



**domestic
abuse
commissioner**

Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales
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Dear Prime Minister,

Domestic abuse has a devastating impact on victims and their families. As the Domestic Abuse Bill reaches its final stages in Parliament, I want to thank you and your team for their hard work on this over the last couple of years to get us to this point. I have had the honour of working closely with Ministers and officials over the last eighteen months and have been struck by the ambition and determination to drive through this important piece of legislation.

The Domestic Abuse Bill marks a monumental opportunity to improve access to support and justice for victims and survivors of domestic abuse. Crucial changes including, the legal right to settled housing for survivors, the statutory duty on local authorities to provide safe accommodation and the inclusion of children as victims of domestic abuse will be transformative in the way that we tackle domestic abuse and will undoubtedly help save lives. I look forward to working closely with the government in my role as the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales and utilising the powers granted to my office through the Bill to improve the services available to prevent and tackle domestic abuse.

To make the very most of this opportunity, I want to bring to your attention an amendment which I believe is fundamental for the provision of adequate domestic abuse support. Lord Polak, along with a number of other peers is leading on tabling an amendment to the Domestic Abuse Bill which will place a statutory duty on public authorities to provide community-based services. Community-based services provide a crucial lifeline of support to victims of domestic abuse and their children. Around 70% of people experiencing domestic abuse and receiving support will do so via community-based services rather than through accommodation-based services such as refuges. These services include specialist Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (whose critical role was recognised in your address during the Hidden Harms summit last year) helplines and perpetrator programmes, as well as specialist local agencies offering support for children. While the current duty in the Bill to provide a statutory underpinning for safe accommodation is extremely

welcome, without a similar statutory underpinning in the Bill for the provision of specialist community-based services there is a risk that local commissioners may redistribute their funding simply to meet the statutory duty placed on them to provide accommodation-based services, deprioritising critical community-based services that can prevent a victim of abuse from being forced to flee to a refuge and undoing years of work to move towards prevention and early intervention.

I understand that there is strong political support for this measure, both among Police and Crime Commissioners and Conservative politicians, but that there are concerns regarding the implementation of the duty in the next couple of months with a funding commitment from the Treasury. To help address these, I have attached a short note outlining a number of options which would ensure that community-based services are recognised on the face of the Domestic Abuse Bill, but would provide the government with a longer period to prepare for implementation, both in terms of preparing local commissioners and securing the funding required to fulfil a new legal duty to provide these services at the forthcoming Spending Review.

By taking this measure the government would provide a firm guarantee of early intervention support to victims and their children and significantly increase the possibility of them remaining in their homes. Given the significant impact that the past year has had on victims of domestic abuse, this would mark a significant political intervention to help them rebuild their lives as we move beyond the Covid-19 pandemic.

Thank you again for your continued support on this issue.

Yours sincerely,

Nicole Jacobs

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicole Jacobs". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales