



Briefing Note

Government VAWG Strategy

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The UK Government has announced a £20m strategy to better protect children from misogyny and abuse, focusing on prevention, education, and early intervention. This sets out a ten year ambitious plan to halve violence against women and girls. For DSLs and education settings the Government's view is that schools are central to prevention, early identification and creating cultural change for young people.

The strategy highlights that attitudes linked to misogyny, entitlement, coercion and control will often develop for young people during their childhood and adolescence. Therefore, this makes education one of the strongest environments for challenging and changing attitudes, whilst also supporting those children effected by harmful behaviour.

Key Points for DSLs

Focus on prevention and early intervention: The Strategy prioritises early intervention, tackling harmful attitudes among boys, and protecting girls before harm occurs.

Education requirements:

- All secondary schools must deliver strong programmes on healthy, respectful relationships and consent in an age-appropriate, trauma-informed and inclusive way. This includes tackling sexist language and 'normalised' behaviours amongst young people.
- Specialist teacher training on consent, intimate image sharing, and challenging misogynistic influences is needed so that all staff feel confident to provide engaging and interactive sessions that have impact. This includes teaching digital literacy and online consent. This will also support pupils in recognising harmful behaviour as victims and bystanders.
- High-risk pupils need to receive targeted support and behaviour change interventions.
- Policies, curriculum opportunities and training need to be well embedded into everyday practice.
- Schools need to maintain strong multi agency relationships with partners across their local authorities.
- Staff need to be trained on recognising early signs of abuse and understand that children may be harmed directly or as a result of witnessing relationship abuse in their family home.

- There is a new Helpline that is dedicated for young people concerned about their own behaviours, offering early support. This should be signposted in school for all young people.

Implications for DSLs

- **Curriculum Oversight:** DSLs need to ensure PSHE/RSE provision meets the new statutory expectations on healthy relationships and consent.
- **Staff Training:** DSLs need to support and prepare for the rollout of specialist training and cascade that learning to all staff.
- **Identification & Referral:** DSLs need to be part of strengthening systems to identify high-risk pupils and refer them to appropriate support programmes.
- **Multi-Agency Working:** DSLs need to anticipate new guidance for police/social care and align safeguarding practice and polices with updated frameworks this will be heavily supported by HH: Safeguarding Matters.
- **Policy Review:** DSLs need to review school safeguarding and child protection policies to reflect the new national priorities and helpline access. This was already undertaken by HH: Safeguarding Matters in summer 2025.
- **Monitoring & Evaluation:** DSL's need to track the impact of interventions for children and young people, particularly around teenage relationship abuse and harmful sexual behaviours.

At HH: Safeguarding Matters the changes to the RSE curriculum were shared in the KCSIE, 2025 update and training sessions. The VAWG Strategy is echoing those changes, and this information is already included in the updated Child Protection Policy for 2025 in the below excerpts that can be shared with Governors/OFSTED to demonstrate existing compliance.

Please see page 4 of your HH: Safeguarding Matters CP Policy

1. **Prevention and Interception** – providing a positive culture of vigilance and safeguarding in school through effective teaching, pastoral care and safe adult role models who identify vulnerability and susceptibility in children and seek to prevent future harm by intercepting at the right time (as early as possible) to reduce further risks including but not limited to (harassment, bullying/cyber-bullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying, victimisation, sexual abuse (including sexual harassment/violence and exploitation), domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse), criminal exploitation, serious youth violence, county lines and radicalisation (extremism and terrorism) and issues such as 'Honour' - Based Abuse, Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage).
2. **Safeguarding and Protection** - following all necessary safeguarding policies and ensuring that all staff respond appropriately, sensitively and timely to all child

protection concerns and that every member of staff has regular training and updates, at least annually, and are supported to refer their concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead **INSERT NAME** or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead **INSERT NAME** or the **Integrated Contact and Referral Team on 561 7007** directly IF NECESSARY. In certain specific cases such as Female Genital Mutilation (mandatory reporting of FGM from October 2015), radicalisation or Forced Marriage there are SPOCS/named teams and individuals within the police who can be contacted).

3. **Escalation** – following the local safeguarding partnership threshold guidance and challenging the progress of new referrals and existing cases to ensure that individual cases are reconsidered and escalated if there remains no improvement to a child's circumstances.
4. **Scaffolding and Supporting** – supporting staff through reflective training to be able to recognise vulnerable children and provide scaffolding and support so that those children achieve their best outcomes.
5. **Timely Record Keeping** – ensuring that all information staff have regarding children's lived experiences and risk of harm are recorded factually, accurately and in a timely manner to ensure the most positive outcomes for children.

Please see page 23 of your HH: Safeguarding Matters CP Policy

- A curriculum where children develop personal resilience, understand and can take appropriate risks or have personal strategies/safety plans that allow them to manage their own safety both on and offline. This can include topics covered as part of Relationships, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education as well as Fundamental British Values and the SMSC Curriculum which cover harm, abuse, positive and healthy relationships and crime. Such a curriculum will be fully inclusive and developed to be age and stage of development appropriate (especially when considering the needs of children with SEND and other vulnerabilities) and will include; healthy and respectful relationships; boundaries and consent; stereo typing, prejudice and equality; body confidence and self-esteem; how to recognise an abusive relationship, including coercive and controlling behaviour; the concepts of, and laws relating to sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, so called 'Honour' - Based Abuse such as Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and how to access support; what constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always unacceptable; online harm including misogyny and deepfakes; mental health and well-being including suicide prevention, personal safety, positive relationships and sexual ethics, inclusion and equality and recognition of diverse family structures (RSHE guidance 2025).