



## Holding our politicians accountable

This week, [Cheltenham Borough councillor Barbara Driver](#) has stepped down after using the phrase: "(t)here is a saying and I'm going to say it: When rape is inevitable, lie back and enjoy it" in reference to a new housing development. This misuse of language by politicians is not unusual. Victim blaming is. Eric Pickles allegedly told a survivor of child abuse to '[adjust your medication](#)' during a disagreement. [UKIP MEP Roger Helmer](#) has made some very concerning comments about consent and children. [William O'Rourke](#), a Labour councillor in Glasgow, was suspended from his party after suggesting a 9 year old rape victim was not "'typical innocent nine year old". For a year, our campaign has been recording personal stories of victim blaming, as well as responses to victim blaming in the media. We have read too many stories of politicians who do not understand the reality of domestic and sexual abuse and violence and yet these politicians get to decide how, or if, money is allocated to help victims.

We need to ensure that our elected representatives and policy makers understand how important training is to ensure universal good practise guidance for victims of sexual and domestic violence. This requires an understanding that the effects of domestic and sexual violence and abuse aren't relegated to the criminal justice system, social services and healthcare - staff working in education, housing, immigration, and revenues and benefits all require basic training. It requires the knowledge that [investment now](#) will not only save lives but save money in the long-term.

These are the statistics on domestic and sexual abuse and violence:

- [1 in 3 women](#) have experienced either [physical or sexual violence](#)
- [1 in 4 women](#) have experienced domestic violence
- [2 women a week](#) are murdered in the UK by a current or former partner account for [40% of female homicides](#)
- [54% of rapes reported to the police](#) took place within the context of domestic violence
- the police receive [one call every minute](#) about domestic violence despite only 40% of incidents being reported to the police
- estimated total cost of domestic violence to society in monetary terms is [£23 billion per annum](#)
- [1 in 5 women](#) (aged 16 - 59) has experienced some form of sexual violence since the age of 16
- [only 9% of rapes](#) are committed by 'strangers'
- [Crown Prosecution Service](#) states that false reports of rape are "very rare" and perhaps less than 1% of reported rapes.
- only [15% of people](#) who are sexually assaulted or raped in the UK report

We are calling on all our elected representatives, at local, county, and national levels to undergo training from specialist services on sexual and domestic abuse and violence. We are asking policy makers to approach their local or national sexual assault centres and third sector organisations which work in the field of violence against women and girls for training. We are asking them to undertake training so that they can:



- recognise [types of domestic violence](#) (intimate partner violence) including financial and emotional abuse.
- recognise [how common](#) domestic violence is
- acknowledge that [domestic and sexual violence and abuse](#) are crimes perpetrated mostly by men with women and children the majority of the victims
- understand how [domestic violence](#) affects women and their families from Black / Minority Ethnic (BME) communities
- understand the issues surrounding [forced marriage](#) and honour based violence
- understand how [immigration status](#) impacts on women and men experiencing domestic violence
- understand the effects of domestic violence on children and how this impacts on their education and healthcare
- understand the [long term impact on children](#) of growing up with domestic/sexual violence
- understand that domestic violence is part of the [wider spectrum](#) of violence against women and girls
- understand that [fatal male violence](#) against women and girls is not "isolated events"
- recognise [rape myths](#) and have the knowledge to challenge these myths
- Understand the commonalities and differences between domestic violence against women and men
- understand the legal definitions of rape and sexual violence in [England/ Wales](#) and [Scotland](#)
- understand that [street and sexual harassment](#) in the workplace are part of the spectrum of sexual violence
- recognise the [damage](#) done to [victims](#) by asking [victims](#) to change their behaviour rather than addressing [perpetrator behaviour](#)
- understand how funding for international development and disaster relief can help women and girls experiencing violence
- understand how [rape and other forms of sexualised violence](#) are used as tools in genocide
- recognise the [damage](#) done to [victims](#) by asking victims to change their behaviour rather than addressing [perpetrator behaviour](#)
- Ensure their work contributes to [making women and children safer](#), not re-victimising them

We are asking our supporters to write, email or phone the men and women responsible for creating and voting on budgets that affect women's services to demand they undergo training. Every single elected representative and policy maker needs to understand the reality of domestic and sexual abuse and violence before we allow them to vote on policies and budgets that, increasingly, are resulting in cuts to services leaving victims without support, children in schools where staff aren't equipped to deal with the effects of domestic violence, and Serious Crime Reviews which say the same thing every time and yet more children and women continue to die at the hands of violent men. We all deserve better than this and our politicians must be held accountable for the effects of their votes on victims of sexual and domestic violence and abuse.



[You can contact your MP, MSPs and MLAs via this site.](#)

**Form letter:**

Dear X,

I am increasingly concerned about the number of politicians who are on record making inappropriate and offensive remarks about domestic and sexual violence and abuse. I worry about politicians who make the following types of statements being responsible for creating policies which effect victims of violence without understanding why their statements are harmful:

- [Cheltenham Borough councillor Barbara Driver](#) has stepped down after using the phrase: "(t)here is a saying and I'm going to say it: When rape is inevitable, lie back and enjoy it" in reference to a new housing development.
- Eric Pickles allegedly told a survivor of child abuse to '[adjust your medication](#)' during a disagreement.
- [UKIP MEP Roger Helmer](#) has made some very concerning comments about consent and children.
- [William O'Rourke](#), a Labour councillor in Glasgow, was suspended from his party after suggesting a 9 year old rape victim was not "'typical innocent nine year old".

I am joining the organisation [Ending Victimisation and Blame \(Everyday Victim Blaming\)](#) in asking that all elected representatives and policy makers, at every level of government, undertake specialist training by organisations who work in the field of domestic and sexual violence and abuse. I do not think it is appropriate for people who believe rape myths to be creating or voting on policies which disproportionately effect women and girls who experience violence daily. A basic understanding of the gendered reality of violence against women and girls is necessary to create appropriate policies to both end violence as well as supporting current victims. These policies apply to social care, education, housing, policing, criminal justice, and healthcare.

There are a number of organisations across the UK who offer training.

- [Women's Aid](#)
- [Scottish Women's Aid](#)
- [Shakti Women's Aid](#)
- [Rape Crisis England/ Wales](#)
- [Rape Crisis Scotland](#)
- [Nia](#)
- [EAVES](#)
- [AVA](#)
- [Ending Victimisation and Abuse](#)



## **Everyday Victim Blaming**

challenging institutional disbelief around domestic & sexual violence and abuse  
<http://everydayvictimblaming.com>

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I would like you to approach a local or national organisation to undergo the appropriate training to ensure universal good practise guidance for victims of sexual and domestic violence.

Thank you,