



## Ending domestic abuse

### SafeLives' priorities for the domestic abuse response 2024

#### The next Government must:

1. Put survivors' authentic voice at the heart
2. #Invest2EndAbuse
3. Support the whole family to get safe and recover
4. Prevent domestic abuse and challenge perpetrators
5. Model effective cross-departmental working to tackle domestic abuse
6. Enable migrant survivors to access safety and support

#### 1. Put survivors' authentic voice at the heart

*"It was not about reliving my past but about using my past to effect change."  
- Authentic Voice Panel Member*

- Authentic Voice is an essential part of a high-quality response to domestic abuse: it requires policymakers, commissioners, professionals, and services to highly value the expert knowledge, perspectives, skills and strengths survivors bring. Survivor voice, including the authentic voice of children and young people, must be at the 'heart and start' of national and local policymaking.
- Local commissioners should be under a duty to listen to a diverse and representative range of local survivors, with clear and accessible mechanisms for engagement, valuing their time and their input, and keeping them safe, in line with best practice.

#### 2. #Invest2EndAbuse

*"I left everything, my possessions, my job, my networks, and I know how hard that is.  
We need to be doing things earlier, before refuge is needed."  
- Survivor of domestic abuse*

- The vast majority of adult and child survivors of domestic abuse prefer to access support without moving into refuge, and only one in four services have dedicated provision for child victims of domestic abuse. The Government must address the postcode-lottery of support they face with a duty to fund community-based services for the whole family.
- Funding for victims must include services that prevent risk escalation and further harm from taking place. Preventing abusive behaviours, or reducing the impact of abuse through early intervention services, delivers long-term savings as the costs of intervening later are so huge, both in human and financial terms.
- Available funding for victims' support should be deployed more effectively and in a more focussed way to ensure high-quality, survivor-centred, specialist services are sustainably commissioned, and services run by and for marginalised survivors are more consistently available.
- Services run by and for marginalised survivors are six times less likely to receive statutory funding, so the Government should introduce a ringfenced, national pot for funding these crucial services.
- Funding must be made available to ensure that specialist domestic abuse provision is available where adult and child victims want to access it, for example, hospital based Idvas, and Family Court support.

#### 3. Support the whole family to get safe and recover

*"I would have liked something for [my] children. Like counselling or family therapy, especially for my eldest. [...] He really struggled."  
- Survivor of domestic abuse*

- Too often, the response to different members of the family is separated out. This lack of joined-up working means the impact of domestic abuse on the whole family is missed, and families receive disjointed and uncoordinated interventions. Provision must integrate the responses for adult members of the family (both victims and perpetrators), adolescents and children, and consider all risks to them in the round.
- Investing in evidence-based, risk-led responses which build on the strong foundations of effective Idva services and Marac for victims at highest risk can have a huge impact on adult and child survivors' lives and futures and save money for the public purse. This should include steps to develop Dash, the risk identification and assessment element of the domestic abuse response.
- Health and Education must be key system partners in the response to domestic abuse as both can intervene sooner, identify 'seldom seen' victims and survivors, and support their recovery. Both bear the costs of domestic abuse and must play an active role in the solution.
- Professionals involved in families' lives, including those across the Family and Criminal Justice Systems, and Children's Social Care workers, must undertake trauma-informed domestic abuse and cultural competency training to achieve safer outcomes for adult and child survivors.

- The Government must address the re-traumatising impact of the Family Courts on adult and child survivors of domestic abuse by urgently implementing the recommendations of the Family Harms Panel report and removing the Legal Aid Means Test for survivors of domestic abuse.

#### 4. Prevent domestic abuse and challenge perpetrators

“He was only in prison for 9 weeks. He came out with the same assumptions about women, the same anger. [...] Because he’s never had any intervention, he doesn’t think he’s done anything wrong.”

- *Survivor*

- Survivors tell us they want their perpetrators to access behaviour change programmes but too few perpetrators receive an effective intervention. Government departments must invest in evidence building and in provision for multi-agency partners to identify and challenge perpetrators to stop causing harm, including those from marginalised communities including LGBT+, and D/deaf and disabled perpetrators.
- Schools and educational settings should be supported to effectively teach children and young people about healthy relationships, including specialist training and support for teachers, and content addressing the specific needs and experiences of boys and young men, and LGBT+ pupils.
- The Government should commit to producing better guidance for young people, including addressing harmful practices such as choking, revenge porn, and non-fatal strangulation. The authentic voice of young people should inform policy development relating to their own safety and wellbeing.
- The Government should become a leader in focussing on the role men and boys can play in ending domestic abuse and violence against women and girls.

#### 5. Model effective cross-departmental working to tackle domestic abuse

“It’s so focused and everybody knows what they are doing and everybody is there together in that multi-agency approach. It makes things a lot easier and we’re able to reach a lot more of the victims.”

- *Domestic abuse specialist*

- We know the most effective response to domestic abuse is a joined-up one which engages the multi-agency partners involved in a family’s life. This should be modelled at the highest levels of Government, with a ministerial commitment to tackling domestic abuse and a cross-departmental working group chaired by the Prime Minister or a Secretary of State.
- Government funding rounds should demonstrate best practice, with accessible tendering processes, multi-year awards (eg, 3+2 years), and effective measurement and evaluation.
- The Government should take an equity-based approach to future policymaking and funding, redressing the historic under-representation of and support for Black, Asian and racially minoritised, D/deaf and disabled, LGBT+, migrant, and older victims of domestic abuse.

#### 6. Enable migrant survivors to access safety and support

“These marginalised survivors are being utterly failed at a time when they most need help, support and safety.”

- *Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales*

- Information sharing between statutory services and Immigration Enforcement is a barrier to migrant survivors reporting the abuse. The Government should introduce a firewall to enable them to access justice and specialist support without fear of deportation.
- The Government should extend the Domestic Violence Indefinite Leave to Remain (DVILR) and Destitution Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC) to all migrant survivors of domestic abuse, regardless of their immigration status or history.
- The Government should exempt migrant survivors of domestic abuse from the NHS charging scheme which sees those with outstanding medical debts automatically prevented from gaining Indefinite Leave to Remain.
- The Government should ratify, in full, the Istanbul Convention, removing the reservations to Articles 44 and 59.