



Government
Equalities Office



Beijing+25 National Report

The response of the Government of the United Kingdom to the UN Questionnaire on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)

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Foreword

Much of the information provided in this report is based on content prepared for the UN Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reporting processes, including our engagement with civil society groups. The UK was examined by the UN CEDAW Committee on 26 February 2019 and submitted its first Voluntary National Review on implementation of the SDGs, including Goal 5 (Gender Equality) in June 2019.

The UK's devolution settlement means that the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland take primary responsibility for observing and implementing the UK's international obligations in areas of responsibility which have been devolved to them. Where responsibility has been devolved to the individual administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, their developments have been included alongside those of the wider UK Government. The Northern Ireland Assembly has not been operational since January 2017. References to Northern Ireland contained in this response remain subject to review and agreement by future Ministers with responsibility for the issues concerned.

Chapter 1: Priorities, achievements, challenges and setbacks

1. Introduction

As we approach the 25th anniversary of the landmark adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the UK reaffirms its proud commitment to gender equality, women's empowerment and the full realisation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its underpinning promise to 'Leave No One Behind'. We believe that every woman and girl, whatever her background, should have the freedom, choice, support and protection to achieve her full potential.

Based on the questionnaire issued by UN Women, this report sets out UK action to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action since 2015, the year of the 20th milestone anniversary of the declaration and of the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In the years since the Fourth World Conference on Women, and indeed over the last 5 years, there have been real and meaningful advancements in the campaign for gender equality. Lives are being transformed in the UK with record numbers of women in work, a narrowing gender pay gap and more women on the boards of the largest companies than ever before. Stronger action is also working to protect women from violence, domestic abuse and harmful practices. Internationally, the UK is committed to empowering all women and girls, reaching the most vulnerable and marginalised with targeted action through the UK's international development programmes.

But, no country in the world, the UK included, has yet achieved gender equality. We realise that there is much more work to be done before this vision becomes reality. Not only is gender equality essential in and of itself, but it is vital if we, as a global community, are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The focus in the UK now is on accelerating the pace of change to ensure that all women and girls are empowered to make informed choices and play an active part in all aspects of society. Promoting gender equality for all is firmly in our national interest - getting this right is key to shaping our shared future, where no one is defined or limited by their gender.

2. Priorities for accelerating progress over the past five years

Equalities and non-discrimination under the law

The UK has a long tradition of protecting rights and liberties domestically, and of meeting our international human rights obligations. The 2017 EU Gender Equality Index, ranked the UK 6th in the EU for its progress towards gender equality, in part due to having some of the strongest legislation in the world protecting women's rights and tackling discrimination.¹

We will ensure that the robust protections provided by the Equality Acts 2006 and 2010, and equivalent legislation in Northern Ireland, continue to apply after the UK leaves the EU, and we've also committed to ensuring workers' rights keep pace with the changing needs of the labour market.

Eliminating violence against women and girls

Gender-based violence and harmful practices are pervasive, dangerous and must be eliminated. The UK has focused considerable activity on tackling violence against women and girls in recent years. The Government is committed to ensuring that victims are supported, perpetrators are brought to justice and that we do everything possible to prevent these terrible crimes happening in the first place.

The UK has refreshed its *Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy* and, in January 2019, published its landmark draft *Domestic Abuse Bill*, since introduced into Parliament in July 2019. Both aim to end all forms of domestic abuse. We have also introduced a new offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship; a new offence of failing to protect a girl from FGM or forced marriage; and lifelong anonymity for the victims of these harmful practices. (See Chapter 2.3)

Women's economic empowerment

The UK is clear that unlocking women's economic potential will help deliver growth and prosperity for all. In the past 5 years, the UK has introduced a combination of innovative reforms and ground-breaking measures to help transform women's lives and provide more help for families. (See Chapter 2.1)

In 2017, we introduced ground-breaking regulations requiring large companies to publish their gender pay gap, providing an unprecedented level of transparency and driving a national conversation. Since 2015, we have also introduced shared parental leave, extended the right to request flexible working to all employees and doubled the childcare entitlement for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds in England, from 15 to

¹ <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/about>

30 hours a week, alongside 15 hours entitlement for parents of disadvantaged 2 year olds.

In July 2019, we published *Gender equality at all stages: a roadmap for change*, which sets out the Government's plans to address the persistent gendered barriers people face at every stage of life. The roadmap announces a range of cross-government activity to address gender inequality, including tackling the limiting attitudes and social norms about roles for men and women; entry and progression in work; supporting people to balance work and care; and helping economic well-being in later life.² (See Chapter 2.1)

100 years of votes for women

2018 was a landmark year for gender equality in the UK, as we commemorated the centenary of voting rights for some women. The Government allocated £5 million that was used to fund projects raising awareness of this crucial milestone and encouraging more women to participate in democracy, building a diverse political system that reflects the nation it serves. These projects involved people who are typically under-represented in civic life. (See Chapter 2.4)

Empowering women and girls throughout the world

Gender equality is at the heart of the UK's development and diplomacy work as set out in the UK's *Department for International Development Strategic Vision for Gender Equality*.³ Since the SDGs were agreed in 2015, UK Aid has provided 16.9 million women and girls with modern methods of family planning; reached at least 8.2 million women and girls with humanitarian assistance; and supported 5.6 million girls to gain a decent education.⁴ The UK's funding has contributed to helping 24.5 million people from 8,000 communities pledge to end FGM and more than 4.8 million people, including community members and religious leaders, to learn about the benefits of delaying marriage and keeping adolescent girls in school. (See Chapter 2.2 for sexual health; Chapter 2.3 for VAWG and harmful practices; and Chapter 2.5 for girl's education)

3. Priorities for accelerating progress over the next five years

Closing the gender pay gap

Reporting is just the first step in closing the gender pay gap. We need action at a sector level, as well as by individual employers, in order to close the gap. The UK is urging individual employers to develop an action plan to identify and address the

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gender-equality-at-every-stage-a-roadmap-for-change>

³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/708116/Strategic-vision-gender-equality1.pdf

⁴ DFID Results Estimates: 2017 to 2018 <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dfid-results-2017-to-2018>

causes of their gender pay gap. We also want to accelerate action by working with sectors to mainstream gender equality in wider sector strategies and/or develop tailored actions and gender initiatives for different workforces. We will prioritise high-profile sectors that have large numbers of women, are fast growing or are strongly associated with one gender, including health, education, retail, financial services, construction, engineering and digital and technology. By continuing to fund research into what works to close the gap and publishing guidance and best practice, the Government will work in partnership with public and private sector employers to drive results.

Following the successful implementation of gender pay gap reporting, the Government launched a recent consultation into options for ethnicity pay gap reporting and is currently considering the results.

Increasing women and girls' participation in STEM

The demand for STEM skills is growing, in the UK and globally, particularly for sectors such as engineering, construction and manufacturing. In order to improve gender representation in STEM industries, we are determined to boost the number of girls studying STEM subjects at school, college and university. There has been a 26% increase in girls' entries to STEM A levels in England since 2010 and the number of women accepted onto full-time STEM undergraduate courses in the UK has also increased by 28% since 2010.

However, the proportion of girls and women in maths and physics is still notably low and therefore we know there is still more to do to improve the gender balance in these subjects. The UK is investing in a number of programmes that aim to increase girls' engagement in STEM and make girls aware of the range of careers available, to ensure they can succeed on an equal basis. (See Chapter 2.2)

Addressing intersectionality between inequalities

Given the intersections between inequalities, the UK's ambition is to take an ever more coordinated approach to its work on equality, supported by the move of the Government Equalities Office to the heart of Government in the Cabinet Office. (See Chapter 3) The UK will do more to connect its action on LGBT and gender equality with its work reducing disparities for other disadvantaged groups such as ethnic minorities and people with disabilities. The Government Equalities Office is currently developing a programme of work to allow women with multiple barriers to have their voices heard by policymakers.

Global rollback on women's rights

There is growing evidence of an increasingly coordinated and effective opposition to women's rights, including women's and girls' access to sexual and reproductive health

and rights, education and preventing violence against women and girls. Whilst these concerns are not new, this opposition appears to now be more coordinated, better funded and able to mobilise more efficiently than ever before. This is creating a more hostile global environment on gender equality, with hard won global norms protecting girls and women being challenged. The UK will stand by its commitment to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the face of this challenge.

Tackling violence against women and girls globally

The UK will continue to prioritise tackling VAWG domestically in the next 5 years. We also recognise that much more needs to be done to prevent the extremely high levels of violence that women and girls experience every day around the world. Investment in generating evidence of what works to prevent VAWG, particularly amongst the most marginalised, including adolescent girls and women and girls with disabilities, continues, whilst advocacy for greater investment in interventions to prevent and respond to VAWG is also being scaled up. (See Chapter 2.3)

Chapter 2.1: Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

1. Advancing gender equality in the workplace

Lives in the UK are being transformed with record numbers of women in work. The employment rate for women (aged 16-64) is at a joint record high of **72%** with **1.8 million** more women in work than 2010. However, there is still work to be done. In July 2019, the Government published its research report, *The case for change*, an analysis of the evidence on how economic gender inequalities affect people throughout their lives, setting out clearly why it is important to take action. There remain big differences in working patterns: women workers are over three times more likely to work part-time than men, which in turn is associated with lower pay and low rates of progression. A gender pay gap still exists, and builds up over the life course. This is in large part because women still take responsibility for the majority of unpaid care work: it remains difficult to balance responsibilities in the home with paid work that makes full use of their talents and, by extension, allows them to take progression opportunities and access higher pay.

Gender equality at every stage: a roadmap for change

To signal its commitment to advancing women's economic empowerment, in July 2019, the Government published *Gender equality at all stages: a roadmap for change*. This sets out the Government's plans to address the persistent gendered barriers people face at every stage of life. The roadmap announces a range of cross-government activity to address gender inequality, including tackling the limiting attitudes and social norms about roles for men and women; entry and progression in work; supporting people to balance work and care; and helping economic well-being in later life.⁵ The roadmap includes actions that the Government will take, for example:

- Launching a consultation on sexual harassment in the workplace;
- Reviewing the enforcement of equal pay legislation;
- Consulting on dedicated employment rights for carers;
- Launching a national communications campaign for employers, to help them support employees to balance work and care and support progression; and
- Announcing a number of new research projects to increase the evidence base.

⁵https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/814079/GEO_GEEE_Strategy_Gender_Equality_Roadmap_tagged.pdf

Alongside the roadmap, we also introduced the new annual Gender Equality Monitor, which brings together a suite of metrics from across Government to monitor important gender equality issues in the UK.⁶ (See Chapter 4)

Gender pay gap reporting and action

On all headline measures, the gender pay gap in the UK is closing. The overall gender pay gap has fallen to a record low of **17.9%**, down from **19.3%** in 2015. The gender pay gap for full-time employees has decreased to **8.6%** from **9.6%** over the same period. The Government is committed to closing the gap entirely.

In 2017, the UK introduced world-leading gender pay gap reporting regulations, requiring large employers (250+ staff) to publish the differences between what they pay their male and female staff in average salaries and bonuses. In the first year of reporting in 2018, and more recently in 2019, over 10,000 employers reported their gender pay gap; providing an unparalleled level of transparency and pushing employers to take real action to close the gap.⁷ The Government is advising and supporting employers to develop effective action plans to tackle their gender pay gaps.⁸

The Welsh Government's *Employability Plan*, published March 2018, commits to take action to reduce the gender pay gap.⁹ The programmes, and the organisations who deliver them, have to demonstrate their commitment to gender equality as well as wider equality, diversity and inclusivity which is an important step forward. In the *Employability Plan*, the Welsh Government encourages businesses to adopt policies and practices which enhance employment opportunities and benefit business. Policies such as flexible working, addressing biases in recruitment and promotion, and provision of skills development for the workforce.

In Northern Ireland, the *Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 2016* introduced an obligation on employers to report on gender pay. In the absence of Ministers and an Assembly, the Government is unable to progress the gender pay legislation. (The structure of the gender pay gap in Northern Ireland is different to that in Great Britain. The most recent statistics for Northern Ireland published in October 2018 shows that among full-time workers there is a pay gap of 3.5% in favour of women compared to 8.6% in favour of men for the UK as a whole. However, when all employees are taken into account, there is still a pay gap in favour of men in Northern Ireland.)

In Scotland, public authorities with 20 or more employees must publish gender gap information and statements on equal pay. In 2019, *A Fairer Scotland for Women: Gender Pay Gap Action Plan* was launched to reduce the gender pay gap and tackle

⁶https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/814080/GEO_GEEE_Strategy_Gender_Equality_Monitor_tagged.pdf

⁷<https://gender-pay-gap.service.gov.uk/>

⁸*Four steps to developing a gender pay gap action plan:* <https://gender-pay-gap.service.gov.uk/>

⁹<https://gov.wales/employability-plan>

labour market inequalities faced by women, particularly disabled women, minority ethnic women, women from poorer socio-economic backgrounds and women with caring responsibilities.¹⁰

Gender equality research

We are committed to ensuring that the UK is an international leader on gender equality research, so that employers have the tools and knowledge they need to close their gender pay gaps.

In September 2017, we invested £2 million in the Gender and Behavioural Insights programme (GABI), a partnership between the Government Equalities Office and the Behavioural Insights Team. The GABI programme has published guidance for employers to understand what actions are likely to improve recruitment and progression of women¹¹ and a diagnostic tool to help employers understand their gender pay gap.¹²

In June 2018, we launched the Workplace and Gender Equality Research Programme (WAGE), a two-year programme which will invest £1.1 million into new academic research to help close the gender pay gap. The WAGE programme has published evidence-based guidance and infographics for employers on how to improve their family friendly policies and support women to progress.¹³

Women's Business Council

The Women's Business Council is a government-backed, business-led council that was established in 2012 with the aim of ensuring real action to maximise women's contribution to economic growth.¹⁴ In July 2019, it was announced that the council will refresh its focus. With a new Chair, Fiona Dawson, and refreshed membership it will play a leading role in promoting best practice activity to close the gender pay gap, working with sectors facing the biggest issues. The council will look to collaborate with local partners and business organisations to:

- Encourage local initiatives to drive action to tackle the gender pay gap at a local or regional level, and take a national role in sharing best practice;
- Help to develop and implement tailored actions to tackle the gender pay gap in target sectors;
- Work with industry leaders in sectors with high numbers of low paid roles, which tend to be female dominated, to support women in these roles to progress;
- Encourage large organisations to work through their supply chains to disseminate best practice; and

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-women-gender-pay-gap-action-plan/>

¹¹ <https://gender-pay-gap.service.gov.uk/actions-to-close-the-gap>

¹² *Eight ways to understand your organisation's gender pay gap*: <https://gender-pay-gap.service.gov.uk/>

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/family-friendly-policies-actions-for-employers>

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/womens-business-council>

- Advise the Government on issues facing particular sectors of the economy and barriers to women’s economic participation.

Men as Change Agents

In 2018, the Women’s Business Council launched its *Men as Change Agents Toolkit* calling on senior business leaders and CEOs in FTSE 350 and other important UK businesses to champion gender equality in the workplace by:

1. Taking personal responsibility for ensuring 33% of executive level business leaders are women by 2020;
2. Sponsoring 1–3 women within their organisation with the potential to secure an executive role within 3 years; and,
3. Being an active and visible change agent and being part of the wider business conversation to achieve gender balance.¹⁵

Combatting sexual harassment in the workplace

The UK has some of the strongest workplace protections in the world. These include explicit protections against sexual harassment in the workplace under the *Equality Act 2010*. The Government issued a consultation in July 2019 to ensure that these laws are operating effectively and that we have the right laws and processes in place to keep people safe. We want to hear from the people affected by this problem so that we can design solutions that work for them. We are also proposing to strengthen the law to make it clear that employers must protect their staff from harassment by third parties, like customers and clients. Our consultation also invites views on legal protections for volunteers and interns; and whether time limits are too short for people bringing a harassment or discrimination case to an employment tribunal.

Under the *Equality Act 2010* any employee who feels they have been harassed in the workplace can take legal action in an Employment Tribunal if they are unable to reach a resolution through the employer’s grievance procedure, or through the Acas Early Conciliation Service.¹⁶

The Government has also committed to working with the Equalities and Human Rights Commission to introduce a new statutory code of practice on sexual harassment, and to raise awareness to ensure that employers are clear on their responsibilities.

Combatting pregnancy discrimination in the workplace

In the UK, discriminating against women in the workplace because they are pregnant or new mothers is illegal. There are clear regulations in place which every employer must follow. In January 2019, we launched a consultation on extending redundancy

¹⁵ https://www.womensbusinesscouncil.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/MACA_Achieving_gender_balance_in_business_leadership_and_closing_the_gender_pay_gap_April_2018.pdf

¹⁶ <http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=4028>

protection for pregnant women and new mothers by six months. This has now closed and the Government will set out next steps in due course.

The Government Equalities Office funds the Equality Advisory and Support Service, an entirely free advice helpline open to anyone in England, Scotland and Wales who feels that they may have been the victim of unlawful discrimination, including because of pregnancy and maternity.¹⁷

The Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is also carrying out important work through its *Working Forward* campaign, supporting employers to make workplaces the best they can be for pregnant women and new parents.¹⁸

The Scottish Government is working with the EHRC to tackle pregnancy and maternity discrimination. The 'Pregnancy and Maternity Discrimination Working Group' is chaired by the Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills and has a remit to create guidelines for employers to ensure best practice, as well as improving access to guidance for pregnant women and new mothers.

2. Family friendly policies

As set out in *Gender equality at all stages: a roadmap for change*, we want: both parents to take active and well-informed choices about balancing work and care, supported by a fair and clear Government offer; employers to create inclusive workplaces fit for the future- showing equal consideration of work-life balance for all employees and facilitating flexible working to retain staff; and infants to reap the benefits of spending time with both parents (where they have the opportunity to do so).

Childcare in England

We know that affordable, quality childcare is the key to unlocking women's economic participation. In the UK, **74%** of childcare time is carried out by women and **90%** of people who are inactive due to looking after the family and home are women.

From September 2017, we doubled the childcare entitlement for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds in England, from 15 to 30 hours a week. The most disadvantaged 2 year olds are able to access 15 hours a week of free early education. Eligibility for the 30 hours entitlement is based on parental income and parents could save, on average, up to £5,000 per year. More than 340,000 children aged 3 and 4 years old benefitted from a 30 hours place throughout the first year of delivery. We are now in the second year of national delivery and an estimated 325,000 children were in a 30 hours place in the spring term 2019 – this is an 11% increase on the spring term 2018. The Department for Education's annual parent survey found that 80% of parents said that the quality of their family life was better after taking up the 30 hours.

¹⁷ <https://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com/>

¹⁸ <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/pregnancy-and-maternity-workplace/working-forward>

In addition to the childcare entitlements, around 1.5 million families are eligible for Tax-Free Childcare with more than 300,000 families having already signed up. For every £8 parents pay into an online account, the Government will pay £2 – up to a maximum contribution of £2,000 per child each year, for children aged up to 12.

Childcare in devolved administrations

The Welsh Government's Childcare Offer for Wales is providing 30 hours of government-funded early education and childcare for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds for up to 48 weeks of the year.¹⁹ It is intended to support families in Wales by helping parents, particularly mothers, return to work or increase their hours of employment.

In Scotland, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 increased the amount of funded early learning and childcare to 600 hours per year for all 3 and 4 years olds. This has now been extended to around a quarter of 2 year olds, including those with a parent in receipt of out-of-work benefits or low income. The statutory entitlement will be increased to 1,140 hours a year by 2020.

In Northern Ireland, the Pre-School Education Programme is funded by the Department of Education to provide one year of non-compulsory pre-school education for children (age 3-4) in their immediate pre-school year. Part-time places under the pre-school programme offer a minimum of 12.5 hours per week and full-time places provide a minimum of 22.5 hours per week.

The Northern Ireland Executive Childcare Strategy is being delivered on a phased basis. The first phase of the strategy was published in September 2013 and this led to the Bright Start School Age Grant Scheme which currently supports approximately 2,500 low cost childcare places across Northern Ireland. The scheme was launched in 2014 and aimed to create or sustain school age childcare provision - breakfast clubs, after school clubs and summer schemes aimed at the 4-14 age group - providing services to disadvantaged families and/or located on the schools estate and/or rural communities.

Shared Parental Leave and Pay

In 2015, we introduced Shared Parental Leave and Pay, which enables working parents in England, Scotland and Wales to share up to **50** weeks of leave and up to **37** weeks of pay in the first year of the child's life.²⁰ Between February and April 2018, the Government Equalities Office and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy ran a joint £1.5m campaign to promote Shared Parental Leave to eligible parents. The campaign encouraged parents to 'Share The Joy' through digital

¹⁹ <https://gov.wales/childcare-3-and-4-year-olds>

²⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/shared-parental-leave-and-pay>

website advertising, social media and billboards and was supported by tools and guidance for parents.²¹

We are currently undertaking an evaluation of the Shared Parental Leave and Pay schemes, which will complete by the end of 2019. A new Shared Parental Leave digital tool is due to be launched later this year to help parents understand the parental leave options available to them. This will better support parents to make informed decisions on how best to balance the challenges of both working and raising a family.

Flexible working

All employees with **26 weeks'** continuous service with their employer already have the right to request flexible working. This accounts for over **90%** of employees. This sends a clear signal that flexible working is a normal practice for anyone in the workplace – and not something special for women, parents or carers.

To help realise the potential in the labour market, we have set up a taskforce to work with business to make flexible working a reality for all employees across Britain. The taskforce will tackle issues around flexible working which are key to improving the recruitment, retention and progression of key groups in the workforce.

The UK Civil Service aims to be a trailblazer in its approach to flexible working both in its employment practices, and by advertising jobs as open to all working patterns.

The Women's Business Council has launched the #100WaysToWorkFlexibly campaign, showcasing the myriad of flexible, dynamic and agile working patterns that can help make that balance possible.²²

The Government has committed to consulting on improving the availability of flexible working in job adverts and on increasing the transparency of organisations' parental leave and pay policies.

Supporting carers

An estimated **2.7 million** women were providing informal care compared to **1.8 million** men in the UK in 2017/18. We want to ensure that adult carers can be supported to remain in, and return to, work. We have committed to consulting on introducing statutory rights to carers leave and in 2018, we published the *Carers Action Plan* setting out a cross-government programme of targeted work to support carers over the next two years, including schemes to:

- Incentivise and support more employers to unlock quality jobs for flexible and part time working;
- Tackle the structural inequalities unpaid carers face in the workplace;
- Enable carers to continue to work alongside their caring responsibilities;

²¹ <https://sharedparentalleave.campaign.gov.uk/>

²² <https://www.womensbusinesscouncil.co.uk/100-ways-to-work/>

- Consider healthcare and education training needs for unpaid carers; and
- Look at the current provision of online information for carers to see whether it is meeting their needs and, if not, make recommendations for improvement.²³

In June 2019, we launched the Carers Innovation Fund in England to provide funding for projects that will develop creative and innovative solutions and models to provide effective support to carers, including increasing their ability to juggle their work and caring responsibilities.

An adult social care Green Paper, to be published at the earliest opportunity, will build on the *Carers Action Plan*. It will include a focus on how society supports carers as a vital part of a sustainable health and social care system, so that they are properly valued, recognized and supported to provide care in a way that supports their own health and wellbeing.

The Welsh Government's *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014* strengthens carers statutory rights and brings with it substantial changes to the rights and entitlements of all carers, including women, young and older carers. Under the Act, all carers of any gender, age, ethnicity or protected characteristic have the right to have their needs as a carer assessed, if they wish to and it is appropriate. A fundamental principle of the Act is that, for the first time, carers have an equal right to an assessment to see whether they need support to carry out their caring role and, if they do, to have that support provided.

In Northern Ireland, the existing policy on the support available to carers was reviewed as part of the wider Reform of Adult Social Care, since the support provided to carers forms a key component ensuring sustainability of the system of care and support as a whole. The first stage of the Reform saw an extensive public consultation to facilitate the debate around the future of adult care and support with ensuring adequate support for carers being raised consistently as a key issue. Consequently, new rights and duties with respect to carers are currently being considered, as part of the second stage of the Reform, with plans to consult on proposals for change in 2020.

Supporting women returning to work

Time out of the labour market has a substantial impact on women's salaries. The Institute for Fiscal Studies state that on returning to work, women earn around **2%** less on average for every year spent out of work. The penalty is worse for highly qualified women who earn **4%** less on average for each year they take out.²⁴ There are **1.2 million** people who are currently out of employment due to caring responsibilities and have stated they wish to return to work. **91%** of these people are women.

²³https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/713781/carers-action-plan-2018-2020.pdf

²⁴ IFS (2016) The Gender Wage Gap (Uses data from the British Household Panel Survey which ran from 1991-2008)

In 2017, the Government committed £5 million to increasing opportunities and support for returners - people who have taken time out of employment for caring responsibilities and want to return to paid work. With this funding, we have launched programmes in the public sector for the police, social workers, allied health professionals, teachers and prospective civil servants. We have also launched a private sector grant fund, which has awarded £489,000 to five organisations supporting returners so far. A further £500,000 of funding will support those with additional barriers to participating in the labour market, including people with speak limited English, people with disabilities and those who have been victims of domestic abuse. We have also launched best practice guidance and a toolkit to encourage and help employers to run their own effective returner programmes.²⁵

3. Championing women's economic empowerment globally

The economic empowerment of women and girls is central to achieving genuinely inclusive growth and is fundamental for the full realisation of human rights. No country can achieve sustained economic development if half its population is locked out. Women's economic empowerment has positive impacts on economic growth, firm performance and human development outcomes.

The UK's priorities in this area are: increasing women's opportunities for employment in decent jobs, access and retention of economic assets including land, and tackling discriminatory laws and regulations that prevent women from working and doing business. The Department for International Development's *Economic Development Strategy* places the economic empowerment of women and girls at the heart of its approach.²⁶ The strategy focuses on trade as an engine for poverty reduction, and investment in sectors which can unlock growth.

The Work and Opportunities for Women programme (WOW) is the Department for International Development's £12.8 million flagship central programme on women's economic empowerment.²⁷ It seeks to build on the momentum of the UNSG High Level Panel (HLP) on Women's Economic Empowerment, growing corporate interest to improve women's access to better work opportunities and build partnerships to deliver scalable and sustainable solutions.

We are also investing in improving the global evidence base on what works through dedicated research programmes. The Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women programme (GrOW), in partnership with IDRC and Hewlett Packard, is generating evidence on the links between growth and economic empowerment in low-income

²⁵https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/685064/Returner_Programmes_-_Best_Practice_Guidance_for_Employers.pdf; <https://www.womensbusinesscouncil.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/toolkit-Women-in-businessv.7.pdf> <https://www.womensbusinesscouncil.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/toolkit-Women-in-businessv.7.pdf>

²⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfids-economic-development-strategy-2017>

²⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/work-and-opportunities-for-women>

countries. It examines barriers to closing gender gaps in earnings and productivity and identifies ways to overcome them.

Chapter 2.2: Poverty eradication, social protection and social services

1. Supporting women out of poverty

Work offers the best route out of poverty. The Government is committed to supporting women who are financially fragile or have multiple barriers to reach their full potential.

National Living Wage

In April 2019, the National Living Wage increased by **4.9%** from **£7.83** to **£8.21**, representing an increase to a full time minimum wage worker's annual earnings of over £690. Over **60%** of those benefiting from the introduction of the National Living Wage are women.

Improving access to work

The Government has announced the introduction of a 'National Retraining Scheme' in England by 2022 to give people the skills they need to thrive. There is also a £10 million 'Flexible Learning Fund' to support projects that design and test flexible, accessible ways of delivering learning to working adults with low or intermediate skills.²⁸

The Government is committed to increasing ethnic minority employment by 20 per cent by 2020. The Department for Work and Pensions is supporting ethnic minority women to get closer to and into employment in 20 areas with high ethnic minority populations and a wide gap between the ethnic minority and white employment rate. There are 594,000 more ethnic minority women in employment than in 2010, and the employment rate (16-64) for ethnic minority women is at a record high.

The Government is committed to seeing **1 million** more people with disabilities and health conditions in work by 2027, through initiatives such as the 'Access to Work scheme' which provides disabled employees with financial support for workplace adjustments and assistive technology.²⁹ This ambitious programme is outlined in Improving Lives; the Future of Work, Health and Disability.³⁰ We are focusing on improving and joining up across three key areas - the welfare system, the workplace and the healthcare system.

In Northern Ireland, the Department for Communities delivers a number of programmes which support people with disabilities to enter, sustain and progress in employment including Access to Work, Workable (NI), Employment Support, Condition Management Programme and the Job Introduction Scheme; the

²⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/multi-million-pound-fund-for-adult-learning-announced>

²⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

³⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-lives-the-future-of-work-health-and-disability>

Department also match funds 18 European Social Fund Programmes tackling economic inactivity and helping people with disabilities to move closer to employment.

In March 2018, Welsh Government published a cross-government employability plan that set out its vision for making Wales a full-employment, high-tech, high-wage economy.³¹ The plan presented an ambitious strategy to create a highly trained and inclusive workforce, one that can respond effectively to national and regional skills needs, and adapt well to the future of work. At the centre of this ambition is a commitment to helping everyone achieve their full potential through meaningful employment, regardless of their ability, background, gender or ethnicity.

Supporting female entrepreneurs

There are **1.2 million** women-led small and medium-sized businesses in the UK, this accounts for 19% of SMEs in the UK. The Government is supporting women to set up and grow their own businesses by:

- Government-backed Start-Up Loans; which provide funding and support to new entrepreneurs. 39% (over £450m) of Start-Up Loans have been issued to women.
- The Business Support Helpline; a free service that provides trusted support and advice – in 2018, 47% of callers were women.³²
- As part of the Industrial Strategy, we are identifying ways to tackle barriers facing female-led businesses in accessing venture capital through research commissioned by the British Business Bank.
- In March 2018, HM Treasury published the *Alison Rose Review into Female Entrepreneurship* which explored the barriers women face when starting a business and what can be done to overcome them.³³ In response to the findings, the Government is setting out an ambition to increase the number of female entrepreneurs by half by 2030. This will require an additional 600,000 female entrepreneurs, and concerted efforts from both the private and public sector.
- We are establishing a new 'Investing in Women Code', which will take steps to improve how financial institutions allocate funding to female entrepreneurs and expose the gender gap in investment.

In 2019, Welsh Government outlined its approach to supporting women entrepreneurs and published a good practice guide for business support organisations on how best to engage with women who are setting up or already running their own business.³⁴

³¹ <https://gov.wales/employability-plan>

³² <https://www.gov.uk/business-support-helpline>

³³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-alison-rose-review-of-female-entrepreneurship>

³⁴ <https://businesswales.gov.wales/sites/business-wales/files/Good%20Practice%20Guide%20ENG.pdf>

2. Social protection systems

State Pension reform

Recent reforms to State Pension have focused on maintaining the right balance between sustainability of the State Pension and fairness between generations in the face of demographic change. The *Pensions Act 1995* legislated to equalise men and women's State Pension age at 65, over a 10 year period between 2010 and 2020. The *Pensions Act 2007* legislated for State Pension age to increase to 66 by 2026, to 67 by 2036 and to 68 by 2046. The *Pensions Act 2011* accelerated the equalisation of women's State Pension age by 18 months, so that it took place by November 2018. It also brought forward the increase in men and women's State Pension age to 66 by five and a half years, so that this takes place by October 2020, rather than April 2026. The *Pensions Act 2014* brought forward by eight years the increase in State Pension age to 67 to complete by 2028 and introduced regular reviews of the State Pension age. Equalisation removed the longstanding inequality in State Pension age, which was based on an outdated rationale that women were dependent on their husband's incomes.

The Government introduced the new State Pension for people reaching State Pension age from 6 April 2016 onwards. The new State Pension system is on average more generous for women, lower paid workers and self-employed people. As a result of recent reforms to the State Pension system, over three million women stand to receive an average of £550 more per year by 2030.

Workplace Pensions

The Government has also introduced automatic enrolment into Workplace Pensions, greatly increasing the number of women who will benefit from a workplace pension.³⁵ In 2018, 85% of eligible women in the private sector were participating in a workplace pension, up from 40% in 2012 when automatic enrolment was introduced.³⁶

Pension Credit

Pension Credit is a benefit available to those on low incomes. It works by topping up any other income to a standard minimum amount.³⁷ These amounts are higher for those who are severely disabled, have caring responsibilities, certain housing costs or responsibility for a child or young person. It is a tax-free, non-contributory, means-tested benefit for people of State Pension age living in the UK. It is primarily designed to help tackle pensioner poverty. Female pensioners with low incomes accounted for 64% of Pension Credit cases in 2018. For those who for whatever reason have been

³⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/workplace-pensions>

³⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/workplace-pension-participation-and-saving-trends-2008-to-2018>

³⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit>

unable to make provision for their retirement, Pension Credit can make a real difference.

Supporting older workers

There are over 1 million more women aged 50+ in work than in 2010. The Government is working with business and other stakeholders to ensure everyone can adapt to the changing face of the workforce. In February 2017, the Department for Work and Pensions published *Fuller Working Lives: A Partnership Approach*, setting out how working longer can benefit businesses, individuals and the economy. The strategy sets out the key actions the Government is taking to support older workers to remain in and return to the labour market:

- Reforming legislation, so that retirement is no longer the cliff-edge it once was;
- Building an evidence-based case for action;
- Supporting those who need more help: for example, carers and people with health conditions; and
- Reforming the adult skills system – including training and careers advice.

Universal Credit

The UK is part-way through the biggest welfare reform programme for a generation. Universal Credit replaces six employment benefits with one, to simplify the system and make work pay. As a result, people will move into work faster, stay in work longer and spend more time looking to increase their earnings. The Government is also committed to helping parents into work and recognises that childcare costs can affect parents' choices. Under Universal Credit, working families can claim back up to 85% of their childcare costs each month, and can claim up to a month before starting a job. For families with two children this could be worth up to £13,000 a year.

The Government is spending an additional £1.7 billion per year on Universal Credit, increasing the Work Allowance, by £1,000, from April 2019. This is the amount that households can earn each year before Universal Credit begins to be withdrawn, and will mean that 2.4 million households will be £630 better off a year. Each claimant has a dedicated work coach who they can contact at any time to discuss all aspects of their claim.

The July 2019 publication, *Gender equality at every stage: a roadmap for change* sets out the Government's plans to ensure that Universal Credit works for women, supporting them into quality jobs equal to their skills with no perverse incentives in the system. Among its advantages, Universal Credit will scrap the 16-hour cliff edge experienced under the legacy system which led to people being trapped on a certain number of working hours and is one reason why women on low pay are often still in low pay years later.

3. Improving healthcare outcomes for women and girls

Female life expectancy at birth (in England) is currently **83.1** years. The UK is committed to women's health and has implemented a comprehensive programme of dedicated health services for women in the areas such as sexual health, maternity and mental health.

Women's Health Taskforce

In November 2018, the Department for Health and Social Care launched the Women's Health Taskforce for England co-chaired by Jackie Doyle-Price MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Mental Health, Inequalities and Suicide Prevention and Lesley Regan, President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. The taskforce's objectives are to improve women's health by:

- Empowering women to speak confidently and openly about their health;
- Raising awareness and breaking taboos around women's health problems; and
- Improving the quality of care for women.

The taskforce works to achieve these goals by drawing together leading experts to look at the data and evidence, and, above all, listen to women about their experiences. The taskforce meets every two months and to date it has met to discuss unplanned pregnancy and the menopause, with the next meeting due to focus on menstrual health.

Screening and vaccinations

Most sexually active women (and men) will be infected with human papillomavirus (HPV) at some point in their lives and some may be repeatedly infected. The NHS continues to provide a human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination programme for girls aged 12-13, primarily to protect them against cervical cancer. Uptake of this programme remains high, currently around 83.9%. There is already a reduction in HPV infections in young women in England since the introduction of this programme and it is estimated that hundreds of lives could eventually be saved every year.

As part of the NHS Cervical Screening Programme in England, women aged 25 to 49 are invited for free cervical screening every three years and those aged 50 to 64 are invited every five years. Women over the age of 65 are invited for screening if they have not been screened since age 50 or if they have had recent abnormal results.

As the likelihood of getting breast cancer increases with age, under the NHS Breast Screening Programme, breast screening is offered every three years for all women in England between 50 and 70 years of age. Women aged 71 or over can still request

free screenings. There is currently a trial to examine the effectiveness of offering some women an extra screen between the ages of 47 and 49 and 71 and 73.

Cervical Screening Wales currently invites those aged 25-64 years old. Women from the age of 25 are invited for screening every three years. Women aged 50 to 64 are invited every five years. In September 2018 Cervical Screening Wales rolled-out high risk HPV testing as the primary cervical screening test for all women in the programme. This is a more sensitive test and will prevent more cancers than primary cytology testing with the programme now testing for 13 high risk HPV types, which cause 99.8% of cervical cancers. Breast Test Wales currently invites those aged 50-70 years old. Women over 70 are able to self-refer into the programme.

Maternity services

The report of the NHS England commissioned National Maternity Review, *Better Births* was published in February 2016.³⁸ It sets out a clear vision: for maternity services across England to become safer, more personalised, kinder, professional and more family friendly; where every woman has access to information to enable her to make decisions about her care; and where she and her baby can access support that is centred on their individual needs and circumstances. The *NHS Long-Term Plan* (January 2019) sets out how maternity services will support women to be fit for and throughout pregnancy, to have the best possible birth experience and outcomes; ensure more babies survive and thrive through infancy.³⁹

The Government made a commitment in 2018 to train 3,000 additional midwives over four years and to ensure a 25% increase in training places. Health Education England introduced a package of measures aimed at professionalising the maternity support worker role.

In the July 2019 publication, *Gender equality at every stage: a roadmap for change*, the Government committed to considering how to improve access to the information new parents want and need, joining up information on: childcare support; parental leave; family friendly policies; and other relevant services.

In Scotland, *The Best Start: A Five Year Forward Plan for Maternity and Neonatal Care in Scotland 2017* contains 76 recommendations to help reshape services putting the mother, baby and family at the centre of service planning and care delivery.⁴⁰ From August 2017, all newborn babies have received a box of essential items, including clothes from newborn up to 6 months.

³⁸ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/national-maternity-review-report.pdf>

³⁹ <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/>

⁴⁰ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/best-start-five-year-forward-plan-maternity-neonatal-care-scotland/>

Mental health

The Five Year Forward View for Mental Health, published in February 2016, identified that one in five mothers suffers from depression, anxiety or in some cases psychosis during pregnancy or in the first year after childbirth.⁴¹ A phased, five-year transformation programme, led by NHS England and backed by £365 million in funding, is underway.

Scottish Government has a Ministerial post dedicated to mental health. *The Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027* contains a vision of a Scotland where people can get the right help at the right time, expect recovery, and fully enjoy their rights, free from discrimination and stigma.

The Welsh Government's *Together for Mental Health Strategy and 2016-2019 Delivery Plan* include actions to reduce inequalities for vulnerable groups with mental health needs, ensuring equitable access and provision of mental health services.⁴² Since 2015, the Welsh Government has invested £1.5 million a year in community perinatal mental health services across Wales, which help identify, treat and manage mental ill health before and after childbirth. There are now community services in every health board area in Wales.

Tackling health inequalities

In 2012, the *Health and Social Care Act* introduced legal duties so that the Secretary of State for Health, NHS England and clinical commissioning groups are required to have regard to the need to reduce inequalities in access, outcomes and experience of health services. These duties are underpinned by annual assessment and reporting requirements.

In the *NHS Long-Term Plan* the NHS has committed to strengthen action on health inequalities. All major programmes and every local area will be required to set out specific measurable goals and mechanisms to reduce inequalities over the next five and ten years.

In the *LGBT Action Plan* the Government committed to a range of action on improving the health of LGBT people and the provision of service.⁴³ Ensuring the specific needs of lesbians and bisexual women is a core part of this. The Government has awarded £1 million of funding to 5 organisations to trial new, innovative, ways to tackle LGBT health inequalities. We have appointed Dr Michael Brady, of Kings College Hospital, as the first National LGBT Health Adviser. Dr Brady's role is to ensure that the needs

⁴¹ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Mental-Health-Taskforce-FYFV-final.pdf>

⁴² <https://gweddill.gov.wales/topics/health/nhswales/mental-health-services/policy/strategy/?lang=en>

⁴³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lgbt-action-plan-2018-improving-the-lives-of-lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-people>

of LGBT people are considered throughout the NHS and public health systems, and, to ensure the delivery of the health commitments in the *LGBT Action Plan*.

Under the Scottish specific duties (commenced May 2012), Scottish Ministers, health boards and other relevant authorities must publish equality outcomes and report on progress, set out how they are integrating equality into their functions, undertake equality impact assessments and gather and use employee data. These activities must include all of the protected characteristics, including sex and pregnancy and maternity.

The *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015* provides a legislative framework which supports the reduction of health inequalities.⁴⁴ The Act sets a series of national well-being goals which public bodies need to align their work to, including goals of ‘a healthier Wales’ and ‘a more equal Wales.’

Access to healthcare for marginalised groups

The Government has set out a range of commitments in the *Rough Sleeping Strategy*, published in August 2018, to help reduce the numbers of people sleeping rough.⁴⁵ We want to see good mental health and addiction services brought to rough sleepers and we want local services to support people to come off the streets. To support this aim we are running an audit of current services, planning pilots to test what works, and the NHS has committed up to £30 million on meeting the needs of rough sleepers who will have better access to specialist homelessness NHS mental health support, integrated with existing outreach services.

The NHS is aware that some people, such as people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and vulnerable migrants, have had difficulty registering with a general practitioner because they are being asked to provide documentation they do not have. NHS England has published policy and guidance for commissioners which includes dedicated information on patient registrations which also acts as a reminder for practices, about which documents they do and do not require in order to register patients.⁴⁶ NHS England has been working alongside voluntary sector organisations to engage with specific community groups, to redesign and update the patient registration information leaflet and intends to replace it with a service user access card.

Championing sexual and reproductive health and rights globally

The Department for International Development is a world leader in promoting and supporting sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Since 2015, UK Aid has provided 16.9 million women and girls with modern methods of family planning.⁴⁷ At

⁴⁴ <https://futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>

⁴⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-rough-sleeping-strategy>

⁴⁶ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/primary-medical-care-policy-and-guidance-manual-pgm/>

⁴⁷ DFID Results Estimates: 2017 to 2018: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dfid-results-2017-to-2018>

the UK's 2017 Family Planning Summit, the UK committed to spend an average of £225 million per year on family planning between the financial years 2017-18 to 2021-22. We estimate that, every year, this investment will support nearly 20 million total users of contraception, prevent 6 million unintended pregnancies, and so prevent more than 3 million abortions, many of which would be unsafe. It will save the lives of over 6,000 women every year.⁴⁸ The UK recently added a new £200 million comprehensive SRHR programme ('Women's Integrated Sexual Health'), which will help 3 million extra girls, women and men gain access to life-saving voluntary contraception in some of the world's poorest countries.⁴⁹

4. Improving educational outcomes for women and girls

Science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM)

The UK recognises that, in order to improve gender representation in STEM industries, we need to encourage more girls to study STEM subjects at school, college and university. There has been a **26%** increase in girls' entries to STEM A levels in England since 2010 (from 86,700 in 2010 to 109,558 in 2018), and between 2010 and 2018, the number of women accepted onto full-time STEM undergraduate courses increased by **28%** in the UK.

The UK is investing in a number of programmes that aim to increase girls' engagement in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects, to ensure girls and boys can succeed on an equal basis. This includes the Stimulating Physics Network which is rolling out tried and tested approaches to improve engagement by girls in physics,⁵⁰ the Advanced Mathematics Support Programme,⁵¹ and a new £84m programme to drive up participation in computer science which will include some focus on improving participation by girls.

Making girls aware of the range of careers to which studying STEM subjects can lead is also important and the Government funds initiatives such as the STEM Ambassadors Programme that brings STEM business and industry representatives into schools.⁵² 44% of these ambassadors are women. Through the Carers and Enterprise Company, we are investing £2 million in developing and extending career-related learning in primary schools to help children keep their horizons broad and doors open.

We are also taking steps to engage with the sector through apprenticeships and using the employer Apprenticeships Diversity Champions Network, now employing 70

⁴⁸ Family Planning Summit Summary of UK Commitments:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/644641/Family-Planning-Summary1.pdf

⁴⁹ <https://options.co.uk/work/women%E2%80%99s-integrated-sexual-health-programme>

⁵⁰ <http://www.stimulatingphysics.org/>

⁵¹ <https://amsp.org.uk/>

⁵² <https://www.stem.org.uk/stem-ambassadors>

members, to champion gender representation in industries where improvement is needed.⁵³

The Welsh Government is actively supporting more girls to take up and study STEM subjects and progress and pursue careers in these areas. This includes addressing recommendations in the 2016 *Talented Women for a Successful Wales* report which outlined a range of actions to improve gender balance in STEM education.⁵⁴

Relationships and sex education in England

All young people deserve to be happy healthy and safe. In the UK, we want to equip our young people for adult life, enabling them to make a positive contribution to society. In England, The Department for Education is making Relationships Education compulsory in all primary schools, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) compulsory in all secondary schools and Health Education compulsory in all primary and secondary state-funded schools. Following a call for evidence and a 16-week consultation, an updated draft of the guidance was published in February 2019.⁵⁵ These new subjects will focus on promoting the positive links between physical and mental health. New content includes age-appropriate teaching about menstrual wellbeing at primary and secondary and female genital mutilation at secondary.

Relationships and sex education in the devolved administrations

In Northern Ireland, the Department of Education requires each school to have in place its own written policy on how it will address the delivery of RSE.

Scottish Government's ten year *Mental Health Strategy (2017-27)* commits to undertaking a national review of personal and social education and the role of guidance in local authority schools and also a review of services for counselling and their evidence base for children and young people.⁵⁶ Scottish Government published updated guidance for teachers on relationships, sexual health and parenthood (RSHP) education in 2014.

In 2017, the Sex and Relationships Education Expert Panel provided the Welsh Government with recommendations on how sex and relationships education can contribute to improving gender equality and reducing gender-based violence, including that:

- Sex education should be re-named Sexuality and Relationships;
- It should be a statutory part of the new curriculum for all schools; and
- Sexuality and Relationships Education should be made statutory to pupils aged 3-16 in the new curriculum (Sex Education is currently only statutory at secondary settings).

⁵³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/apprenticeship-diversity-champions-network>

⁵⁴ <https://gov.wales/welsh-government-accepts-all-talented-women-successful-wales-report-recommendations-and-marks>

⁵⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/relationships-and-sex-education-and-health-education#history>

⁵⁶ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/mental-health-strategy-2017-2027/>

In May 2018, the Minister for Education announced that she would be implementing the recommendations.

Teenage pregnancy

In England, teenage pregnancies are at the lowest rates ever recorded - the under-18 conception rate was 18.9 conceptions per thousand women aged 15 to 17 years in 2016, a 10% decrease from 21.0 in 2015.

Tackling period poverty

In 2019, the Minister for Women and Equalities announced a new taskforce to bring together Government, business and the third sector to develop a comprehensive and sustainable response to period poverty in the UK. The taskforce will be chaired by Plan International, Procter & Gamble and the Minister for Women and Equalities. It will also include members from grass-root organisations, businesses, public bodies and consult with academics, social enterprises, retailers and manufacturers. The taskforce will: tackle data gaps, improving evidence and understanding on period issues in the UK; tackle the stigma, shame and taboo around menstruation through better awareness and education; and, improve access to period products for all women and girls including vulnerable groups. Up to £250,000 of seed funding from the Government Equalities Office has been allocated to support the work of the new taskforce in generating and testing new ideas and schemes.

This builds on the proud record of the work the UK is already doing to tackle period poverty globally and the range of initiatives that different organisations are leading domestically. The Department for Education is leading a new scheme to provide access to free period products in schools and 16-19 education institutions in England. NHS England announced in March 2019 that it will offer period products to every hospital patient who needs them (including long-term in-patients). The Tampon Tax Fund was established in 2015 with the aim to invest money generated from VAT on period products in good causes that tackle the serious issues that women of all ages face.⁵⁷ Since 2015, the Government has awarded £62 million from the fund.

The Welsh Government has committed over £1million up to 2020 in grant funding to local authorities to help tackle period poverty and ensure period dignity in their communities. Part of this funding is being used to make improvements to school toilet facilities to help young people manage their periods with confidence. Some local authorities are working with their local food banks to deliver essential products to people who need them, and some are working with their schools to ensure young people do not miss out on their education because of period poverty.

⁵⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tampon-tax-fund-application-form-2019-2020-funding-round>

Preventing bullying

The Government has recently awarded £1 million of funding to six organisations to extend an anti-homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying (HBT) programme until March 2020. The programme will foster tolerance and understanding of LGBT issues in the classroom. Organisations will deliver staff training on tackling HBT bullying, creating inclusive school policies and curricula. The previous programme finished in March 2019, and operated in over 1200 schools.

In April 2018, the Government published an Online Harms White Paper, which aims to gather views on plans for regulation and tackling online harms. This comprises both legislative and non-legislative measures, and will make companies more responsible for the safety of users online.

In 2017, the Scottish Government published *Respect for All: National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People* to help everyone involved in the lives of children and young people to identify and address bullying, including racist, homophobic and abusive behaviour, whether it happens online or offline.⁵⁸ Scottish Government will also continue to fund *respectme*, a national anti-bullying service, to build confidence and capacity to address all types of bullying effectively.⁵⁹

The Welsh Government is currently updating its anti-bullying guidance *Respecting Others* based on the findings of extensive engagement with key stakeholders, including schools, children, local government and the police. These findings will inform the revised guidance, ensuring it is user-friendly and provides practical support to schools. The revised guidance sets out the importance of taking a whole school, proactive approach to tackle and prevent bullying.

Tackling sexual harassment in schools

In England, the statutory safeguarding guidance *Keeping Children Safe in Education* sets out what all school staff should know and do to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.⁶⁰ All school staff should receive child protection and safeguarding training at induction and the training should be updated regularly. Following a public consultation, the guidance was revised in 2018 to include a new Part 5, covering child on child sexual violence and harassment.⁶¹ This provides guidance on the immediate and ongoing response to a report of abuse, with a particular focus on safeguarding and supporting the victim.

The Department for Education have also published *Respectful School Communities*, a self-review and signposting tool to support schools to develop a whole-school

⁵⁸ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/respect-national-approach-anti-bullying-scotlands-children-young-people/>

⁵⁹ <http://respectme.org.uk/>

⁶⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

⁶¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

approach which promotes respect and discipline. This can combat bullying, harassment and prejudice of any kind, including sexual violence and harassment.⁶²

Tackling sexual harassment in universities

As autonomous institutions, higher education providers have a responsibility to provide a safe and inclusive environment for all students. The Government asked Universities UK to set up a 'Changing the Culture' taskforce in 2015 to tackle this issue and have been working with them to implement the recommendations. The Office for Students is supporting 119 projects, worth over £4 million, looking at harassment and hate crime.

⁶² <https://educateagainsthate.com/resources/respectful-school-communities-self-review-signposting-tool/>

Chapter 2.3: Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes

1. Tackling violence against women and girls

The UK recognises that gender-based violence remains a pervasive and dangerous feature of our societies. Efforts to accelerate its elimination are high on the national agenda. £100 million has been pledged up to 2020 to combat gender-based violence and, in 2019, the Government refreshed its *Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy* (VAWG).⁶³ The strategy sets new ambitions for national and local government, as well as wider society, in tackling VAWG.

Domestic abuse

The 2017/18 Crime Survey of England and Wales estimated that **6.1%** of adults aged 16 to 59 experienced domestic abuse in the last year. The police recorded **1.2 million** domestic abuse incidents and crimes that had been reported to them in 2017/18. Since 2010, there has been a 20% increase in domestic abuse prosecutions and a 28% increase in domestic abuse convictions.

The newly introduced landmark *Domestic Abuse Bill*, aims to prevent all forms of domestic abuse and will help to ensure that victims have the confidence to come forward and report their experience, safe in the knowledge that the justice system and other agencies will do everything they can to protect and support them, and pursue their abuser.⁶⁴ The new legislation will:

- Introduce a statutory Government definition of domestic abuse, which will highlight economic abuse as a distinct type of abuse;
- Establish a Domestic Abuse Commissioner to provide public leadership on domestic abuse issues;
- Introduce new Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders to further protect victims and place restrictions on the actions of offenders;
- Prohibit the cross-examination of victims by their abusers in the family courts;
- Provide automatic eligibility for special measures to provide more support to victims in court;
- Place the guidance supporting the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare's Law) on a statutory footing (the scheme enables the public to ask for, and police to disclose, information about previous violent offending by a current or former partner where this may help protect them from further violent offending) and;

⁶³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-to-end-violence-against-women-and-girls-2016-to-2020>

⁶⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-publishes-landmark-domestic-abuse-bill>

- Support ratification of the Istanbul Convention by extending the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the criminal courts in England and Wales to further violent and sexual offences.

In 2015, the Government also introduced a new offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship.

Legislation is underpinned by a comprehensive package of non-legislative action. For example, funding is provided for the 'National Respect Helpline' to support male and female perpetrators to address their abusive behaviour.⁶⁵ The UK's 'Disrespect NoBody Campaign' helps young people to understand what a healthy relationship is and to re-think their views of controlling behaviour, violence, abuse, sexual abuse and what consent means in a relationship.⁶⁶ It aims to prevent the onset of domestic abuse in adults by challenging attitudes and behaviours amongst young people that abuse in relationships is acceptable.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government are providing £22 million of funding which will support 63 projects covering 254 local areas across England. It will provide support to over 25,000 victims and their families, and more than 2,200 additional bed spaces in accommodation-based services, including refuges.

Sexual abuse

Whilst the reporting of sexual violence has risen in recent years, there have been reductions in police referrals, prosecutions and convictions for rape cases. In particular, in 2017/18, the volume of rape referrals from the police fell by 9.1% to 6,012, prosecutions fell by 13% to 4,517 and the volume of rape convictions fell by 11.9% to 2,635. In response, the Government has committed to an 'end to end' review of the criminal justice system in relation to rape and serious sexual offences, which will consider data from the point of police report to final outcome in court.

Supporting vulnerable groups

The Government's VAWG strategy identifies that some sectors of society can experience multiple forms of discrimination and disadvantage or additional barriers to accessing support. This includes women and girls from BAME communities, disabled and LGBT victims. The *Violence Against Women And Girls National Statement of Expectations* makes clear to local partnerships what good commissioning and service provision looks like.⁶⁷ It also sets out that Commissioners should have access to a

⁶⁵ <http://respect.uk.net/>

⁶⁶ <https://www.disrespectnobody.co.uk/>

⁶⁷ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/574665/VAWG_National_Statement_of_Expectations_-_FINAL.PDF

broad diversity of provision, considering how services will be accessible to BAME, disabled, LGBT and older victims and survivors.

Ratifying the Istanbul Convention

The Coalition Government signed the Istanbul Convention on 8 June 2012 signalling its strong commitment to tackling VAWG. The current Government remains committed to ratifying the Convention. In October 2018, the Government published, and laid in Parliament, the second progress report on the Istanbul Convention, in line with the requirements of *the Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Ratification of Convention) Act 2017*.⁶⁸ The report sets out the steps which the Government and the UK's Devolved Administrations are taking to tackle VAWG, and the remaining steps required as we progress toward ratification. The newly introduced *Domestic Abuse Bill* brings the UK closer to ratifying the Convention.

Action in the devolved administrations

In Wales, the *Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015* seeks to bring about an improved public sector response to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. The Welsh Government's five-year *National Strategy on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence* was published in November 2016.⁶⁹ The six objectives in the strategy were designed to facilitate compliance with the Istanbul Convention. A delivery framework setting out how the Welsh Government will meet the objectives of the strategy was published in July 2018. Unlike Scotland and Northern Ireland, crime and policing is not devolved in Wales, meaning that the provisions of the *Domestic Abuse Bill* will apply to Wales.

Scotland has a strong policy and legislative focus on combatting violence against women and girls. In 2014 (updated in 2016) the Scottish Government published *Equally Safe*, Scotland's national strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against girls.⁷⁰ In November 2017, to ensure that the overarching ambitions of the strategy were rooted in practical delivery that would make a real difference to the lives of women and girls, the Scottish Government published its *Equally Safe Delivery Plan* which promotes a collaborative approach that recognises the different roles and experience of organisations working in the sector. Significant progress has been made with a number of the actions within the plan and the Scottish Government published its first progress report in November 2018.⁷¹

One particular *Equally Safe Delivery Plan* ambition is to strengthen governance arrangements for forensic medical services for victims of rape and sexual assault, to

⁶⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ratification-of-the-council-of-europe-convention-on-combating-violence-against-women-and-domestic-violence-progress-report>

⁶⁹ <https://gov.wales/national-strategy-violence-against-women-domestic-abuse-and-sexual-violence-framework-delivery-2016>

⁷⁰ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/equally-safe/>

⁷¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/equally-safe-year-one-update-report/>

ensure a trauma informed, consistent health care response to those requiring a forensic examination as part of an overall health focussed assessment. The Chief Medical Officer for Scotland chairs a taskforce set up to provide national leadership for the improvement of these services⁷² and the Scottish Government recently consulted on legislation to underpin service improvement.⁷³ The taskforce's priority is to ensure that all examinations take place in person centred, trauma informed, healthcare surroundings and to improve victim choice about the sex of the healthcare professional involved in their examination.

The Scottish Government is also investing significant levels of funding to strengthen service provision and has brought forward legislation to help tackle violence against women and girls. In February 2018, the Scottish Government passed the *Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill* and the *Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018* came into force in April 2019. The Act creates a specific offence of domestic abuse that covers not just physical abuse but also other forms of psychological abuse and coercive and controlling behaviour. The legislation also recognises the fact that children are harmed by domestic abuse by providing for a statutory aggravation in relation to children and strengthens protections for victims as Courts are required to have a particular focus on the safety of the victim when sentencing.

In March 2016, the Northern Ireland Executive published a seven-year strategy *Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland*.⁷⁴ The Department of Justice in Northern Ireland is currently delivering a range of initiatives under this strategy:

- A Bill has been prepared to provide for a new Domestic Abuse Offence, dealing with controlling and coercive behaviour and a separate statutory aggravation. This requires a functioning Northern Ireland Assembly to take forward. Discussions have begun as to whether there is scope for a new Northern Ireland domestic abuse offence to be included in the draft Westminster Domestic Abuse Bill. (The framework for this offence had been developed by the Department of Justice.) This could also provide an opportunity to ratify the Istanbul Convention, from a Northern Ireland perspective.
- **Domestic Violence Behavioural Change Programmes** – two pilot programmes currently operate in Northern Ireland. A pilot domestic violence court supervised perpetrator programme has been operating at Londonderry magistrates' court since early 2018. Non-court behavioural change programmes are also being piloted for individuals showing concerning behaviour in a domestic context, but who have not yet reached the criminal justice system.

⁷² <https://www.gov.scot/groups/taskforce-to-improve-services-for-rape-and-sexual-assault-victims/>

⁷³ <https://www.gov.scot/policies/violence-against-women-and-girls/forensic-medical-services-for-rape-victims/>

⁷⁴ <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/stopping-domestic-and-sexual-violence-and-abuse-northern-ireland-strategy>

- **A Domestic Violence and Abuse Disclosure Scheme** – This scheme was introduced in March 2018 and enables a person to make enquiries about the abusive past of a partner. In its first year around 330 applications have been made to the scheme, with 40 disclosures made. Approximately 75% of these have involved direct applications from victims/potential victims or third parties who know them, with the remaining 25% instigated by the police.
- **Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs)** – The Department of Justice are developing a DHR model, to seek opportunities for learning from those tragic circumstances where an individual has died as a result of domestic violence and abuse. A summary and response paper has been published and we will shortly be recruiting chairs to take these reviews forward. The Department of Justice would hope to then further refine the model, using a historic case, ahead of introduction of this measure.
- **Advocacy service** – proposals for a streamlined advocacy service, to support victims of domestic and sexual violence and abuse, have been developed. Detailed consultation is underway with relevant statutory and voluntary and community sector partners, to establish the scope of the service across Northern Ireland. It is intended that the service will be in place during 2020.
- **Special Listing Arrangements** – Special listing arrangements are in place at Londonderry magistrates' court. The Specialist Domestic Violence Court represents a partnership approach to domestic violence by the police, prosecutors, court staff, probation service and specialist support services for victims. Further consideration of roll-out will be carried out in 2019/20.

2. Eliminating harmful practices

Female genital mutilation (FGM)

FGM has been illegal in the UK since 1985. In 2015, the UK introduced a number of provisions to strengthen the law on FGM. This made it a criminal offence for UK nationals to perform or arrange FGM overseas; increased the maximum prison sentence from 5 to 14 years; and allowed FGM victims to obtain lifelong anonymity. These changes alongside FGM Protection Orders and a new duty for professionals to notify the police if they discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl who is under 18, helped the UK secure its first conviction for FGM in February 2019.

To help raise awareness of FGM, the UK launched a communications campaign in October 2018.⁷⁵ The campaign seeks to prevent FGM by changing attitudes among

⁷⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fgm-campaign-materials>

affected communities through raising awareness of the negative long-term health consequences of FGM. The campaign also raises awareness that FGM is a crime and encourages communities to report via the NSPCC's FGM helpline.⁷⁶

In Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Executive has issued *Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines on Female Genital Mutilation* which provide advice and support to frontline professionals who are responsible for safeguarding children and protecting adults from the abuses associated with FGM.⁷⁷ As with England and Wales, provision to strengthen the law on FGM was made via the *Serious Crime Act 2015*, including provision for FGM Protection Orders. However, the new duty for professionals to notify the police if they discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl who is under 18, was not extended but remains a matter which is monitored in this jurisdiction.

In Scotland, *the National Action Plan to Prevent and Eradicate Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)* is a partnership approach between Police Scotland, NHS, third sector, local authorities and the Scottish Government to prioritise the protection from and prevention of FGM; provide services and appropriate support for those who have experienced FGM and hold perpetrators to account.⁷⁸ The Scottish Government has also committed to strengthen the existing legislative framework for the protection of women and girls from FGM. In May 2019, the Scottish Government introduced the *Female Genital Mutilation (Protection and Guidance) Bill* to parliament. The Bill includes provision for FGM Protection Order and Statutory Guidance.

Wales' VAWG strategy includes a commitment to challenge cultural attitudes which can underpin these traditional harmful practices. Welsh Government are doing this with national campaigns, working with and supporting specialist BME violence against women services.

Forced marriage

The UK has introduced Forced Marriage Protection Orders and granted anonymity for victims. A range of materials to support professionals in understanding these issues have also been developed, including multi-agency guidance and free e-learning for frontline professionals.⁷⁹ The joint Home Office/Foreign Office Forced Marriage Unit are carrying out ongoing programmes of outreach to support professionals and communities.

The UK hosted an international conference in November 2018 in London on tackling forced marriage and FGM, in partnership with the Council of Europe. The conference demonstrated the UK's global leadership in our work to tackle these crimes and brought together survivors, policy officials and international experts from countries to

⁷⁶ <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/female-genital-mutilation-fgm/>

⁷⁷ <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/multi-agency-practice-guidelines-female-genital-mutilation-0>

⁷⁸ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-national-action-plan-prevent-eradicate-fgm/>

⁷⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage>

share best practice on effective interventions taking place and generated further commitments from international governments.

3. Gendered online abuse and stereotyping

Online abuse

The Government wants to eliminate bullying, intimidation, violence and harassment both on and offline. Women and girls can suffer extreme online abuse, from unacceptable comments about their appearance and views, to intimate pictures shared without their consent, and even rape or death threats. Results from the 2018 Girl Guiding survey found that 47% of girls aged 11-21 had unkind things said about them on social media and 25% of girls aged 11-21 had threatening things said about them on social media.

The Government published its response to its *Internet Safety Strategy consultation* in May 2018, and announced plans to introduce:

- a social media code of practice, which will provide guidance to social media companies on appropriate reporting mechanisms and moderation processes to tackle harmful content; and
- transparency reporting, which will provide data on the amount of harmful content being reported to platforms in the UK, and how these reports are dealt with, including what mechanisms are in place to protect users.⁸⁰

In April 2019, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport published an Online Harms White Paper, which aims to gather views on plans for regulation and tackling online harms.⁸¹ This comprises both legislative and non-legislative measures, and will make companies more responsible for the safety of users online. The White Paper proposes establishing in law a new duty of care towards users, which will be overseen by an independent regulator. Companies will be held to account for tackling a comprehensive set of online harms, ranging from illegal activity and content to behaviours which are harmful but not necessarily illegal.

The Government has recently funded the Law Commission to review current legislation on offensive online communications to ensure that laws are keeping pace with technology. The Law Commission published their initial report on 1 November 2018. It recommends Government consider consolidating communications law so that it is clearer and more proportionate, including a review of co-ordinated harassment by groups online, and the misuse of private images and information. We are reviewing these recommendations.

⁸⁰https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/708873/Government_Response_to_the_Internet_Safety_Strategy_Green_Paper_-_Final.pdf

⁸¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/online-harms-white-paper>

Revenge pornography

Since 2015, there has been legislation in place specifically addressing revenge pornography. Courts can impose custodial sentences on offenders for up to two years. The Government funds the 'Revenge Porn Helpline', which has received over 15,000 calls since it opened in February 2015.⁸²

Scottish Government introduced the *Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Act 2016*. It created a specific offence of sharing private intimate images without consent with a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment, which came into force in July 2017.

Upskirting

Following a detailed review of the law, the Government has recently taken a Bill through Parliament to make 'upskirting' a specific criminal offence. The Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019 applies to England and Wales and is framed in clear and focused terms to ensure that it addresses the gap in the law and the concerns of those that have campaigned for this important change.

The bespoke 'upskirting' offence in Scotland has led to 14 convictions between April 2012 and March 2017. In Northern Ireland, the Department of Justice in Northern Ireland has recently consulted on a proposal to make 'upskirting' a criminal offence.

Harmful gender stereotypes

Rigid stereotypes can hold back both women and men at work and in society. At their worst these stereotypes can create an environment that enables violence against women and girls.

The Government Equalities Office are looking at what more can be done to tackle harmful gender stereotypes, including:

- Commissioning research on engaging men and boys on gender expectations, attitudes and behaviours;
- Researching the causes and impact of body dissatisfaction across the life course and potential government interventions to tackle this; and
- Improving our evidence base on the potential relationship between online pornography and attitudes to women and girls.

⁸² <https://revengepornhelpline.org.uk/>

Gender stereotypes in the media

The media exerts a significant influence over the way that we view ourselves and society. By repeatedly portraying men and women in a certain way, the media can perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes. In July 2017, the Advertising Standards Authority released a report, *Depictions, Perceptions and Harm*, which showed that gender stereotypes in adverts can cause harm.⁸³ The regulator has now issued a new rule which states that adverts must not include gender stereotypes that are likely to cause harm, or serious or widespread offence. This came in to force on 14 June 2019.

The Government will deliver a programme of work later this year to tackle stereotyping in the media and advertising, including the creation of a barometer to measure the prevalence of harmful gender stereotypes in UK advertising.

4. Tackling VAWG globally

'What Works to Prevent VAWG' programme

The UK's flagship 'What Works to Prevent VAWG' research programme works in 15 countries in Africa and Asia to understand and address the underlying causes of violence, to stop it from occurring and find interventions that can be taken to scale. The programme has shown that interventions can halve the violence faced by women and girls. In addition to generating evidence, the UK is contributing £21 million to organisations working to prevent VAWG and improve access to services for women and girls who experience violence. Since 2016, the UK has supported 67 organisations in 46 countries.⁸⁴

Eliminating harmful practices

In November 2018, the UK announced a £50 million package to support an African-led movement to put an end to FGM by 2030 – the biggest single investment by an international donor. The UK continues to use political leadership to make the case for evidence and human rights, challenging harmful social norms, and “breaking the silence” on neglected issues, such as safe abortion, period poverty, FGM and comprehensive sexuality education.

The UK is also at the forefront of international efforts to end Child, Early and Forced Marriage. Through UK aid, nine countries have been supported to develop National Action Plans to end child marriage and over 1.12 million girls have been reached since 2015 with schooling initiatives, skills training and girls' clubs to prevent and respond to child marriage⁸⁵. Since the Forced Marriage Unit was established in 2005, it has

⁸³ <https://www.asa.org.uk/resource/depictions-perceptions-and-harm.html>

⁸⁴ UN Trust Fund to End VAWG Annual Report 2018 <https://undocs.org/en/E/CN.6/2018/9>

⁸⁵ 2017 Annual Report: UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage

assisted in over 10,000 cases involving a victim or potential victim, in over 110 countries.⁸⁶ It has additionally delivered a targeted outreach programme, both in the UK and overseas, to raise awareness of forced marriage and where to go for help.

⁸⁶ This data is an amalgamation of published annual reports: See the latest one: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/730155/2017_FMU_statistics_FINAL.pdf

Chapter 2.4: Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions

1. Women's participation in public life and decision making

Diversity in political representation

The UK currently has the most diverse Parliament in its history with its second female Prime Minister and the highest number of women MPs ever (210). Women represent 32% of MPs elected in 2017, an increase from 29% in 2015.⁸⁷ At the 2017 election 52 MPs (8%) elected were BAME, up from 41 MPs in 2015; of those, 26 are women. As of 2018, 34% of local councillors and 18% of council leaders are women.

Parliament needs to be representative of the nation it serves. Whilst it is for political parties to ensure that they select a diverse range of candidates, the Government has funded projects that aim to increase women's participation in politics. These include training in political leadership in Bradford and Birmingham, and skills sessions in public speaking and media relations across the East Midlands, West Midlands and London.

Scottish Government has a gender balanced Cabinet, however only 35% of MSPs in the Scottish Parliament and 29% of councillors in local government are women. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) has launched a story-sharing campaign and a safe online space which aims to provide peer support both for women considering entering local government and those already active within it. CoSLA has also identified actions to improve women's representation in local government.

In 2018, Scottish Government provided funding to the women's organisation *Engender* to collaborate with other equality organisations and the Women 50:50 campaign to produce an evidence based online tool to allow those involved in political parties nationally and at local level to audit their membership and practices and to create a bespoke action plan to improve accessibility and diversity.⁸⁸

The Welsh Government's Diversity in Democracy programme aimed to increase the number of under-represented groups to stand for election to local government. The programme ran from October 2014 to March 2017 and offered a mentoring scheme for people from under-represented groups with the intention of preparing them to stand as candidates in the local government elections in May 2017. Of the 65 who participated in the programme 37 were female. The Welsh Government commissioned an evaluation of the programme which will help inform future initiatives around

⁸⁷ House of Commons Library (2019), Women in Parliament and Government: <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN01250/SN01250.pdf>

⁸⁸ <https://www.engender.org.uk/news/blog/engender-joins-equalities-organisations-to-launch-tool-to-improve-political-representation/>

improving the representation of females and under-represented groups in local government.

Commemorating the suffrage centenary in England

In 2018, the Government allocated £5 million to mark the centenary of voting rights for some women. The fund supported projects that raised awareness of this crucial milestone and encouraged more women to participate in democracy. These projects involved people who are under-represented in civic life, particularly women, young people, BAME people, people living with disabilities, LGBT people and people from lower socio-economic groups and included:

- £1.5 million 'Women's Votes Centenary Grant Scheme' for community projects;
- A suite of education projects to engage young people with democracy, including a schools resource and training for young Democracy Ambassadors;
- £1.2 million to seven towns and cities to celebrate their suffrage history;
- An *#AskHerToStand* event for 350 women giving them invaluable help to get on that crucial first rung of a political career; and
- A statue of suffragist Millicent Fawcett in the Parliament Square – the first statue of a woman to be installed in this iconic location.

The Government Equalities Office hosted a conference to celebrate the centenary of women being able to stand for Parliament on 21 November 2018. The Government also provided financial assistance to allow each MP in the House of Commons to invite a woman constituent to parliament for the day.

In November 2018, the UK Parliament and Government jointly hosted a Women MPs of the World Conference. This was a historic event bringing together 100 women parliamentarians from 86 countries to inspire the next generation and show how elected women globally shape the political agenda.

Commemorating the centenary in the devolved administrations

The Welsh Government committed nearly £300,000 to mark the centenary of women's suffrage with a range of activities focused around the themes of celebrate, educate and participate.

In Northern Ireland, the Department for Communities led the programme of events to mark the centenary. The audiences participated in educational and participative activities designed to stimulate and maintain interest in democracy and public life and also to inform them of local history and of the events that shaped our current elections and voting systems. This programme included:

- **Elected Women: Platform for the Future** – from across the political spectrum, elected female representatives gathered to mark the Centenary and celebrate the landmarks of the past 100 years by elected women and discuss a number of potential changes to encourage and foster participation by women in the future;
- **Putting Gender at the Heart of Planning** – recognising that one of the most far-reaching changes since the 1918 Act had been the opportunity for women to be heard in society and yet building gender into the foundations of any services remains a challenge;
- **Voting for All** – Year 10 students on a study visit to the Northern Ireland Assembly got the opportunity to experience life in 1918 and to consider life against the backdrop of the Great War across the world and the changes to the voting franchise at home;
- **Successful Women** – a number of leading women within Northern Ireland gathered on International Women’s Day and took to the spotlight to explore themes around public and political representation; and
- **She Believed She Could, So She Did** – an empowerment programme aimed at young women aged 18-25 took a fresh look at supporting women, developing confidence and building leadership. The two-day course, delivered in both Derry-Londonderry and Belfast, culminated in the creation of videos which were released as part of the UK-wide initiative of Democracy Week.

EnAble Fund for Elected Office

The Government is undertaking a programme of work with disability organisations to help political parties to better support disabled candidates. The £250,000 interim EnAble Fund for Elected Office opened in December 2018, supporting around 40 candidates at the local elections in May 2019.

The fund helps to cover disability-related expenses for example, British Sign Language Interpreters, Assistive Technology, or taxi fares where other modes of transport are not appropriate.

Scottish Government has an Access to Elected Office Fund Scotland that supported candidates for local elections in May 2017, where 15 disabled candidates were successful of which 7 were women. This fund will remain in place until the Scottish Parliament elections in 2021.

Women in senior leadership roles

There is a higher percentage of women on boards of FTSE companies than ever before, with women holding 26.7% of seats in the FTSE 350 (up from 21.9% in 2015) and 30.2% in the FTSE 100 (up from 26.1% in 2015).⁸⁹ The Government is supporting

⁸⁹ Hampton-Alexander Review 2017: https://ftsewomenleaders.com/wpcontent/uploads/2017/11/Hampton_Alexander_Review_Report_FINAL_8.11.17.pdf

the Hampton-Alexander Review which is aiming to achieve 33% women on boards, and 33% women in Executive Committees and positions reporting directly to the Executive Committee in the FTSE 350 by 2020.

The percentage of managerial positions held by women has been gradually increasing over time, rising from 37.3% in 2015 to 37.9% in 2017.⁹⁰

Women also now hold more senior positions than before in the Senior Civil Service (42.7% in March 2018, an increase from 38.9% in 2015),⁹¹ and the first female Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police was appointed in 2017.

Women's participation in the media

The Government is supportive of collaborative measures in the media industry, working in partnership with media industries to drive up on- and off-screen diversity. For example, we are supporting Project Diamond which is an ambitious industry-wide diversity monitoring system created by broadcasters BBC, Channel 4, ITV and Sky, and supported by Pact and Creative Skillset, through the Creative Diversity Network. People working on or off screen on all UK-originated productions are asked to enter information on their gender, gender identity, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability into the Diamond monitoring system.

Women's participation in ICT

Published in 2017, the *UK Digital Strategy* sets out the UK's plans to develop a world-leading digital economy that works for everyone.⁹² Priorities include ensuring digital inclusion, with libraries becoming the 'go-to' provider of digital access, training and support for local communities; developing specialist digital skills for a digital economy; and enabling a more diverse digital workforce.

The Government also supports the Tech Talent Charter (TTC) which has 300 signatories, from international giants, such as Microsoft, Cisco, BT, BAE and Vodafone right through to start-ups, SMEs and charities.⁹³ TTC gives organisations tangible actions and principles they can adopt to change their hiring and retention practices to become more gender-diverse and commits signatories to measuring the diversity profile of their UK employees and to share this data for (anonymous) collective publication in an annual report.

The Government has provided £20 million to help fund the Institute of Coding consortium.⁹⁴ One of the five central core themes the consortium will be looking at is

⁹⁰ ONS Annual Population Survey
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/adhocs/009741proportionofwomeninmanagerialpositionsuk2012to2017>

⁹¹ Civil Service Statistics, UK: 2018

⁹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-digital-strategy/2-digital-skills-and-inclusion-giving-everyone-access-to-the-digital-skills-they-need#digital-capability-for-all>

⁹³ <https://www.techtalentcharter.co.uk/>

⁹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-announces-20-million-institute-of-coding>

‘Widening participation’ to boost equality and diversity in technology-related education and careers.

The ‘CyberFirst Girls Competition’ was organised by the National Cyber Security Centre, a part of Government Communication Headquarters, to raise more awareness of careers in cyber security amongst girls, because only 10% of the global cyber security workforce is female.⁹⁵

2. Accountability and gender responsive institutions

National strategy for gender equality

The UK Government does not have a single national strategy or action plan for gender equality, as we believe that targeted action, tailored for specific levers and issues, is most effective.

For example, we published the *LGBT Action Plan* in 2018 and the *Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy* was refreshed in 2019. Complementing this work is the new *Gender equality at every stage: a roadmap for change*, which sets out the Government’s plans to address the persistent gendered barriers to economic empowerment that people face at every stage of their lives.

The Government Equalities Office, which leads work on policy relating to women, sexual orientation and transgender equality, and is responsible for the wider equality framework across government, published its *2019-2020 Strategic Plan* in summer 2019.⁹⁶ As part of its objective to put equalities at the heart of Government, the Government Equalities Office has been working with other departments to ensure that high-quality equality objectives are included in every Single Departmental Plan.⁹⁷

On International Women’s Day 2018, the Welsh Government announced a rapid review of its gender equality policies. The approach to the Gender Review involves working across different equality strands, including race, disability and age, aiming to ensure that no one is left behind. The aim of the first phase was to assess what the Welsh Government already does well, identify what it can improve, and look at examples from Governments around the world to learn from their models and practices. Phase 2 of the review is underway and is due to complete in 2019 with the establishment of a roadmap to advance gender equality in Wales in the immediate, medium and long term, across all parts of Welsh Government.

⁹⁵ <https://www.cyberfirst.ncsc.gov.uk/girlscompetition/>

⁹⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-equalities-office-strategic-plan-20192020>

⁹⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/a-country-that-works-for-everyone-the-governments-plan#single-departmental-plans>

Implementing CEDAW

The Government is committed to fulfilling its obligations under the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The UK was examined by the UN CEDAW Committee on 26 February 2019 in Geneva and the Committee issued their concluding observations and recommendations on 11 March 2019, including a perennial recommendation on decriminalising abortion in Northern Ireland.

On 9 July 2019, as an amendment to the *Northern Ireland (Executive Formation) Bill*, the House of Commons voted that, unless the Northern Ireland Executive is restored before 21 October 2019, the UK Government must give effect to the recommendations of the UN Committee supporting the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women concerning abortion in Northern Ireland.⁹⁸ This would have the effect of liberalising the current abortion framework in Northern Ireland. The Government is now considering how best to take this forward, recognising the clear message made by the House.

Work is underway to raise awareness of the Committee's observations and recommendations across relevant ministerial departments to ensure implementation of policies in line with CEDAW. A high-level Gender Director's Network, chaired by the Government Equalities Office and comprising counterparts from the Devolved Administrations, remains an important vehicle for effective co-ordination and mutual learning on the implementation of CEDAW.

The UK has recently extended its ratification of CEDAW to Anguilla, Bermuda, Cayman Islands and St Helena, meaning increased protections to over 70,000 women and girls in these jurisdictions. Work continues to progress the extension of CEDAW to the remaining Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies.

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Sponsored by the Government Equalities Office, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is the independent statutory body set up to promote equality and human rights and to hold the government to account on these issues.⁹⁹

The EHRC has a unique set of duties and powers under the Equality Act 2006 to help fulfil its mandate. It is under a Duty to:

- promote understanding of the importance of equality and diversity;
- encourage good practice in relation to equality and diversity;
- promote equality of opportunity;
- work towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination and harassment.

⁹⁸ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/2017-2019/0190/18190.pdf>

⁹⁹ <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-work/our-projects>

Examples of how the EHRC has promoted gender equality include its compliance campaign, *'Working Forward'*, which supports employers to make their workplaces the best they can be for pregnant women and new mothers. So far, 347 employers have signed up, covering 1.67 million employees. Also, following introduction of mandatory gender pay gap reporting, the EHRC took on the role of enforcing the regulations, publishing an enforcement policy in March 2018. This is testament to the ability of Government and the EHRC to work well together, without compromising the EHRC's closely guarded independence. The EHRC works in England, Wales and Scotland.

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI), sponsored by the Executive Office is an executive Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) established as a body corporate by section 73 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. It has the following duties and functions:

The commission's powers and duties give the Commission the following duties and functions:

- to promote equality of opportunity;
- to promote affirmative action;
- to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different racial groups generally;
- to work for the elimination of unlawful discrimination;
- to oversee the effectiveness of the statutory duties on public authorities; and;
- to keep under review the working of anti-discrimination and equality legislation and, when it is so required by the department or otherwise think it necessary, draw up and submit to the Department proposals for amending legislation.

The ECNI includes gender equality across all its duties and functions. It promotes equality of opportunity for women, for example by employer training and information on issues such as preparation for the introduction of gender pay reporting and by advising employers on measures to create workplaces inclusive of all employees, including women. The ECNI has legal powers to challenge discrimination against women. Every year, about 25% of the calls to the Commission's discrimination advice team relate to sex discrimination. The ECNI provides advice and information and supports cases to tribunals, if necessary.

Gender-responsive budgeting in Overseas Development Assistance

In our reporting to the OECD Development Assistance Committee Creditor Reporting System, the UK has to indicate for each activity whether or not it targets gender equality as one of its policy objectives. To qualify as “gender equality focussed,” an activity must explicitly promote gender equality and women’s empowerment. An activity can either target gender equality as its “principal objective” or as a “significant objective”. A “principal” score (2) is assigned if gender equality was an explicit objective of the activity and fundamental to its design - i.e. the activity would not have been undertaken without this objective. A “significant” score (1) is assigned if gender equality was an important, but secondary, objective of the activity - i.e. it was not the principal reason for undertaking the activity. A “not targeted” score (0) is assigned if, after being screened against the gender equality policy marker, an activity is not found to target gender equality. The gender equality marker allows an approximate quantification of aid flows that target gender equality as a policy objective.

We are committed to putting gender equality at the heart of UK Aid, both through dedicated principle programming and mainstreaming gender equality as a significant objective across our portfolio. In 2017 (the most recent year for which data is available), 54% of UK bilateral ODA investment, amounting to more than £4.2 billion, had gender equality as either a principle or significant objective. In 2016 over £3.9 billion of UK ODA was assessed ‘principal’ or ‘significant’.

Chapter 2.5: Peaceful and inclusive societies

1. Women, Peace and Security

In January 2018 the UK launched its fourth *National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS)*.¹⁰⁰ This is the UK's 5-year strategy for how we will meet our Women, Peace and Security commitments under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 to reduce the impact of conflict on women and girls and to promote their inclusion in conflict resolution. It is part of wider efforts to ensure that the UK's foreign policy consciously and consistently delivers for women and girls. It provides a framework to ensure that the provisions of UNSCR 1325 and associated Resolutions are incorporated into the Government's defence, diplomacy and development work, centred around 7 strategic outcomes. The NAP applies globally; annual reports will include how it is being implemented in 9 focus countries: Afghanistan, Burma, DRC, Iraq, Libya, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Syria. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Department for International Development and the Ministry of Defence developed the NAP with support from the Stabilisation Unit.

At the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) the UK committed to a £1.6 million project to increase women's meaningful participation in peace processes, including through the Women Mediators across the Commonwealth (WMC) initiative.¹⁰¹

2. Leadership and participation in conflict prevention and resolution

Women in the UK armed forces

The recent decision to open-up all combat roles to women is a defining moment in the history of the armed forces. Females were unable to serve in ground close combat roles until the ban was lifted in 2016. The Royal Armoured Corps, followed by the RAF Regiment, were the first to open their doors to female soldiers and officers.

From October 2018 all roles, including joining the Royal Marines, were opened to women. There were 20,480 women serving in the armed forces as of October 2018. Those currently serving can transfer into all roles and new recruits have begun basic training. This change will ensure that entry to our armed forces is determined by ability alone and not gender.

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-national-action-plan-on-women-peace-and-security-2018-to-2022>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.c-r.org/where-we-work/global/women-mediators-across-commonwealth>

Support for human rights defenders

In 2017, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office updated the *UK Guidelines for Working with Human Rights Defenders*. The purpose of the guidelines is to help overseas diplomatic staff get to know prominent human rights defenders, and support them, either privately or publicly, taking into account the local context.

The UK's work to support human rights defenders can involve attending trials, raising cases privately with the host government, making public statements, and lobbying for safe and open space for civil society and human rights defenders to operate. This includes taking into account groups who may face additional risks, such as women and those defending the rights of women.

In November 2018, we co-sponsored a new UN resolution on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association, which urged States to 'pay particular attention to the safety and protection of women and women human rights defenders from acts of intimidation and harassment'. In 2017, we co-sponsored the UN resolution on Human Rights Defenders to strengthen support for them and the work they do.

3. Defending women's human rights in conflict or crisis settings

Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict

The UK champions the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI), working with international partners to tackle the stigma survivors face, strengthen justice for survivors and hold perpetrators to account, and prevent conflict-related sexual violence, including by tackling the root causes of gender inequality and discrimination.

In November 2018, Lord Ahmad, the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict hosted a PSVI film festival 'Fighting Stigma through Film' and will host the PSVI international conference in November 2019.

Tackling sexual exploitation and abuse in UN system and aid sector

The UK fully supports the UN Secretary General's zero tolerance approach to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in any part of the UN system. At UNGA 2017, the Prime Minister joined the UN Secretary General's Circle of Leadership on SEA and we negotiated and signed the UN Secretary General's Voluntary Compact on SEA. We use our position in the UN Security Council to ensure all mandates for Peacekeeping Missions contain language on protection of women and children from SEA offences, and on accountability measures.

Over the past three years, the UK has provided \$3 million to support the UN Secretary-General's efforts to tackle SEA and improve accountability. These funds have been used to support staff posts, to deliver more effective system-wide coordination, and to

establish robust vetting and mandatory pre-deployment training and communications projects, focussed on providing redress for victims.

The UK hosted an international safeguarding meeting on 18 October 2018, where partners from across the sector demonstrated progress made on efforts to put survivors and the people we are there to help first.

The UK is also supporting the design and development of a NATO policy on SEA, through the provision of technical and policy support. The UK hosted a NATO SEA conference in January 2019, where UK Foreign Office Minister, Lord Ahmad, announced further support to NATO to allow completion of this work and to support the development of a NATO gendered conflict analysis methodology.

Modern slavery/human trafficking in the UK

The UK is committed to ending modern slavery in the UK, including the trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation. The pioneering *Modern Slavery Act 2015*, gives law enforcement agencies the tools to tackle modern slavery, including maximum life sentences for perpetrators.¹⁰²

The UK is transforming the law enforcement response, seeing more police operations than ever before; overhauling support for victims; and working with businesses to eradicate forced labour from UK supply chains. As a result, more victims than ever before are being identified. In 2018, 6,993 potential victims were identified in the UK – a 36% increase on 2017. The UK is also driving industry action; thousands of businesses have published modern slavery statements and companies have changed practices that were driving demand for modern slavery. Moreover, to ensure our response keeps pace with the evolving threat, the UK also commissioned an independent review of our *Modern Slavery Act*, which concluded in spring 2019.

In Northern Ireland, the *Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2015* consolidates and reinforces the legislative framework around human trafficking and slavery.¹⁰³

The *Northern Ireland Modern Slavery Strategy 2019/2020* consolidates work to reduce the threat from, the vulnerability to, and the prevalence of, modern slavery in Northern Ireland.¹⁰⁴ Developed in partnership with statutory organisations and NGOs the strategy draws the many strands of work together under three key themes: Pursue, Protect and Prevent. Particular focus is being given to training and awareness, through the development of a strategic Training Plan, training for all organisations with first responder duties in Northern Ireland, and training on transparency in supply chains for central and local government. Support for potential victims of modern slavery in Northern Ireland is provided during the National Referral Mechanism decision-making process, including access to safe accommodation and material assistance for victims

¹⁰² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/30/contents/enacted>

¹⁰³ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/niu/2015/2/enacted>

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-modern-slavery-strategy-2019-2020>

of human trafficking, access to specialised care including medical treatment, psychological assistance, counselling and information. Potential adult victims are also provided with assistance to access translation, interpretation and legal services and provided with help to access compensation.

Modern slavery/human trafficking overseas

The UK is also working overseas to reduce the vulnerability of women and girls to human trafficking. For instance, in Ethiopia, UK Aid has provided health and educational support to over 200 girls who experienced or were at risk of exploitation, and in 2019 the UK launched a new media campaign with Nigeria's anti-trafficking agency to prevent women from being trafficked to the UK.

The UK's international efforts to fight slavery are supported by a £200 million UK Aid commitment to tackle the root causes of slavery – improving business and recruitment practice to eradicate exploitation in supply chains, strengthen law enforcement capacity and improve victim protection. UK programmes include: the £20m Global Fund to End Modern Slavery, an innovative public-private partnership which seeks to develop focused, coherent strategies across countries and industries to reduce the prevalence of modern slavery and the £33.5 million Modern Slavery Fund that focuses on countries from where we know victims are regularly trafficked to the UK.

At the UN General Assembly (UNGA) 2017, Prime Minister Theresa May launched the *Call to Action to End Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking*.¹⁰⁵ The Call to Action now has 88 endorsements and positive steps have been taken on implementation. At UNGA 2018 the US, Australia, Canada, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Argentina and Bahrain agreed to champion the agenda alongside the UK.

4. Eliminating violations of the rights of the girl child

UN Convention on Rights of the Child

The UK is fully committed to children's rights and the continued implementation of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), including giving due consideration to UNCRC when creating new policy and legislation. The UNCRC sets out an enduring vision for all children to grow up in a loving, safe and happy environment where they can develop their full potential, regardless of their background. The Government shares that vision and is dedicated to providing the best possible opportunities for all children.

The Department for Education is leading a programme of work to embed children's rights across government. This includes training on UNCRC for civil servants and a new child's rights impact assessment template.

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-call-to-action-to-end-forced-labour-modern-slavery-and-human-trafficking>

England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland each have their own dedicated Children's Commissioner, an independent champion who promotes and protects the rights of children, especially the most vulnerable, and stands up for their views and interests.

Girls' Education

The UK is a global leader on girls' education. Between 2015 and 2018 UK Aid supported 11.4 million children to access education and learning; including 5.6 million girls. The Department for International Development's flagship Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) is the world's largest global fund dedicated to girls' education and is now supporting up to 1.5 million girls across 17 countries.

At the Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) meeting in April 2018, the UK launched the 'Leave No Girl Behind' campaign, calling for 12 years of quality education for all girls by 2030. Since then, the UK has continued to build international support for this agenda, working through key multilateral fora to foster commitment for girls' education. We worked with Canada to make girls' education a prominent theme of their 2018 G7 Presidency, and secured support from 152 states for a UK-led joint statement on girls' education at the 38th Session of the UN Human Rights Council.

At UNGA 2018, Prime Minister Theresa May co-hosted an event with French President, Emmanuel Macron, and Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, and called upon other countries to join the UK in giving girls in developing countries access to quality education. At UNGA, the Foreign Secretary also hosted the first meeting of the Platform for Girls' Education: a group of 12 influential figures committed to securing 12 years of quality education for girls across the world. The UK has also been a key contributor to the French G7 presidency, which is looking to support lower income countries to develop gender responsive education plans.

Chapter 3: National institutions and processes

1. National machinery for gender equality

Ministers and parliamentary scrutiny

Penny Mordaunt MP has been the Minister for Women and Equalities since April 2018. She holds this post in conjunction with her role as Secretary of State for Defence. She is supported by Victoria Atkins MP, the Minister for Women and Minister for Safeguarding at the Home Office, and Baroness Susan Williams, the Minister for Equalities and Minister for Countering Extremism. The Ministers are held to account on progress by the UK parliament, where they are called every six weeks to answer questions about any of their policies, alongside relevant Ministers from across Government.

In addition, the Women and Equalities Select Committee was established by the House of Commons in 2015 to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Government Equalities Office on equalities (gender, age, race, sexual orientation, disability and transgender/gender identity) issues. The Chair of the Committee is Maria Miller MP.

Similarly, the Joint Committee on Human Rights consists of twelve members, appointed from both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, to examine matters relating to human rights within the United Kingdom. The Chair of the Committee is Harriet Harman MP.

Government Equalities Office

The 'national machinery for gender equality and the empowerment of women' is the Government Equalities Office, which leads work on policy relating to women, sexual orientation and transgender equality, and is responsible for the wider equality framework across government. It is also the institutional mechanism responsible for overseeing and promoting the delivery of UK commitments under CEDAW.

The Government Equalities Office also sponsors the Equality and Human Rights Commission (see Chapter 2.4) and funds the Equality Advisory and Support Service, an entirely free advice helpline open to anyone in England, Scotland and Wales who feels that they may have been the victim of unlawful discrimination.

In April 2019, the Government Equalities Office became part of the Cabinet Office, sitting at the very heart of government. Its enhanced reach from within the Cabinet Office will help to better articulate and co-ordinate a national mission to tackle inequality including better addressing intersectionality. Working alongside the Race Disparity Unit, the Office for Disability Issues, the newly established Office for Tackling

injustices and others. The Government Equalities Office is part of an equalities hub for all parts of central government and beyond.

The Government Equalities Office has worked across Government and with the Equality and Human Rights Commission over the last six months to encourage Government departments to include more ambitious and robust measures tackling inequality in their annual Single Departmental Plans. This year's Single Departmental Plans were published on 27 June - only the second year that equality objectives have been included. The number of policy and service related equality objectives has increased more than five times from 9 in 2018 to 46 in 2019.

2. Gender equality in the implementation of the SDGs

In 2015, the UK played a central role in the formulation and adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The UK pushed hard for a standalone goal on gender equality, but also recognises that without gender equality we will not deliver on the other goals.

Following adoption of the goals, the UK's report *Agenda 2030: Delivering the Global Goals (2017)* set out how the UK is contributing towards the SDGs.¹⁰⁶ Each Government Department has embedded the goals in their Single Departmental Plans – an established process to focus government efforts on important issues.¹⁰⁷ Each Department also works with its partners and stakeholders to deliver these priorities. Progress of activity supporting goal delivery is reported publicly in Departmental Annual Reports and Accounts, enabling scrutiny by Parliament and the public.

The Secretary of State for International Development has overall leadership and policy oversight for the Goals, with the Minister for Implementation in Cabinet Office playing an important role in ensuring a coordinated cross- government approach to the delivery of the goals. A cross-government group of officials meets regularly and provides a platform to coordinate goal implementation, integrate the Goals into departmental activity and consider progress towards their implementation. The Deputy Head of the Government Equalities Office is a member of this cross-government group and has a role in ensuring that gender equality is mainstreamed across the SDGs.

The UK has undertaken its first Voluntary National Review this year, setting out how Government, business, civil society and the public in the UK are helping to make the goals a reality, at home and around the world. The Government Equalities Office took a leading role on preparing the chapters on Goal 5 (gender equality) and Goal 10 (reduced inequalities).

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agenda-2030-delivering-the-global-goals>

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/a-country-that-works-for-everyone-the-governments-plan#single-departmental-plans>

3. Stakeholder engagement

The UK greatly values the expertise and knowledge of its stakeholders and engages in regular thematic consultation. The Government Equalities Office is also currently developing a programme of work to ensure that women's voices, especially those from marginalized groups, are better heard by policymakers.

This report is based on information gathered as part of the UK's recent CEDAW reporting process and SDG Voluntary National Review, both of which involved formal consultation mechanisms.

In preparing the eighth periodic CEDAW report in 2017, the Government Equalities Office, with support from the Welsh and Scottish Governments, conducted a targeted engagement exercise with a cross-section of women's organisations. The consultation process was largely based on stakeholder roundtables: in Wales on 19 June 2017, in London on 26 June 2017 and in Scotland on 14 July 2017.

The UK adopted a comprehensive approach to stakeholder engagement during preparations for the SDG Voluntary National Review. A range of engagement activities were undertaken, designed to capture as many views as possible. This included inviting case studies from organisations and individuals from across the UK; outreach events; an online questionnaire; and goal-focused engagement led by UK Government Departments. The Government Equalities Office hosted a roundtable consultation on Goal 5 on 14 January 2019 and a further roundtable on Goal 10 on 28 February 2019.

The roundtable on Goal 5 doubled up as a consultation event on the priority theme for the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The UK Government and the CSW Alliance (the umbrella organisation for NGOs with an interest in CSW) have an excellent working relationship in the run up to, and during, CSW. Championing civil society participation is a key objective for the UK at CSW, manifested in the various consultation events offered, including a drafting meeting to strengthen the 'zero draft' of the agreed conclusions and nightly debriefs from officials during the two-week session itself. This year, the UK organised a CSW side-event on 'how governments can support civil society to get the most out of CSW', co-hosted by Australia and in conjunction with the CSW Alliance.

As part of the Welsh Government's Gender Review a Ministerial Steering Group has been established. The Ministerial Steering Group is supported by an Expert Advisory Group comprised of a wide range of stakeholders across different protected characteristics, which provides advice and supports engagement to ensure that the review adequately reflects the diverse needs and lived experience of women throughout Wales.

Chapter 4: Data and statistics

1. Availability of gender-disaggregated data

Gender has been successfully mainstreamed within the production of statistics within the UK. This is evident in the findings from the October 2018 Equalities Data Audit undertaken by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), which identified that over 80% of the datasets included in the audit contain information on sex.¹⁰⁸

The vast majority of National Statistics, including key statistics on employment and income, are disaggregated by gender as standard. In addition to employment and income, data disaggregated by gender are available across a range of outcomes, enabling consideration of differences in health outcomes, educational outcomes, experiences of justice and personal security and levels of participation for women/girls.

The UK also operates a series of large-scale ongoing studies such as Understanding Society, the British Social Attitudes Survey, and the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England, which are actively used within and beyond Government to undertake cutting edge research on gender.

2. Increasing transparency and utilisation of data

Beyond Official Statistics, the UK has world-leading data on gender. All data reported by large UK employers under the *Gender Pay Gap (GPG) Transparency Regulations* is available to the public via our GPG Viewing Portal.¹⁰⁹

The UK is also strengthening the use of gender statistics by publishing the Gender Equality Monitor, bringing together a suite of gender equality indicators across five key areas: economic participation and progression; attitudes and leadership; education and skills; crime and justice; and health and wellbeing.¹¹⁰ Much of this information is already measured, but bringing it together in this way allows users to understand the gendered nature of these issues and allows the Government to monitor progress. The framework offers a mechanism for the UK to track progress annually against its ambitions for gender equality in the UK, and provides a first step towards a central hub for gender statistics. We will continue to build on it and expand to a broader set of indicators in the future.

This follows the success of the Race Disparity Audit (published in October 2017), which reviewed and published all UK data that could be analysed by ethnicity.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/methodologicalpublications/generalmethodology/onsworkingpaperseries/equalitiesdataauditfinalreport>

¹⁰⁹ <https://gender-pay-gap.service.gov.uk/>

¹¹⁰ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/814080/GEO_GEEE_Strategy_Gender_Equality_Monitor_tagged.pdf

¹¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/race-disparity-audit>

3. SDG reporting platform

The Office for National Statistics is responsible for the development and collection of UK data for the SDG global indicators and for reporting UK progress towards them. Currently in Alpha stage development, the 'SDG reporting platform', gives UK statistics on each goal, including Goal 5.¹¹²

4. Addressing data gaps

The Office for National Statistics has recently established a Centre for Equalities and Inclusion which aims to improve the evidence base for monitoring and reporting on inequalities in the UK across all the protected characteristics in the *Equality Act 2010*, including sex. The Centre has been working across Government to identify the key gaps in the evidence base and will continue to work collaboratively to develop solutions to address these gaps.

The Government Equalities Office are working to identify and address specific data gaps on known gender issues. For example, due to a lack of clear and robust data on sexual harassment, we have committed to gather regular data on the prevalence and nature of sexual harassment, to inform our approach.

5. Improving intersectional data

We also recognise that there are improvements to be made around intersectional data – currently our datasets and Official Statistics are limited in the extent to which they consider the overlaps of protected characteristics. The ONS Equalities Data Audit was undertaken, in part, to address this, and the Government Equalities Office are partnering with the Office for National Statistics on this project to improve the collection and exploitation of equalities data. This work will involve making better use of existing data sources and taking advantage of advances in data science and the opportunities arising from the *Digital Economy Act* to develop new data sources, capable of disaggregation and enabling insights into issues of intersectionality.

The newly established Office for Tackling Injustices (OfTI) will present future Governments with more effective, data-driven, evidence-based challenge to help drive forward reforms to tackle wide-ranging disparities in society. The OfTI will look at disparities in areas including socio-economic background, ethnicity, gender, disability and sexual orientation and explore if specific groups of people are unfairly discriminated against or held back from getting on in life.

¹¹² <https://sustainabledevelopment-uk.github.io/5/>