

28 October 2021

Sent by email

Copies sent to Rachel Maclean, Parliamentary under Secretary of State at the Home Office

Dear Home Secretary,

I am writing to warmly welcome the commitment made in the Chancellor's speech yesterday to ensure that sufficient investment is made to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls and the increased spending allocation to the Home Office

To meet the objectives of reducing crime and protecting the most vulnerable victims, it will be crucial that sufficient investment is made to support the delivery of the Government's Violence Against Women and Girls strategy and forthcoming domestic abuse strategy, and that in particular a significant emphasis on the importance of preventing these crimes from ever taking place in order to reduce the human and economic costs. A strong cross-government approach to implementing these changes will be required to ensure that this responsibility sits with all agencies which interact with potential victims and perpetrators in order to maximise the opportunity for success.

A key pillar to preventing domestic abuse, is behavioural change programmes for perpetrators of domestic abuse. There are currently an estimated 400,000 perpetrators causing high and medium levels of harm across England and Wales, however fewer than 1% receive specialist interventions for their behaviour. The Commissioner considers the best approach to perpetrator management to be one that focuses on coordinated multi-agency responses with proven effectiveness, such as MATAc and DRIVE. Such responses must be adequately funded, with long-term sustainable funding accompanying the Government's proposed Perpetrator Strategy.

As you will be aware, a quarter of homicides in England and Wales are recorded by police as domestic homicides. Despite the very welcome introduction of Domestic Homicide Reviews, there has been no significant reduction in the number of domestic homicides each year and we are very concerned that vital lessons captured within these reviews are being lost. In response to this problem, I have proposed a clear oversight and accountability mechanism that would bring together learning from a whole range of reviews and would be led by my office, which would help to drive effective implementation and share lessons nationally in the long, as well as short-term. It would cost just over £100,000 to deliver this mechanism each year, which would bring greater robustness and transparency to the process, follow up on implementation of recommendations, and prevent future deaths.

To protect the most vulnerable and reduce crime effectively, it is essential that support services are tailored to meet the needs of those individuals. Specialist by and for services provide highly tailored support for groups of people with protected characteristics and those who experience the highest levels of exclusion from mainstream services. This includes LGBT+, Deaf, disabled and Black and minoritized victims and survivors of domestic abuse as well as migrant women. It is well established these victims and survivors are best served

by specialist “by and for” services. As the Government’s VAWG Commissioning Framework highlights, “investment in BME-led specialist organisations has been shown to deliver significant financial savings as well as a range of social benefits and outcomes for service users.” I have recommended a dedicated funding pot be made available to specialist by and for organisations. I strongly recommend that this pot should be administered directly from national government straight to frontline services to ensure that they are not disadvantaged by local commissioning structures which favour more generic providers. This funding stream should be utilised as an opportunity to allocate longer term sustainable funding to organisations, and incorporate capacity building to ensure the delivery of services to all victims and survivors, wherever they live. We know that access to support is a key enabler for victims and survivors to come forward to the police, and to stay engaged with the criminal justice system. Not only do we need support for victims to help them to cope and recover, but to bring serious and dangerous offenders to justice, and keep the public safe. A more detailed breakdown of the costs for different sectors in delivering specialist services is attached to this letter.

I have attached my full representation to the Spending Review, which has also been shared with teams at the Home Office and outlines these proposals in more detail, with full costings.

I would like to thank you again for the Home Office’s dedication in supporting victims of domestic abuse and bringing violent offenders to justice. I look forward to meeting with you to discuss these proposals at the earliest convenient opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicole Jacobs', with a stylized, cursive script.

Nicole Jacobs