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## School lessons to tackle domestic violence



The government plans to offer more help for victims

**Every school pupil in England is to be taught that domestic violence is unacceptable, as part of a new government strategy.**

It plans to introduce school lessons from 2011 which will teach young people how to prevent violent relationships.

Plans include a stalking and harassment and 24-hour sexual violence helpline, both to be launched in 2010.

The charity Refuge has welcomed the announcement while urging people to speak out against domestic violence.

About a million women are victims of one domestic violence incident a year, according to the British Crime Survey.

Prime Minister Gordon Brown said violence against women and girls was "an obscenity".

### **Home ban**

More than £13m of funding is being provided to help support victims of sexual and domestic violence, with a range of actions for the police, local authorities, NHS and government.

From 2011, gender equality and preventing violence in relationships lessons will be included in the statutory personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum.

Teachers will be trained to tackle violence against students.

Plans will also see the piloting of Domestic Violence Protection Orders - or "Go" orders - which could see perpetrators excluded from their homes and give victims space to apply for longer-term protection.

A health taskforce set up to examine the role of the NHS in response to female victims of violence will publish recommendations in 2010.

### **'Postcode lottery'**

The strategy coincides with the launch of a Four Ways To Speak Out campaign by domestic violence charity Refuge, fronted by famous faces such as Dame Helen Mirren and Sheryl Gascoigne.

It wants people to sign a petition urging the government to put an end to "the postcode lottery of domestic violence services".

Lisa King, director of communications at Refuge, welcomed the government's plans but said there was an "urgent need" for services for abused women and children.

"One in three authorities still do not provide such services... a woman might have to move a long distance to find the support she needs.

"Councils should be required by law to provide a range of services to victims of domestic violence and abuse and the government should put the necessary funding in place," she said.

The "particular needs" of abused women from black and minority ethnic backgrounds also needed to be properly served, she added.

It is a view echoed by Donna Covey, chief executive of the Refugee Council.

"We know that refugee women are disproportionately likely to be affected by rape and sexual violence... it is therefore of great concern that women fleeing violence find it difficult to access appropriate services in the UK, and there is nothing in this strategy to address this," she said.

Harriet Harman, minister for women and equality, said tackling violence against women and girls was "one of the government's top priorities" and it was "vital" to have a "cross-government approach".

**“ Councils should be required by law to provide a range of services to victims of domestic violence and abuse**

Lisa King, Refuge

['I hid the abuse from everyone' Why have a domestic violence campaign?](#)

### **ANALYSIS**

#### **Sue Littlemore, BBC News**

Why is the government launching a campaign to end violence against women and girls in particular?

The difference is that women disproportionately become the victims of crimes because they are women.

The figures on domestic violence demonstrate the point.

The latest Home Office figures suggest that in one year, 106 people were killed by a current or former partner.

But the overwhelming majority, 72 of them, were women. It means that domestic attacks result in the death of at least one woman every week, on average, in England and Wales.

[Read Sue Littlemore's full analysis](#)

She said the strategy, entitled Together We Can End Violence Against Women and Girls, focused on prevention, which was "critical" to long-term change.

"We have to work to change attitudes in order to eliminate violence against women and girls and to make it clear beyond doubt that any form of violence against women is unacceptable," she said.