



**domestic
abuse
commissioner**

Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales
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Anneliese Dodds MP
Minister of State for Women and Equalities
20 Great Smith St
London SW1P 3BT

cc. Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP

Dear Minister of State for Women and Equalities

I would like to warmly welcome you to your new role as Minister of State for Women and Equalities in this new government. Since my appointment as the first Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales in September 2019, I have had the privilege to act as an independent voice for victims and survivors of domestic abuse, drawing on my 30 years' experience in domestic abuse services, policy and intervention. I have used my statutory powers, which are set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, to hold both agencies and government to account to help improve the support provided to the 2.1 million victims and survivors of domestic abuse every year and to hold perpetrators to account. I very much look forward to expanding on this work with you in your new role.

I agree wholeheartedly with your assessment that we need a cross-Government approach to addressing violence against women and girls. I could not have put it better myself when you said *"While it is absolutely right that we focus...on criminal justice and policing matters, the solution will be found more widely in our schools, hospitals and workplaces. Not delivering that solution will fail women and girls."* Responding to domestic abuse is everybody's business; every part of the local community and every statutory agency has a role to play, in partnership with specialist services. In the same way, an effective national response to domestic abuse requires a multi-disciplinary approach which utilises the whole of the government's apparatus. As set out in your Manifesto's 'mission led' approach, tackling domestic abuse must be a genuine cross-Departmental priority for this new Government - working together to fully harness levers of change, overseen by robust governance and accountability and driven from the very heart of Government.

I fully support this Government's overarching commitment to halving VAWG in ten years, as well as that to rights and equalities for all, as underpinned by the Equalities Act 2010. I believe that both of these commitments intersect and support the other. My Office and I strive to continually refine an intersectional lens by listening to all victims and survivors of domestic abuse, no matter

who they are or where they are located, and I welcome Government taking a similar approach. Domestic abuse does not exist in a single form; it is unique to each person's situation and history. Different forms of domestic abuse, including controlling and coercive behaviours, coexist in most contexts and it is important to understand how power and control manifest in these situations. There are many different identities that victims and survivors may hold which play a crucial role in their experience of abuse, its impact and their ability to access pathways of support and recovery.

I also welcome the specific Manifesto commitments to strengthening worker's rights to equal pay, protections from maternity and menopause discrimination and sexual harassment. Economic empowerment of victims and survivors has a key role to play in a holistic response to domestic abuse, both in the access to means and resource to plan for safety and respond to risk, as well as in the rebuilding and resettlement following experiences of abuse. Equally, I was pleased to see the recognition of all forms of 'conversion' practices as abuse, and the commitment to implement a full ban.

I strongly agree that conversion practices, including those targeting trans identities, are always a form of abuse. When this abuse takes place within the home and is perpetrated by an intimate partner or by one or more family members towards an LGBT+ individual, this is a form of domestic abuse as defined in the Domestic Abuse Act. We know that even where victims appear to 'consent' to conversion practices, as is established in case law, harm or abuse cannot be consented to. When the Draft Conversion Practices Bill progresses through Parliament, I hope for your support in closing any potential legal loopholes where it is implied that non-physical forms of abuse, such as so-called conversion therapies, are deemed less harmful than physical violence.

As an independent Commissioner, my team and I are here to support, advise, and challenge. My small team of domestic abuse experts develop policy, conduct research, and collect practice insight to ensure that we can be at the forefront of thinking and understanding of what victims and survivors need. I would warmly welcome the opportunity to engage regularly with you in your new role, and remain available to you and your colleagues across Government to engage and advise on all issues relating to domestic abuse - as well as to facilitate, wherever needed, invaluable connections to the specialist sector and to victims and survivors themselves.

I would very much welcome a discussion at your earliest convenience on these important issues.

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