



domestic
abuse
commissioner



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Dear Lord Chancellor,

We hope that you are keeping well. We would like to thank you again for our recent, productive discussions ahead of the publication of the end to end Rape Review.

As you will be aware, during the passage of the Domestic Abuse Act through Parliament, we strongly supported proposed amendments to place a legal duty on relevant public bodies (including PCCs, CCGs and local authorities) to deliver community-based services. Community-based services provide a crucial lifeline of support to victims and survivors of domestic abuse. Around 70% of people experiencing domestic abuse and receiving support will do so via community-based services, which enables them to continue living in their own homes and stay in close contact with existing support networks. These services often step in and provide support earlier, before harm escalates and victims are forced to flee their own homes. Where this is sadly necessary, community-based services are also vital in providing the support needed to help someone to access refuge accommodation.

We strongly welcome the new duty in the Domestic Abuse Act on tier one local authorities to deliver safe accommodation to victims of domestic abuse and their children, and it is our hope that this will lead to greater availability of vital refuge spaces and a more sustainable funding model in the longer term.

Without a similar legal duty for the provision of specialist community-based support, we are concerned however, that these services risk becoming marginalised in local planning and delivery. We recognise that there were some further considerations required before a new legal duty of this kind could be considered by the government, including a comprehensive understanding of the current landscape and gaps in the provision of community-based services and the funding required to implement the new duty. We therefore strongly welcomed the commitment you made to Lord Polak and other peers during the passage of the Domestic Abuse Act to include a proposed duty for community-based services as part of the upcoming Victims' Law consultation. This was also widely welcomed by charities, Police and Crime

Commissioners and health staff representatives' bodies. We also welcomed the amendment to the Act to place a duty on the Domestic Abuse Commissioner to publish a report which maps the provision of domestic abuse services across England and Wales within a year of the Act receiving Royal Assent.

The work of the Office of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner to map the provision of services across England and Wales is well underway. The survey carried out by the Office of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner of all services is currently open until early August. In addition, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner will be surveying survivors of domestic abuse to better understand their experiences of services through running a number of targeted focus groups with survivors and service providers to better understand some of the key issues around commissioning and provision of support in more detail. The Domestic Abuse Commissioner will be in a position to share early findings with you and officials in the autumn ahead of the Spending Review and will be publishing the full report in early 2022.

In light of the work that the Office of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner is currently undertaking to map services, and of the engagement of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner and Victims' Commissioner on the Victim Funding Strategy and the commitment made during the passage of the Domestic Abuse Act, we would welcome an opportunity to meet with you to discuss further the plans to consult on the new legal duty to provide community-based services.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss in more detail about the nature of the new proposed duty and what the consultation will specifically focused on. We would strongly welcome a duty that is placed on all relevant public bodies, including Police and Crime Commissioners, local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups. We would also support a relatively broad definition of specialist community-based support, which would include floating support, outreach and advocacy roles (e.g. IDVAs), open access services (e.g. helplines, drop-in and online web chats), recovery work (counselling, group work and support groups), children and young people services and perpetrator programmes.

The Victim's Bill provides a vital opportunity to provide a legislative underpinning for these integral community-based support services for both victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence, and we look forward to speaking to you about this in further detail at the earliest convenient opportunity.

Thank you again for your continued support on this issue,



Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales
Nicole Jacobs



Dame Vera Baird QC
Victims Commissioner for England and Wales

