

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street,
Westminster,
SW1A 2AA

1 February 2021

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to urge the Government to include community-based domestic abuse services within the Domestic Abuse Bill to ensure a holistic whole family approach to tackling domestic abuse.

While ensuring victims have access to safe accommodation is a vital part of the spectrum of support, the majority of domestic abuse victims, including children, do not step foot inside safe accommodation. The majority of victims (70 percent) remain at home or in the wider community accessing community-based support such as Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs), outreach support and child specialist workers. This includes victims at the highest risk of harm or murder who can be safely supported to stay at home or in alternative housing. As well as providing more specialist support for disabled, LGBT+, elderly, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and migrant victims who face additional barriers to leaving home and accessing services. Article 4 (3) of the Istanbul Convention, which the Government intends to ratify with this Bill, is very clear that there can be no discrimination in access to support and protection on any grounds. Specialist 'by and for' services in the community are vital places where these victims will go to disclose abuse and access support services. However, it is well documented that this provision of support, especially specialist services, varies across the country.

Our aim should not be to uproot the lives of adult and child victims, making them move miles away from their support networks, abandon their possessions and sometimes their livelihoods, take children out of school all whilst the perpetrator stays at home. Instead we should ensure victims can stay at home or in independent accommodation through well-funded community-based services. These services not only protect and support victims but provide programmes for perpetrators to prevent offending and reoffending, as we know that a quarter of high-harm perpetrators are repeat offenders and some have at least six different victims.

By excluding community-based services in the Bill we risk creating a two-tier system which may: lead to funding being diverted away from community-based services to ensure the new duty on local authorities is fulfilled; create a perverse incentive resulting in victims only having one option left if they need support and that is to place themselves at great risk by fleeing their homes; and exclude tackling the cause of domestic abuse, its perpetration.

To truly tackle domestic abuse we need to take a holistic whole-family approach with targeted interventions to:

- Support adult victims, no matter their status, access support including specialist support to rebuild their lives and recover.
- Support children and young people experiencing domestic abuse within their families or in their own intimate relationships.
- Ensure perpetrators access quality programmes to prevent offending and reoffending.

This is not an abstract idea or concept, this holistic approach is already being effective and successful in tackling domestic abuse in Norfolk, West Sussex and South Wales. Amendment [176](#), led by Lord Polak, would put accommodation and community-based services on the same statutory footing by placing a duty on the key public agencies who commission domestic abuse services, including local authorities, police and

crime commissioners and health to ensure support for all persons affected by domestic abuse; ensuring a holistic approach is available throughout the country. The Designate Domestic Abuse Commissioner has been clear that the results of their mapping exercise are not needed to introduce this change, and organisations have been calling on the Government to include community-based services and consult other public agencies about a duty for years.

Domestic abuse devastates the lives of millions of victims and survivors and the Government's own figures estimate the cost to society as £66billion (minimum). The pandemic has shown the huge importance of community-based services, though they are now stretched more than ever. We encourage you to look at what more the Government can do to ensure the majority of domestic abuse victims are not excluded from this Bill and a holistic approach is taken to truly transform our response to domestic abuse.

Yours sincerely,

The Lord Polak CBE

The Baroness Bertin

The Lord Alton of Liverpool

The Rt.Hon the Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top

The Baroness Benjamin DBE OBE

The Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

The Lord Bird MBE

The Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe

The Baroness Crawley

The Rt Rev. the Lord Bishop of Derby

The Baroness Fall

The Rt Hon. the Baroness Featherstone

The Baroness Goudie

The Baroness Healy of Primrose Hill

The Baroness Hussein-Ece OBE

The Rt Hon. the Lord Hunt of Kings Heath OBE

The Lord Hylton

The Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

The Baroness Lister of Burtersett CBE

The Baroness Masham of Ilton DL

The Lord Morrow

The Baroness Newlove

The Rt Hon. the Baroness Primarolo

The Rt Hon. the Baroness Royall of Blaisdon

The Lord Russell of Liverpool

The Baroness Scott of Needham Market

The Rt Hon. the Lord Smith of Finsbury

The Lord Storey CBE

The Baroness Uddin

The Baroness Watkins of Tavistock

Cc'd: The Rt Hon. Robert Buckland QC MP, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice; The Rt Hon. Priti Patel MP, Home Secretary; The Baroness Williams of Trafford, Lords Minister; The Lord Wolfson of Tredegar QC, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and Government Spokesperson.