



Dame Meg Hillier MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

DECS Reference: MIN/0255154/22
Your Reference: MH75396

25 April 2022

Dear Dame Meg,

Thank you for your email of 2 March on behalf of [REDACTED] about the Valerie's Law petition and the debate in Parliament on 28 March. I am sorry for the delay in replying to your email. I was pleased to speak at the debate, and I am grateful to the Sistah Space organisation for their work supporting and advocating for victims of domestic abuse.

This Government is committed to ensuring that all victims of violence against women and girls, including domestic abuse, get the support they need. The Valerie's Law petition calls for police and agency cultural competency training to help them better understand the lived experiences, needs and barriers of black women affected by domestic abuse. We know that domestic abuse affects a wide and disparate group and that a "one size fits all" approach is not appropriate to support all victims, especially ethnic minority victims. Police and agency training is an important part of tackling and responding to domestic abuse, but this needs to form part of a wider approach of guidance and support.

Our legislative and strategic work in the domestic abuse space, alongside appropriate police training, will help support all victims of domestic abuse. Our landmark Domestic Abuse Act 2021 will help millions affected by these awful crimes by strengthening the response across all agencies – from the police and courts to local authorities and service providers. On 30 March 2022, we published our Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan ([Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/104444/Tackling-Domestic-Abuse-Plan-2022.pdf)). It is closely aligned with and used the same call for evidence as the Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy, which actively sought input from under-represented groups to ensure that we heard the perspectives of a diverse range of people, including victims and survivors from ethnic minority backgrounds. Both documents set out how we intend to tackle barriers and build confidence for victims and survivors to come forward and get the justice and response that they deserve.

The Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance, which we are in the process of finalising, will provide further detail on how lived experiences of domestic abuse can vary between different communities and groups, including ethnic minority victims. The guidance also specifically mentions that ethnic minority victims may experience additional barriers to disclosing domestic abuse and seeking help, including distrust of the police and other agencies – and that professionals should be aware of this and actively seek to ensure the

right support is made available. We expect all statutory agencies and those working with victims of domestic abuse to pay regard to this guidance.

We recognise the aims of the Valerie's Law petition and know that it is essential that police and other agencies working with victims of domestic abuse receive the training required to respond effectively, regardless of the victim's background. We agree that all police officers have the right competences and values, especially when dealing with the most vulnerable in our society. The College of Policing's foundation training for police entrants includes police ethics and self-understanding, hate crimes, ethics and equalities, and policing without bias. Specialist training for officers dealing routinely with public protection issues explores these issues in more depth and detail.

The College of Policing has also developed specialist domestic abuse training, the 'Domestic Abuse Matters' programme, which helps first responders develop the skills they need when first on the scene of an incident or report. The training considers the needs and vulnerabilities of different victims, including black and ethnic minority women and girls. This training has been delivered, or is due to be delivered, to the majority of forces already, however for those that have not, the Home Office will provide up to £3.3 million over three years to support their delivery of Domestic Abuse Matters.

The new full-time National Policing Lead for Violence Against Women and Girls, DCC Maggie Blyth, has included building trust and confidence as a key pillar of the Policing VAWG National Framework for delivery. This includes working with charities supporting ethnic minority women and girls to avoid their specific needs being overlooked.

During the Valerie's Law debate, I proposed a meeting between the College of Policing and Sistah Space as I would like the leaders in policing to hear directly from those working with African and Caribbean heritage women and girls. I will also be meeting with Sistah Space to discuss these matters in more detail.

Please extend my gratitude to  for taking the time to write in with her concerns.



Rachel Maclean MP