

# SafeLives' 2019 survey of domestic abuse practitioners in England and Wales



Idvas (Independent domestic violence advisors) and domestic abuse practitioners support victims, survivors and children to become safe, sooner. We champion their work and the need for all frontline professionals to be properly supported and funded.

Each year, for the Home Office, we collect data on the number of domestic abuse professionals in England and Wales and ask them about their experiences and challenges. This year's survey comes at a strategic time when Government is considering how to transform the domestic abuse response through its Domestic Abuse Bill.

## Key findings

### There are still not enough Idvas to support everyone at high risk of serious harm or murder – victims of domestic abuse face a dangerous postcode lottery

Idvas provide vital support to victims of domestic abuse who are identified as being at high risk of serious harm or murder. They are a lifeline for victims and their children – but we still need **at least 300 more Idvas** to support the number of people who need them.



Support across the country remains patchy: **nine police force areas have less than 50% of the Idva provision required** to meet the needs of victims at high risk of serious harm or murder.

**The Domestic Abuse Bill is a chance to change this. You should be able to access life-saving Idva support if you need it, wherever you live.**

### Victims of domestic abuse and their families need more help to stay safe at home

**Almost two thirds of Idva services are based outside of refuge provision**, indicating that while accommodation-based services are vital, victims and survivors need access to a range of options in the community. For those who require early intervention or recovery support, outreach provision remains patchy and inconsistent.



Young people experience some of the highest rates of domestic abuse, at high levels of severity. Despite this, almost **one in five police force areas have no specialist support for young people experiencing domestic abuse.**

**Almost one in five practitioners don't think the response in their area takes the whole family into account.** The Domestic Abuse Bill should introduce a statutory duty on local authorities to commission specialist domestic abuse services for all adult and child victims with a funding package to match.



**As part of the Domestic Abuse Bill, national and local Government must invest in the full range of services, to support adult and child victims before they reach crisis point.**

## The most vulnerable victims need support services in hospitals

We know that four out of five victims of domestic abuse don't call the police – so it's important that support services are located where they can make the most difference. SafeLives' Cry for Health research demonstrated the impact of locating domestic abuse support in a hospital setting; hospital based Idvas were able to reach victims sooner, and support some of the most vulnerable people.

**But the number of Idvas based in a health setting is still less than a quarter of what we need.**



**All hospitals should invest in an Idva service to ensure victims aren't just patched up and sent back into the arms of the perpetrator.**

## Perpetrators need to be held accountable, but funding is a barrier

For every victim of domestic abuse, there is someone responsible for that abuse – the perpetrator. In order to reduce the number of people experiencing abuse, we must hold perpetrators to account and challenge them to change their behaviour. However, **more than a third of services were not aware of a response to perpetrators of domestic abuse in their local area – with funding identified as the biggest barrier.** The Domestic Abuse Bill must address this.

**In order to end domestic abuse, national and local Government must invest more in provision which challenges the behaviour of perpetrators.**

