



Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales
2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4JA
commissioner@domesticabusecommissioner.independent.gov.uk

Victims Commissioner for England and Wales
5th Floor, 7 Petty France
London SW1H 9EX
Victims.Commissioner@victimscommissioner.org.uk

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Sent by email

Dear Deputy Prime Minister,

We want to thank you for taking the time to meet with us both recently to discuss the Victims' Bill. We believe that this has the potential to transform the way in which victims of crime navigate the criminal justice system and access the vital support services needed to help them with this process and rebuild their lives. We really appreciate your commitment to ensuring that this work is conducted in a timely manner and that the Bill process begins within this parliamentary session.

We very much welcome the publication of the consultation and will be responding within due course. Our teams are on hand for any further assistance officials may need during this period to help draw out the detail that will be most useful in formulating the draft Bill. We are concerned however, that an eight week consultation period, running over the Christmas season, will have a significant impact on both the detail that ourselves, the specialist domestic abuse and sexual violence sector, and victims and survivors of crimes are able to contribute to this important process.

Whilst we believe that an eight week consultation would, under normal circumstances, potentially provide the time needed, we are concerned that the very rapid escalation of the Omicron Covid-19 variant will severely limit the ability of organisations, who will inevitably have to prioritise staffing frontline services during the busy Christmas period, to respond in the detail required. As you will be very aware, the increased number of people who are required to self-isolate during this period, as a result of the very necessary public health measures, will lead to an increase in domestic abuse and sexual violence. It will therefore be essential that these small and underfunded sectors focus their resources and capacity on

supporting victims who are in immediate danger during this period. We are very concerned that without the input of both these survivors and expert sector groups in this consultation, that it will not fulfil its aims of ensuring that those who face the greatest barriers to accessing the criminal justice system are sufficiently supported.

We would also welcome further improvements to ensure that the consultation is accessible for Deaf and disabled respondents. There are currently no large print or Easy Read versions. We understand that these are only available upon request, creating further barriers to responding. We have echoed similar concerns that have been raised by VAWG sector organisations, led by Stay Safe East and SignHealth, with the Home Secretary on the need for accessible and inclusive consultations to ensure that all expert voices are factored into government policy-making.

This is a once in a generation Bill, which has been strongly welcomed by victims, survivors and specialist organisations providing support to those accessing the criminal justice system. We are concerned however, that without thorough input from them at this stage that this support for the legislation could be lost. We therefore call upon you to extend the deadline by four weeks to ensure that we are able to continue building on this support and that the Ministry can garner the richest response, from expert voices and those with lived experience.

We recognise that extending the consultation period would necessitate a compromise on timings elsewhere as the timetable is so tight and we would be happy to discuss what that might be.

Yours sincerely,



Nicole Jacobs

Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales



Dame Vera Baird QC
Victims Commissioner for England and Wales