



**National  
Council of  
Women GB**  
For a fair and  
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## June 2025 Current Affairs Update

### Adult Social Care

#### Casey Commission's terms of reference are published

Baroness Louise Casey has begun her role as Chair of the Independent Commission into Adult Social Care by reviewing evidence and holding a roundtable with people with first-hand experience of the social care system. This follows the publication of the Government's [terms of reference for the Commission](#) which is to be in two phases. The first phase – reporting in 2026 – will focus on how the Government can make the most of existing resources and local authority funding to increase the quality and productivity in the sector over the medium term. It is also expected to recommend reforms to reduce unnecessary hospital admissions and tackle delayed discharges. This phase must set out a plan for reforming adult social care that would be “phased in over 10 years”. Phase two will make longer-term recommendations. With a deadline of 2028, it will look at the care model needed to address demographic change and discuss alternative models for the future. The terms of reference state that the Commission's conclusions must be “affordable” and stay within government spending limits for the remainder of the parliament. This has prompted concern that the changes will be underfunded. There are also fears that the Commission will merely repeat the already well-aided debates thereby further delaying changes that could already have been implemented.

#### Casey reforms doomed unless the Government measures the cost of inaction

The Health and Social Care Select Committee says the Government needs to measure the [true cost of inaction on social care](#) to be able to present a robust financial case for reforms. Too much emphasis is put on the cost of change and not enough on the human and financial cost of inaction. The Committee wants the Government to commission research to fully quantify the cost of continued inaction and calls on it to publish an annual assessment of the level of unmet care needs for adults, as well as an annually published official estimate of how much delayed hospital discharges are costing the NHS. It points out that the Government and taxpayers are paying £32 billion a year for a system that is not meeting the needs of the population. This is despite the army of unpaid carers providing care equivalent to a second NHS. It is they who are bearing the highest cost from failures to reform adult social care. Furthermore, the economy is missing out on the care sector's potential to drive growth. By consuming an increasing proportion of councils' budgets, social care is crowding out spending on other services. The report finds that every £1 invested in the sector would generate a £1.75 return to the wider economy and that an extra £1 billion spent on social care would create 50,000 jobs across the country. The report emphasises that social care reform is an integral part of NHS reform and cannot be a separate process.

#### Ban on care worker recruitment overseas puts services at risk

Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper, [has announced](#) an end to care sector recruitment from abroad as part of the Government's attempts to bring down net migration. The new rules will require care companies to recruit from domestic workers, job seeking care workers, the pool of over 10,000 care workers brought to the UK on visas for jobs that never materialised or from people here on visas for a different purpose switching to a health and care worker visa. Care England, a charity which represents independent care services, [described the move](#) as a “crushing blow to an already fragile sector” that would make the crisis in social care even worse. Care providers insist they try hard to recruit from this country but cannot get the numbers they need. The i Paper, reported that, last year, 105,000 international recruits started in care-providing roles while the number of British recruits fell by 30,000. In 2023/24, the adult social care sector in England had approximately 131,000 vacant positions.

## Child poverty

The Government's child poverty strategy due for publication in the spring [has been postponed](#) until later in the year. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister is under increasing pressure to scrap the two-child benefit cap to ease child poverty. He [has hinted](#) that the Government is considering options. The cap prevents parents from claiming child tax credit and universal benefit for more than two children. According to [Government statistics](#), a record 4.5 million children in the UK were living in poverty in the year ending April 2024 (31% of children) and 3.5 million were in deep poverty while 1.5 million children live in households that are subject to the two-child cap. The Child Poverty Action Group said [its analysis](#) suggested an estimated 350,000 children would be lifted out of poverty immediately if the policy were scrapped. Torsten Bell, former chief executive of the think tank the Resolution Foundation and now a Labour Treasury minister, [put the figure](#) at 470,000. Estimates of the cost of scrapping the cap range from £2.6 billion to £3.5 billion by the end of this Parliament. However, polling shows the public favour restoring the winter fuel payment to pensioners over scrapping the two-child benefit cap even though pensioners [are half as likely to be in poverty](#) compared to children due to the success of government policies over the last 30 years. The public view is that, in fairness to tax-paying working families, those on benefits should limit the number of the children they have. But [60% of the families affected by the cap](#) have one parent in work. Speaking on Radio 4, Lord Willets from the Resolution Foundation said that, in social policy terms, scrapping the two-child benefit cap would be the more effective way of reducing poverty.

## Minister admits aid cuts will disproportionately affect women and girls

Appearing before the International Development Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> May, Development Minister, Baroness Chapman, confirmed that the cut in the UK aid budget from 0.5% to 0.3% of GDP (the lowest level since 1999) would [disproportionately affect spending on gender equality and education](#). Campaign organisations have reacted with dismay. Only [10 per cent of all UK aid](#) has gender equality as its 'principal' objective, while evidence shows investment in global gender equality is critical not only for improving women's rights, but for economic growth, climate action and conflict prevention. Past ODA cuts have already disproportionately impacted on women and girls. Data [published by Care International UK](#) in February showed the UK's Official Development Assistance spend on gender equality fell from £6.3bn in 2019 to £3.4bn in 2022. This was disproportionate to the overall fall in the ODA budget. When the aid budget was cut by a third between 2021 and 2022, programmes to prevent violence against women and girls fell by 41%, those primarily targeting gender equality as their outcome fell by 30% and funding to women's rights organisations fell by 66% from its peak in 2017. The responses of aid organisations to Baroness Chapman's remarks can be found here: [Gender and Development Network](#), [Care International UK](#), [Oxfam](#), [Plan International](#), [Save the Children](#), [Bond](#).

## Violence against women and girls

### Reactions to the sentencing review

Domestic abuse campaigners welcomed the recommendations relating to women in the [independent sentencing review](#) but expressed deep concern about the proposed early release of domestic abuse and sexual offence perpetrators who show good behaviour in order to free up prison capacity. The CJW [pointed out](#) that such perpetrators can be very adept in manipulating a system that is not adequately resourced to manage them properly. Women's Aid [said](#) the Government was tackling the issue of prison overcrowding at the expense of safety for women and girls. Refuge [stated](#) that any initiatives to tackle prison overcrowding should not happen before improvements to the probation service are implemented. The Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales, Dame Nicole Jacobs, [said](#) the measure would send "a clear message to domestic abusers that they can now offend with little consequence".

Among the Review's other recommendations, the CWJ [reacted positively](#) to:

- the Review's acknowledgment of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's recent recommendation, [supported by the CJW](#), that the Government introduce legislation to provide victims of domestic abuse with a legal defence when they are coerced into their offending
- the recognition that significant harm is often done by imprisoning women, both for the women themselves and their children, and that imprisonment of pregnant women should only ever be a last resort
- the wealth of evidence the Review received regarding the vulnerabilities of women in contact with the criminal justice system, and the fact that experience of domestic abuse and coercive control is directly linked to many women's criminalisation.

Women's Aid [gave a qualified welcome](#) to the Review's proposals relating to:

- improving the protections for survivors including through the introduction of a domestic abuse flag that seeks to exclude perpetrators of abuse from the presumption against a short custodial sentence
- ensuring mandatory training for judges on violence against women and girls
- increasing funding for the probation service.

Refuge [welcomed, with qualifications](#), the plans to

- improve the identification of domestic abuse perpetrators
- increase investment in the Probation Service.

### MPs call for stronger Government action to tackle VAWG

In its [report](#) on Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls, the Public Accounts Committee found that the [Government continued to be outpaced](#) in its efforts to tackle violence against women and girls (VAWG) and it lacked a full understanding of the issues victims and survivors faced. It found that:

- the services supporting the victims and survivors of VAWG had reached crisis point and the short-term and insecure nature of funding made it difficult for service providers to plan ahead. It called on the Government to provide long-term funding stability to the sector
- Government departments did not have a complete understanding of the extent of VAWG. They lacked awareness of wider pressures on services for survivors and victims, including those caused by shortfalls in the availability of safe accommodation and increased demand for services caused by delays in the justice system
- the Home Office's survey to measure the prevalence of VAWG did not collect data on all crime types or responses from under-16s. The most likely age range to become a survivor or perpetrator of sexual violence is between 11-20 years old
- the Government needed to set out how it would work with boys to prevent harmful attitudes perpetuating, and how it would improve the safety of children and young people online. The Department for Education needed to take a more proactive approach to stopping the proliferation of misogynistic attitudes across social media and their influence on young men and boys.

The Committee said that the Home Office needed to set out precisely how it would lead a truly cross-government effort in tackling VAWG that had the commitment of all Government departments.

## Non-consensual Intimate Image Abuse

The Government [has rejected](#) many of the recommendations made by the Women and Equalities Committee in its report into non-consensual intimate image abuse (NCII), Specifically, the Government:

- rejected the idea of criminalising the possession of NCII material, citing difficulties in proving the lack of consent or reasonable belief in consent. It thinks this would lead to uncertainty for law enforcement and could result in individuals being charged even without malicious intent
- declined to extend the current six-month time limit for prosecuting NCII offences, despite the UK Parliament noting that many victims may not become aware of the abuse until much later
- did not support the idea of creating a fast-track civil process for ordering content takedowns or blocking access to harmful content
- rejected the recommendation to mandate internet infrastructure providers to act against NCII content hosted overseas, citing concerns about the practicality of implementing such measures
- is considering the issue of culturally sensitive images but does not believe that changes should be made at present, citing concerns about the potential for unintended consequences.

These rejections have been met with criticism from organisations like the [End Violence Against Women Coalition](#) and [SWGfL](#). They argue that the Government's response represents a missed opportunity to better protect victims of NCII and prevent future harm.

## The rights of older people

In its [response](#) to the Women and Equalities Committee's report on the Rights of Older People, the Government has rejected:

- the Committee's call for the Cabinet Office to establish a unit within the Office of Equality and Opportunity and implement a new cross-government strategy. It said that it was already taking a cross-government approach and that services from health to social care needed to remain within the departments responsible for them
- the Committee's recommendation that stronger legal protections against age discrimination were needed to tackle 'widespread' and 'culturally embedded' ageism. The Government said it believed that the Equality Act 2010 already provided a strong protective framework.

On the positive side, the Committee welcomed:

- the Government's agreement to consider the experience and effectiveness of the well-embed Commissioner for Older People in Wales, including any evaluation, lessons learned or other evidence of impact. This has been well received by campaigners despite their disappointment that the Government hasn't committed to establishing a Commissioner in England straightaway
- the publication of the Government's Digital Exclusion Plan. The Committee had called on the Government to prioritise a new digital inclusion strategy that included a focus on the needs of older people, who are in danger of being unable to access essential services.

## Other Select Committee inquiries

- **The Women and Equalities Committee – Inquiry in progress:** *Misogyny: the manosphere and online content; Equality at work: paternity leave; FGM*
- **International Development Committee – Inquiry in progress:** *Women, peace and security.*
- **Home Affairs Committee – Inquiry in progress:** *Tackling violence against women and girls.*
- **Health and Social Care Committee – Inquiry in progress:** *the Government's 10-year Health Plan.*
- **Work and Pensions Committee – Inquiry in progress:** *Pensioner poverty: challenges and mitigations.*
- **Science, Innovation and Technology Committee – Inquiry in progress:** *Social media, misinformation and harmful algorithms.*