



**domestic
abuse
commissioner**



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Sent by email (cc' Alex Chalk MP, Parliamentary Undersecretary at the Ministry of Justice)

Dear Lord Chancellor,

As we move towards new national restrictions to help reduce and control the spread of the Covid-19 virus, we are writing to outline our priorities for ensuring that victims and survivors of domestic abuse can access support and perpetrators are brought to justice.

While Covid-19 has not in itself caused domestic abuse, it has created a conducive context for it to happen. For many, this period has led to an escalation of violence and abuse, closed down routes for people to safely escape and made it more challenging to bring perpetrators to justice. As you will be very aware, there has been a surge in demand for domestic abuse services. Beyond the period of the tightest lockdown, the demand for domestic abuse services has continued to remain high as the impact of abuse continues.

During the last lockdown period, swift action from the government helped to ensure that vital funds were made available to domestic abuse services and there was a significant growth in public awareness as a result of the You Are Not Alone campaign.

As we enter into a second period of national lockdown it is essential that we renew and double down our efforts to tackle domestic abuse. We understand that the Ministry of Justice has been gathering vital evidence during this period from the services that were funded through the initial funding round about the volume and nature of the work they are carrying out and the projected costs required to continue to provide this vital support over the winter months. Based on these costings, we are calling on the Ministry of Justice to provide a second round of extraordinary funding due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic to support

services through to the end of the financial year of £16,304,991. Any further funding provided must have a proportion earmarked for specialist by and for domestic abuse services to assist those who face the greatest exclusion from services.

To maximise the resources for frontline domestic abuse services we are calling on the government to address the instability facing services by guaranteeing longer-term funding of at least a year from March 2021 until March 2022. Research carried out by Women's Aid in 2019, estimated a total cost of £393,326,676 to provide specialist community-based and refuge accommodation per year. This guarantee will help retain current staffing levels during the lockdown period. Furthermore, based on the patterns of demand for services, we also know that the pressure will continue to remain high for at least a six-month period following the tightest lockdown restrictions.

We want to thank you again for your support on this issue, and as ever, stand ready to support the government in its important work to help keep victims of domestic abuse safe and bring perpetrators to justice.



Nicole Jacobs
Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales



Dame Vera Baird QC
Victims Commissioner for England and Wales