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Dear Colleague

The UN International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls is held on 25th November 2016. It is followed by 16 days of activism, ending next week on 10th December which provides a key opportunity to raise awareness of these serious and often hidden crimes.

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) can shatter the lives of victims, their families and those closest to them, notwithstanding the huge impact on our economy, health services, and the criminal justice system. Supporting women and girls who have experienced violence and abuse, and preventing it from happening in the first place, remain key Government priorities.

But as our VAWG strategy, published in March 2016 and with funding of £80m, makes clear, if we are to bring what can be hidden crimes out of the shadows and ensure victims are supported and perpetrators brought to justice, we need to make ending violence against women and girls 'everyone's business'.

We have made good progress. We have strengthened the legal framework, introducing a range of new offences, including those of forced marriage and recognising the harms caused by coercive and controlling behaviour in relationships. These have been underpinned by our work to change attitudes and prevent offending, and by working with police to improve their response to these crimes.

Latest estimates from the crime survey of England and Wales show that the number of women who experienced domestic abuse in the last year was the lowest since the survey began. The survey also shows a long term downward trend in the prevalence of sexual assault. At the same time, prosecutions and convictions for VAWG crimes are at their highest ever levels.

However, with 1.3million women experiencing domestic abuse and 400,000 victims of sexual assault in the last year, there is still much more to do.

To mark International Day for the Elimination of VAWG, the Government has announced that we will introduce a new **stalking civil protection order**.

Stalking can have terrifying consequences, and will affect one in five women and one in ten men in their lifetime. This new protection order will support the stalking offences introduced in 2012, and will help victims at an earlier stage and address perpetrator behaviour before it becomes entrenched.

We have also announced the launch of a three-year, £15million **VAWG Service Transformation Fund** to aid, promote and embed the best local practice and to help deliver against the **National Statement of Expectations** and **Commissioning Toolkit**, both published today. This is in addition to the £20million for accommodation-based services announced by the Department for Communities and Local Government earlier this month.

The VAWG Service Transformation Fund will be used to support local programmes which complement and add to existing services, and will be open to commissioners working in partnership with specialist partner organisations. It will support new approaches incorporating early intervention, and establish and embed the best ways to help victims, survivors and their families.

Members are ideally placed to work with local commissioners (be they Police and Crime Commissioners, local authorities or health commissioners), to encourage them to work together and to engage with local, specialist organisations to develop bids into this Fund.

We hope that the measures being announced today, alongside other work the Home Office is doing to support the vulnerable, will help afford victims and those at risk the protection they deserve and we will continue to support and co-ordinated and robust approach to tackle these terrible crimes.

Together, we can deliver on our aims: that no woman should live in fear of violence, and every girl should grow up knowing she is safe, so that she can have the best start in life.

Yours sincerely



The Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP



**Sarah Newton MP
Minister for Vulnerability,
Safeguarding and Countering Extremism**