

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
The Rt Hon Jeremy Corbyn MP
Jo Swinson MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

05 November 2019

Dear Party Leaders,

Re: Protect victims of domestic abuse and their children

As representatives from across the children's, domestic abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls sectors, we are calling on the new Government to introduce domestic abuse legislation as a matter of urgency. This should include a new statutory duty on local authorities to commission a full spectrum of specialist domestic abuse services for all victims, including adults who want to stay safely in their own homes rather than flee, and for children and young people.

We know that children affected by domestic abuse are some of the most vulnerable in the country, and that domestic violence is the most common factor identified during assessments of children 'In Need' of support from local authority children's social care. Yet children are too often the 'hidden victims' of domestic abuse - left without the care and support they need to recover from harm and risk continuing the cycle of abuse in later relationships.

One in five police force areas in England and Wales has no specialist support for young people experiencing domestic abuse at all, and fewer than one percent of perpetrators currently receive any intervention to challenge or change their behaviour. Without tackling the root cause of the problem, domestic abuse will not be stopped.

Research suggests 25 percent of girls aged 13 to 17 report having experienced some form of physical violence from an intimate partner, but many do not receive support.

A statutory duty to commission a full spectrum of specialist domestic abuse services for all victims of any age, as well as perpetrators, would mean support would be available for the whole family, to prevent coercive control, violence and harm, and to help them forge a positive future. Victims who want to stay safely in their own homes would be supported to do so, and provision would be available for those who really have to leave.

We urge you to commit personally to introducing domestic abuse legislation as your first act should you be (re)elected Prime Minister, and for this to be included in your party's Manifesto.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Javed Khan, CEO, Barnardo's

Suzanne Jacob, CEO, SafeLives

Julie Bentley, CEO, Action for Children

Peter Wanless, CEO, NSPCC

Peter Grigg, Director of External Affairs, The Children's Society

Anna Feuchtwang, CEO, National Children's Bureau

Niki Scordi, CEO, Advance

Jemima Olchawski, CEO, Agenda

Professor Gene Feder OBE, Domestic Violence and Health Group, Bristol Medical School

Professor Louise Howard, Professor in Women's Mental Health

Fiona Dwyer, CEO, Solace Women's Aid

Cathy Ashley, CEO, Family Rights Group

Frank Mullane MBE, CEO, AAFDA

Guddy Burnet, Co-Founder, DAHA

Elizabeth Filkin CBE, Chair, Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse

Jenny Beck, Director, Beck Fitzgerald and Co-Chair Legal Aid Practitioners Group

Dr Nicola Sharp-Jeffs, Director, Surviving Economic Abuse

Donna Covey, CEO, AVA

Diana Fawcett, CEO, Victim Support

Suky Bhaker, Acting CEO, Suzy Lamplugh Trust

Shonagh Dillon, CEO, Aurora New Dawn

Estelle Du Boulay, Director, Rights of Women

Lyndsey Dearlove, Head, UK SAYS NO MORE

Harriet Wistrich, Founding Director, Centre for Women's Justice

Diana Nammi, Executive Director, IKWRO

Medina Johnson, CEO, IRISi

Abigail Ampofo, Director of Operations, Hestia

Gisela Valle, Director, LAWRS

Hannah Shead, CEO, Trevi House

**Professor Jane Callaghan, Director, Centre for Child Wellbeing and Protection,
University of Stirling**

Dr Emma Katz, Senior Lecturer in Childhood and Youth, Liverpool Hope University

Ruth Bashall, CEO, Stay Safe East

Jasvinder Sanghera CBE, Founder, Karma Nirvana