



Dame Vera Baird
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MoJ ref: ADR 82999

18 November 2020

Dear Dame Vera,

DOMESTIC ABUSE FUNDING IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Thank you for your letter of 3 November 2020, regarding the importance of ensuring victims of domestic abuse can access support during the Covid-19 pandemic. As you highlight, these new national restrictions may make it more challenging for victims of domestic abuse. The Government is clear that those experiencing domestic abuse should not stay in danger, but should seek safety and support, as set out by the Prime Minister in his announcement of new national restrictions. Domestic abuse safe accommodation provision, including refuges, remains open for victims and their children during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I welcome your recognition of the swift action undertaken by the Government during the last lockdown period to ensure that vital funds were made available to domestic abuse services, and the significant growth in public awareness as a result of the You Are Not Alone campaign, and the Government is working with communications colleagues to explore a further push for the imminent November lockdown. The Ministry of Justice also committed in June to deliver a new communications campaign to support victims of sexual violence. This campaign is currently being developed in partnership with stakeholders and will seek to raise awareness of victims' rights and entitlements and the ways in which support can be accessed.

As you highlight, as we enter a second national lockdown it is essential to renew our efforts to tackle domestic abuse. Therefore, I am pleased to announce that we are making over £10m available to domestic abuse and sexual violence organisations, to help them to continue to provide valuable support to victims during the pandemic. This funding is in addition to the £22m COVID-19 funding already distributed to charities across England and Wales since May.

The Government recognises the importance of assisting those facing challenges accessing support. This is why we have worked with key stakeholders to develop guidance for commissioners around effectively supporting BAME victims through the local support services they commission. The guidance, which we are currently testing with Police and Crime Commissioners, aims to improve the effectiveness of services, and the level of engagement between victim support services and BAME victims - through better addressing barriers, raising awareness and understanding needs. This second round of funding includes

£7.7m to allow Police and Crime Commissioners to direct extra support to those organisations most in need in their local area.

I am aware that there are real concerns across the sector about sustainability of funding beyond this financial year. This additional £10m in funding supplements the core funding provided to PCCs each year. The SR settlement for the upcoming financial year is still being negotiated, and allocations will be confirmed shortly after.

The government recognises the ways in which support services have innovated and adapted to continue delivering their vital and life-saving services in the pandemic. We want to help the sector to continue to support victims in the most effective way, and as such the government has committed to developing a Victims Funding Strategy, and a new delivery model that will place the sector on a more sustainable footing in the long term.

We remain committed to ensuring victims of crime receive the support they need during this challenging time and continue to work across government, with the sector and local bodies to identify emerging needs.

Thank you again for getting in touch.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Chalk'.

ALEX CHALK MP