors who need our help. We need a secure, flexible, multi-year funding settlement for the specialist VAWG sector, which ensures all forms of service provision for survivors, children and young people and perpetrators are resilient for the future, provides equity of provision for survivors across the UK nations, paying particular attention to traditionally underfunded regions, and includes ring-fenced funding for specialist services led 'by and for' Black and minoritised women, Deaf and disabled women and LGBT+ survivors. We need an end to the current competitive tendering landscape that puts the single-sex services and 'by and for' services that women need at perennial risk, and leaves the most vulnerable and marginalised women without access to services at all.

Fifth, prioritise the systems change required to tackle men's violence. The government must end the focus on the criminal justice system as the only solution. Rape suffers from such low prosecution volumes and rates that it appears to have been effectively decriminalised. We are also seeing falling prosecutions and convictions for domestic abuse. Pushing women and girls to report violence in this context, or increasing sentence lengths, are limited solutions that will compound the structural racism experienced by Black and minoritised communities. The landmark report by Centre for Women's Justice, the End Violence Against Women Coalition, Imkaan and Rape Crisis England and Wales provides a comprehensive set of recommendations to address the justice system's response to rape and all of these should be taken forward by the government's end to end rape review.

We need a step change in the response to VAWG, paying particular attention to solutions that meet the needs of women facing multiple and intersecting layers of inequalities, which goes far beyond the police and courts alone. There is also an urgent need for a major public awareness

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London, SW1A 2AA

23 March 2021

Dear Prime Minister

Violence against women and girls

We are writing to you as specialist organisations supporting survivors of violence against women and girls with serious concerns about the government's current response to male violence.

The death of Sarah Everard has sparked a national conversation and an outpouring of grief and distress about the violence and abuse that women and girls experience daily. The level of attention we have seen to these issues in recent days is long overdue, and could be described as a watershed moment. But it is a conversation that must also be widened to consider all women who have had their lives taken, including Wenjing Xu, Nicole Smallman, Bibaa Henry, Blessing Olusegun, Joy Morgan and Sian Blake and her children, Jillian Grant, Natasha Wild and Katy Sprague. It is important to reflect on why the deaths of Black and minoritised, migrant, LBT and disabled women and their treatment by the justice system rarely garners the same attention or response, and what this makes clear about issues of structural inequality and racism. We need a response to the endemic issues of male violence against women, police brutality and surveillance towards Black and minoritised communities, increasing restrictions on migrant and refugee women's fundamental rights and institutional racism, sexism and disablism within institutions – including the criminal justice system.

Our organisations are at the frontline of responding to women and children experiencing violence against women and girls (VAWG). We are concerned that rather than providing the specialist support women and girls need, reforming the broken criminal justice response to these forms of violence and abuse, tackling intersecting layers of inequalities and delivering the societal shifts to end men's violence altogether, the government's recent response led with more funding to improve street lighting, cameras and placing plain clothes police officers in nightclubs. There is a serious disconnect between the reforms required to end men's violence, and the announcements that followed a meeting of your Crime and Justice Taskforce and the punitive measures proposed as solutions in the Policing, Crime and Sentencing Bill.

We write with five clear recommendations for the required response, which must be central to the government's future strategy for ending all forms of men's violence against women and girls.

First, we call on you to name the problem. As Prime Minister, we urge you and your government to state clearly that this is an issue of men's violence against women, rooted in sexism and inequality between men and women. The next VAWG strategy must tackle the root cause of the problem head on. We are seeing the rise of 'gender neutral' responses, which fail to recognise persistent gender inequality and the need for women-only services for escape and recovery. Separating domestic abuse, which is driven by men's power and control over women from other forms of VAWG in the next strategy will only accelerate these trends. Instead, we urge you to ensure a coordinated approach to VAWG that recognises specialisms in support, but makes clear the inextricable links between different forms of male violence and abuse – paying particular attention to the interplay of different types of violence experienced, often concurrently, by women made vulnerable by their identity and situation.

campaign, designed to create societal shifts in the attitudes and excuses for men's violence against women.

We urge you to work with our organisations to deliver a response that meets the needs of all women and girls, and tackles the root causes of men's violence, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Farah Nazeer, CEO, Women's Aid Federation of England
Andrea Simon, Director, End Violence Against Women Coalition
Baljit Banga, Executive Director, Imkaan
Estelle du Boulay, Director, Rights of Women
Katie Russell, Spokeswoman, Rape Crisis England & Wales
Sara Kirkpatrick, Chief Executive, Welsh Women's Aid
Donna Covey CBE, Chief Executive, AVA (Against Violence and Abuse)
Gisela Valle, Director, Latin American Women's Rights Service
Ruth Bashall, Co-Chief Executive, Stay Safe East
Harriet Wistrich, Director, Centre for Women's Justice
Dr Nicola Sharp-Jeffs OBE, CEO, Surviving Economic Abuse
Jess Southgate, Interim CEO, Agenda
Jo Todd, CEO, Respect
Melissa Green, General Secretary, National Federation of Women's Institutes
Naana Otoo- Oyortey, Executive Director, FORWARD
Jacqui Hunt, Director Europe Office, Equality Now
Cordelia Tucker O'Sullivan, Senior Policy and Public Affairs Manager, Refuge
Frank Mullane MBE, CEO, AAFDA
Professor Aisha K. Gill, Ph.D. CBE, Professor of Criminology and Co-Chair of EVAW
Professor Liz Kelly, Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit, London Metropolitan University
Dr. Purna Sen, Visiting Professor, Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit, London Metropolitan University and formerly Director of Policy Division, UN Women
Sarah Hill, CEO, IDAS
Heidi Riedel, CEO, Woman's Trust
Fiona Dwyer, CEO, Solace Women's Aid
Gurpreet Virdee, Director of Development and Operations, Women and Girls Network
Liz Felton, Chief Executive Officer, Rape Crisis South London
Umme Imam, Executive Director, Angelou Centre
Souad Talsi, MBE, Founder, Al Hasaniya Moroccan Women's Centre
Jo Gough, CEO, RISE
Firoza Mohmed, CEO, Humraaz
Khaldha Manzoor, Centre Manager, Rochdale Women's Welfare Organisation
Shaminder Ubhi, Director, Ashiana Network
Angie Stewart, Chief Executive Officer, Cambridge Women's Aid
Priya Chopra, Chief Executive, Saheli
Diana Nammi, Executive Director, IKWRO - Women's Rights Organisation
Jackie May, CEO, The Women's Centre Cornwall
Alison Boydell, co-founder, JURIES
Gemma Aitchison, YES Matters UK
Shigufta Khan, Chief Executive Officer, The Wish Centre
Deborah Cartwright, Chief Executive Officer, Oasis Domestic Abuse Service
Sarah Dagley, CEO, NIDAS
Anthea Sully, Chief Executive White Ribbon UK
Sally Winston, Chief Executive, Lighthouse Women's Aid
Becky Rogerson, Director, Wearside Women in Need
Sharon Howard, CEO, Safe in Sussex
Naomi Dickson, Chief Executive, Jewish Women's Aid

Caroline Grant, Director of Policy and Development, Liverpool Domestic Abuse Service
Joyce Simon, Manager, Anah Project Ltd
Michelle Blunsom MBE, CEO, East Surrey Domestic Abuse Services
Charlotte Kneer, CEO, Reigate and Banstead Women's Aid
Claire Lambon, Chief Executive Officer, Stop Domestic Abuse
Margaret Bourne, Chief Executive, North Surrey Domestic Abuse Services
Gail Heath, CEO, The Pankhurst Trust (Incorporating Manchester Women's Aid)
Elaine Yates, CEO, Coventry Haven Women's Aid
Aneta Mackell, Director, Opoka
Richinda Taylor, CEO, EVA Women's Aid
Dr Ava Kanyeredzi, University of East London and the Black Church Domestic Abuse Forum
Dickie James MBE, Chief Executive, Staffordshire Women's Aid
Stacy Smith, CEO, Her Centre
Wendy Bulman, Manager, Shropshire Domestic Abuse Service
Lisbeth Harvey, CEO, Wycombe Women's Aid
Penny Ryan, National Chair, Townswomen's Guilds
Dr Liza Thompson, CEO, SATEDA
Amtal Rana, CEO, Kiran Support Services
Lynda Dearlove, CEO, Women and the Well
Tracy Vallis, Chief Executive Officer, Changing Pathways
Mandy Green, Head of Services, Nottinghamshire Women's Aid Ltd
Yasmin Rehman, Chief Executive Officer, Juno Women's Aid
Colette Byrne, CEO, Broxtowe Women's Project
Fiamma Pather, Chief Executive Officer, Your Sanctuary
Anna Cummins, Chair of the Trustees, Sutton Women's Centre
Sue Coleman, Chief Executive, West Mercia Women's Aid
Nik Peasgood, CEO, Leeds Women's Aid
Yasmin Khan, CEO, Staying Put
Steph Mallas, CEO, Stockport Without Abuse
Beverley Jones, Chief Executive, Next Chapter
Maureen Connolly, CEO, Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid
Rebecca Hirst, Chief Executive, Pennine Domestic Abuse Partnership
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Ursula Lindenberg, Director, VOICES
Andrea West, CEO, Berkshire Women's Aid
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Clair Johnson, CEO, Bexley Women's Aid
Fiona Gwinnett, Chief Executive, Wight DASH
Michelle O'Rourke, Chief Executive Officer, My Sisters Place Domestic Abuse Service
Helen Gauder, Managing Director, SafeNet
Maureen Storey, Director, Vida Sheffield and Interim Director, Sheffield Women's Aid
Cath Jago, Chief Executive, South West Surrey Domestic Abuse Outreach Service
Jill Caldwell, Chief Executive, Endeavour Project
Sue Burke, Chief Executive Officer, MK-Act Domestic Abuse Intervention Services
Denise Fenn, CEO, Welwyn Hatfield Women's Refuge and Support Services (WHWR)
Karen Ingala Smith, Chief Executive, Nia
Vicky Bunnage, Chief Executive, Crossroads Derbyshire
Fran Ellis, CEO, Rising Sun Domestic Violence and Abuse Service
James Watson-O'Neill, CEO, SignHealth