



Response to the UK Government's *Ending Violence against Women and Girls Strategy 2016-2020*

1. Welcome recognition of technology-fuelled Violence against Women & Girls

The newly established Centre for Gender Equal Media (GEM) welcomes the commitment in the revised Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) 2016-2020 strategy for Government action on online and 'cyber-enabled' violence against women. In particular we are pleased to see the integration of online forms of violence against women, including image-based sexual abuse ('revenge porn') and pornography, into the strategy, as recommended by the End Violence Against Women Coalition's report into new technologies in 2012. We urge the Government to recognise the need for the funding of specialist organisations to both support survivors of online abuse, as well as help to challenge such behaviours.

2. Welcome role for education of young people

We welcome the commitment to inform and educate young people about the harms of pornography, including the extension of the successful *This is Abuse* (now Disrespect Nobody) campaign, and action regarding age verification for pornographic websites. The commitment to educate young people would benefit from linking up with existing work in schools on these issues, a link that is unfortunately made more difficult by the recent decision by the Government refusing to make sex and relationships education statutory.

3. Urge greater recognition of gendered impact of pornography

We would urge the Government to be clear in policy and practitioner documents, as well as in its broader messages, that online pornography has a disproportionate impact and usage by boys and girls and women and men, and that it is detrimental to gender equality, as well as being a child protection issue. As such we recommend a broader prevention campaign, to recognise the impact of pornography on attitudes towards women and relationships for men of all ages, and to include targeting older groups of men who abuse and harass women and girls in online spaces.

4. Specialist representation on review of technology-facilitated VAWG

We welcome the establishment of a Government working group to map out current issues, prevalence, initiatives and barriers to addressing gendered online abuse to improve understanding and co-ordinate the response to online manifestations of VAWG. We note this was also a recommendation from EVAW in 2012. We hope this will lead to enforcement agencies taking online VAWG as seriously as offline abuse. We would urge Government to ensure this group has representation from the specialist VAWG sector, including substantial representation from specialist BME services. That such expertise is needed to ensure the success of the working group demonstrates the necessity of secure, long-term government funding for specialist support services rather than the move to local commissioning outlined in the strategy.

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