



Ending domestic abuse

3rd July 2020

Dear Secretary of State (Priti Patel/Robert Buckland),

We write to you representing frontline community-based services for domestic abuse victims – adults and children, asking you to make sure the Domestic Abuse Bill specifically recognises the value and importance of our role in supporting families to be safe.

Between us, we serve the majority of victims seeking support – nearly 70% of domestic abuse victims. Through our Idva, outreach, helplines, children's and drop-in services we help families to find safety by working with agencies from the police to health services to ensure victims can access the support they need to be free from abuse. The Prime Minister at the Hidden Harms Summit acknowledged the critical role of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (Idvas) who in the last year have supported over 65,000 adult victims and 85,000 child victims – saving and rebuilding lives.

We recognise the incredibly valuable role that refuges have to play in offering some survivors a place of safety when there is nowhere else to go. But victims do not always need the protection of a refuge and can be safely supported to stay at home or in alternative housing, and the evidence base for this has been proven for over a decade.

That's why we are so disappointed that the Domestic Abuse Bill does not provide explicit recognition of community-based domestic abuse services. The proposed duty on local authorities to commission accommodation-based support risks creating a dangerous and unnecessary two-tier system, which ignores the reality of current provision of domestic abuse services and a victim's experience of them.

Community-based services will also often be a key referral point into accommodation-services, with domestic abuse professionals working with the victim to find accommodation which is most appropriate for them – whether that be their own home, council accommodation, private accommodation, or a refuge.

It is a missed opportunity to introduce a statutory duty which only speaks to such a small part of the options available to victims and fails to recognise the hugely important role of specialist children's services, as well as the vital need for perpetrator interventions. Together, these form an approach which speaks to the needs of the whole family and can be more effective in creating sustainable safety. The proposed duty as it stands puts the services that tens of thousands rely on at risk.

We know nearly 300 more Idvas across England and Wales are still needed to ensure minimum sufficient effective support for all victims of domestic abuse who are at high risk of serious harm or murder. There are nine police force areas with less than 50% of the Idvas needed to support these victims. Simply put, this is not good enough.

We urge you to reconsider your opposition to a widening of the statutory duty now, so that all of our services are placed on an equal footing, recognised in statute, and with the funding that is required to keep them open. Community-based services have been the subject of a number of reviews in recent years. We urge the Government not to wait for another one – which is expected to take 12 months – but rather to act now on the wealth of evidence about the difference they make. Work by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner can readily continue alongside this.

Our services have remained open during COVID-19 – our staff have moved heaven and earth to make that so – ensuring we don't let victims of abuse down. Now we look to you to continue that commitment by pledging to recognise the huge contribution of community-based services in the Domestic Abuse Bill.

The Government has shown that it is listening and is committed to making sure the Bill fulfils its whole potential. Important concessions have been made on the inclusion of children, and on making urgently needed changes to the Family Court. These additions by the Government have been so warmly

welcomed by survivors and campaigners. We hope that the Government is still able to make these further changes, which 70% of survivors in this country would benefit from.

“Idvas are like lifelines – they enable you to survive when you’re feeling very alone” – Survivor

Yours sincerely,

Suzanne Jacob OBE, SafeLives

Frank Mullane MBE, Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse (AAFDA)

Fatima Mourad, Chair, Al-Hasaniya Moroccan Women’s Centre

Annie Gibbs, Amour Destine CIC

Jane Simpson, Anglia Care Trust

Ashiedu Joel, Ashioma Consults

Sandra Beeton, Association of Panel Members

Andrea West, Berkshire Women’s Aid

Stephanie Price, Blue Door Support Service

Michelle Whelan, Calan DVS

Tony Saberi, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough DASV

Karen Travanti, Cambridgeshire County Council

Caitriona Scanlan, Camden Safety Net

Deborah King, Change Grow Live

Sarah Griffin, The Change Project

Jacki Murphy, Changing Lives

Judith Gibson, Cheshire East Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Service

Gillian Stobie, Cheshire West and Chester Domestic Abuse Intervention

Ayesha Fordham, City of London Corporation

Nadia Brown, Clean Slate

Cathy Press, Compassion

Alison Bourne, DASH Charity

Mary Driver, Derbyshire Community Health Services

Sarah Wigley, Domestic Abuse Training and Consultancy

Julie Chisholm, Dumfriesshire & Stewartry Women’s Aid

Nicola Lee, Early Childhood Partnership: Bedfordshire

Arron Samson, Eastlight Community Homes

Paul Abbott, East Riding of Yorkshire Council

Michelle Blunsom MBE, East Surrey Domestic Abuse Services

Emily Davison Centre
Mike Crowther, Empowerment
Nicola Marlow, Engage Leeds
Anna Clark, Equation Nottinghamshire
Zoe Mckee, Essex Domestic Abuse Partnership Project (EDAPP)
Richinda Taylor, EVA Women's Aid
Lyn Gooding, First Light
Anne Barguss, FLAG DV
Tina Hibbard, Flyde Coast Women's Aid
Gill Smallwood, Fortalice Ltd.
Kendra McCormick, Foundation UK
Tamar Nwafor, GAGE CIC – The Lioness Circle
Leni Morris, Galop
Heather Downer, Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service
Meena Kumari, H.O.P.E Training & Consultancy
Caren Barnfather, Harbour Support Services
Amanda Elwen, HARV Domestic Abuse Services and HARV Housing CIC
Stacy Smith, Her Centre
Robert Wheat, Hypnotherapy Horizons
Sarah Hill, IDAS
Diana Nammi, IKWRO
Sonia McKenzie, Inclusive Economy and Housing, London Borough of Newham
Jo Clayton, Bridges Domestic Violence Service/Jigsaw support
Yasmin Rehman, Juno Women's Aid
Rabiya Jiva, Marac Chair, Lancashire Police
Debbie Cowling, Leeds DVS – Behind Closed Doors
David Banks, Littledale Training and Development Service
Sally Winston, Lighthouse Women's Aid
Francine Jones, Liverpool Domestic Abuse Service
Kerry Dowling, Liverpool Idva Service
Debbie Hughes, Living Without Abuse
Frances Beecher, Llamau
Yvette Hazelden, Look Ahead Housing and Care Ltd
Sue Burke, MK-Act Domestic Abuse Intervention Service

Saskia Lightburn-Ritchie, MyCWA
Elaine Longshaw, Newcastle Women's Aid
Leanne McGachan, NIDAS
Judi Lincoln, Norfolk Community Law Service
Denise Farman, North East Lincolnshire Women's Aid
Victoria Roberts, North Wales Domestic Abuse Safety Unit (DASU)
Maureen Williams, MARAC Northamptonshire Police
Jane McKenzie, Northern Care Alliance (NCA)
Karen Richardson, Northumberland Domestic Abuse Service
Stephen Evans, Norwich City Council
Deborah Cartwright, Oasis Domestic Abuse Service
Adele Phiri, Oldham Council
Juliana Leigh, Oldham Domestic Abuse Service
Faye Oldroyd, Operations, Inspire North
Liz Jones, Oxford City Council
Paladin National Stalking Service
Pauline Ruth Consultancy
Jill Caldwell, Paws for Kids/Endeavour
Jen Gore, Pendle Domestic Violence Initiative
Helen Lee, Pennine Domestic Abuse Partnership
Shelley Morris, Peterborough & Cambridgeshire Domestic Abuse Service
Catherine Hill, Phoenix DAS
Ceri George, Platform for Life
Sue Caitland, Plymouth Domestic Abuse Service
Sharon Furtado, Portsmouth Idva Project
Salma Ali, Preston Domestic Violence Services
Saria Khalifa, Project Choice – Oldham Council
Gulcan Ocak, Refuge – Redbridge Violence Against Women and Girls
Janice Dent, Regional Lead Advisor Gwent VAWDASV Team
Fernanda Correia-Sefzick, Respeito
Jane Taylor-Morrell, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
Chloe Purcell, SAFE! Support for Young People Affected by Crime
Sharon Howard, Safe In Sussex
Paris Vrotherton, Safenet

Cllr Hamida Ali, Safer Croydon and Communities
Safer Together Partnership
Julia Carver, Safety Net (UK)
Dr Liza Thompson, SATEDA
Neil Frackelton, Sefton Women's Aid and Children's Aid (SWACA)
Julie Beck, SMT
Geraldine McGivern, South Ayrshire Violence Against Women Partnership
Pragna Patel, Southall Black Sisters
Fran Lewis MBE FCMI FRSA, Splitz Support Service
Guddy Burnet, Standing Together
Ruth Bashall, Stay Safe East – Supporting Disabled Survivors
Stephanie Mallas, Stockport Without Abuse
Cllr. Maria Linforth-Hall, Su Mano Amiga
Julie Beck, Supporting Safe and Confident Communities
Gillian Barnett, Tai Calon Community Housing
Mary Cosker, Swindon & Wiltshire Home Truths
Rachel Weir, The Cornforth Partnership
Jennifer Calverley, The Elm Foundation
Alice Harness, The Harbour Centre – Norfolk Police
Manjit Ray-Taylor, The People's Buddhi बुद्धि घेंपी
Polly Harrar, The Sharan Project
Shigufta Khan, The Wish Centre
Ewa Wilcock, Vesta Specialist Family Support
Diana Fawcett, Victim Support
Marlene Crane, Victim Support Scotland
Maureen Storey, Vida Sheffield
Ursula Lindenberg, VOICES
Becky Rogerson, Wearside Women in Need
Jenny Trevethan, West Cornwall Women's Aid
Laura Christer, West End Women and Girls Centre
Gwen Bleasdale, West Lancashire Women's Refuge Ltd trading as The Liberty Centre
Lisa Johnson, WHAG
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Rebecca Robson, Women's Community Matters

Corrine Devine, Women's Health in South Tyneside