

Government moves to provide reassurance to women and girls: 15 March 2021

Following a meeting of the Criminal Justice Taskforce, chaired by the Prime Minister, the Government is taking immediate steps to provide further reassurance for women and girls.

This includes doubling the size of the Safer Streets fund, which provides neighbourhood measures such as better lighting and CCTV. This will bring the funding for these local projects to £45million, alongside a commitment from the Government to work with police forces and Police and Crime Commissioners to ensure these target areas of potential concern for women and girls and are now more focussed on preventing sexual violence.

This could include targeting parks and alleyways, and routes from bars, restaurants and nightclubs as we see a return to the night-time economy, in line with the lifting of coronavirus restrictions.

To further support this, and help women feel safer in the night-time economy as we build back from the pandemic, the Government will also roll-out pilots of 'Project Vigilant' across the country. This is an internationally award winning-approach taken by Thames Valley Police where both uniformed and plain clothes officers identify predatory and suspicious offenders in the night time economy. This can involve officers attending areas around clubs and bars undercover to better ensure women are safe in these locations, and increased patrols as people leave at closing time.

These steps have been taken in response to the outpouring of experiences and concerns following the death of Sarah Everard. They will complement existing action being taken to address violence against women and girls and keep them safe. This includes toughening sentences for serious violence and sexual assaults through the Police Crime and Sentencing Bill and measures in the Domestic Abuse Bill to improve protections for victims and create new offences, such as non-fatal strangulation.

The Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

The horrific case of Sarah Everard has unleashed a wave of feeling about women not feeling safe at night.

We must do everything we can to ensure our streets are safe, and we are bringing in landmark legislation to toughen sentences and put more police on the streets.

We are also now taking further steps to provide greater reassurance, such as providing better lighting and greater use of CCTV in parks and routes women may take on their walks home.

Ultimately, we must drive out violence against women and girls and make every part of the criminal justice system work to better protect and defend them.

Safeguarding Minister Victoria Atkins will continue to lead on this work, alongside the Home Secretary and Women and Equalities Minister Liz Truss.

The Policing Minister Kit Malthouse will also hold a summit in the coming weeks with police and industry representatives from the night-time economy on preparations to protect women as pandemic restrictions lift.

Further steps agreed in the meeting include plans to consult on the Government's intended Victims Law this Summer and £11million in funding to provide for more Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) to support victims through the criminal justice process.