



Home Office

Home Secretary

2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF
www.gov.uk/home-office

His Majesty's Coroner Ms Nadia Persaud
East London Coroners Court
124 Queens Road
Walthamstow
E17 8QP

19 September 2024

Dear Ms Persaud,

RESPONSE TO REGULATION 28 REPORT TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATHS

Thank you for your Report to Prevent Future Deaths on 26 July 2024 regarding the unlawful killing of Zara Natasha Aleena.

I would like to start by recognising that at the heart of this tragic inquest is Zara Aleena and I extend my deepest condolences to her family and loved ones for their devastating loss and extend my gratitude to them for their persistence on change for the future.

I would also like to thank you for your diligence and the detailed consideration of the failings you identified in your report. These failings are shocking, and I am clear that the lessons must be learned across Government and beyond.

Tackling violence against women and girls is a top priority for this Government and we will treat it as the national emergency that it is. This Government's mission is to halve levels of violence against women and girls within a decade, using every lever available to us. The Home Office is working closely with other departments and stakeholders in developing plans to achieve this mission. The findings you outline make it crystal clear that lessons must be learned. I will ensure that these are acted upon, not only as we build upon the existing work I outline below, but also within our future work. However, I want to be clear that this will take time – we must deliver it effectively, and we must get it right. Too often piecemeal changes have failed to change systems which are fit for the future, and we are determined not to make those mistakes.

The Home Office's response to your report focuses on two matters of concern raised, specifically concerns 20 and 21.

Matter of concern 21

At least two other members of the public were followed by the offender before he attacked

Zara Aleena. The members of the public appear to have seen the offender and appear to be aware that he was following them. This was not brought to the attention of the emergency services. I am concerned that there is a societal acceptance that such conduct does not need to be reported.

In your report, you highlight that other members of the public were followed by the offender before he attacked Zara Aleena and that this was not brought to the attention of the emergency services. I recognise these failings and share your concern that there is a societal acceptance of such conduct which can mean that those subject to it may not feel it should be reported. I also recognise that women may not report as they do not have confidence that they will receive a robust response. Everyone has the right to live in freedom from fear, yet women and girls are still facing threats of violence, abuse and death.

The Home Office has funded a range of interventions to help tackle violence against women and girls in public spaces, including within the night-time economy. These interventions have included capable guardianship initiatives such as Street Angels or Street Pastors and educational programmes with a focus on changing attitudes and perceptions and raising awareness on these issues, as well as active bystander training, which was targeted at night-time economy staff and other members of the community. The independent evaluations of educational programmes have shown that they can have a positive influence on training beneficiaries', including improvements in their awareness and understanding of these crimes, likelihood to report VAWG and improvements in confidence in their ability to support victims and ability to intervene in incidents.

While we welcome this activity, it is clear that this does not go far enough and we must do more. For far too long women and girls like Zara have been failed. This is why this Government will treat VAWG as the national emergency it is. We will go further, using every available tool to target perpetrators and address the causes of abuse and violence. The Home Office will use the learnings from these initiatives to help inform future policy interventions. Universal education and prevention models aimed at the general public which centre around the acceptability of these crimes will be at the heart of this governments' mission.

Matter of concern 22

Business owners were aware of the offender's concerning conduct on the night of Zara Aleena's murder. For example, a public house had refused to provide more drinks to him. It is not clear whether business owners are encouraged to report such concerning behaviour to the authorities or whether they are offered any training to assist them and their staff to recognise sexualised or predatory behaviour.

I would also like to respond to concerns relating to business owners not doing enough to report sexualised and predatory behaviour, and concerns relating to staff training. All business owners are encouraged to report such concerning behaviour to the authorities. Additionally, the licensed sector often provides training to assist staff to recognise sexualised or predatory behaviour and to take the necessary action. However, your report illustrates clearly that there were failings and that much more work needs to be done to ensure this is happening in practice. I have asked my officials to consider how we can go further to encourage business owners and staff to report such predatory behaviour. As a

part of this mission, we will work across government to ensure these responsibilities are understood, and pathways are created.

Thank you for raising these important issues in your report. I hope that this response has been helpful in setting out that, as a new Government, we are fully prepared to use every available lever and resource to better safeguard victims and prevent devastating cases like this from occurring.

A large black rectangular box redacting the signature of the Home Secretary.A black rectangular box redacting the name of the Home Secretary.

Home Secretary