



Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales
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Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Her Majesty's Treasury
100 Parliament Street
Sent by email

Copied to the Home Secretary, Lord Chancellor, and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

24 November 2020

Dear Prime Minister and Chancellor,

Spending Review and funding to address Violence Against Women and Girls including domestic abuse

As the Commissioners for Domestic Abuse and for Victims in England and Wales, we write to you ahead of the Spending review announcement to call for effective, longer-term funding to support the Government's efforts to end Violence Against Women and Girls, including domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse affected over 2.4 million adults in the past year. The unacceptable fact remains that in this country one in four women will experience abuse from a

partner or ex-partner during her lifetime. We expect a huge spike in domestic abuse this year as a result of the Covid-19 lockdown. Abuse can blight lives for years to come, including those of children exposed to it and who are at heightened risk of a range of social ills, including becoming involved in crime themselves. The Government's own estimates are that domestic abuse cost society £66bn in the year ending March 2017, and this is itself likely to be an underestimate, as the impact on children was unable to be quantified. Not only does domestic abuse bring untold human cost, but in hard figures the impact on the economy is significant, including £1.4bn in lost economic output, £2.3bn in costs to health service, and £1.3bn in costs to the police, amongst many others.

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought domestic abuse to the forefront of public consciousness, at the same time as bringing into harsher light the inadequacy of current funding arrangements for the life-saving services that support victims and survivors. As people stayed at home, those subjected to domestic abuse were put in an incredibly difficult and dangerous situation. Calls to the National Domestic Abuse Helpline soared, over 70% higher than usual, with some more specialist helplines receiving even higher increases during this period. And, sadly, the Counting Dead Women project found that in the first three weeks of lockdown there were 14 women killed by men; the highest rate for at least 11 years.

We have consistently welcomed the emergency funding provided to services to address these shorter-term surges in demand. But now it is vital that effective, longer-term funding is provided to services as part of this week's Spending Review. The pandemic has demonstrated how critical these services are, with domestic abuse workers rightly recognised as 'key workers' during this period, and services showing remarkable resilience and working around the clock to keep victims safe.

However, funding remains patchy and short-term, with front-line organisations struggling to make ends meet and keep their services afloat. Many frontline workers have no funding assurance beyond March 2021. Without a strong message from Government and committed funding, these workers are at risk of receiving redundancy notices come Christmas and the New Year. We do not believe for a moment you want to see this happen.

Therefore, we call on you to this week – which coincides with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls – to show once again leadership and commitment to tackling domestic abuse and all forms of violence against women and girls through a strong funding package to support services and improve the response across England and Wales. Any new Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy must be backed up with Government funding to support our collective efforts to address these devastating crimes. We appreciate that this is an unprecedented time for our country and for public finances, but the cost of not funding services effectively is far too high.

We stand ready to assist in any way we can.

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicole Jacobs". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Nicole Jacobs
Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vera Baird". The signature is bold and cursive, with a large initial "V" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dame Vera Baird QC
Victims Commissioner for England and Wales