



Sent by email:

Lord Polak

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4 March 2021

Dear Stuart,

DOMESTIC ABUSE BILL: COMMUNITY-BASED DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES

Thank you for your continued constructive engagement on exploring the provision of community-based support for victims of domestic abuse and the children in the Domestic Abuse Bill.

Your Committee stage amendment (amendment 176), is admirable in its desire to take a holistic approach to ensuring that adult and child victims of this terrible crime receive the support they need, no matter where they reside, and that perpetrators can access programmes to address their behaviour. The Government shares these ambitions and recognises the vital role that community-based services play in supporting victims.

You note that excluding community-based services from the Bill risks creating a two-tier system. As I hope is demonstrated in the Government's strategic funding commitments for 2021/22, we are sensitive to such concerns but we are confident that as a result of the new funding we are providing there is no reason why the implementation of the new duty in Part 4 of the Bill should have a detrimental impact on the provision of community-based support services.

As part of the Spending Review, the Government announced £125 million for tier one local authorities to fund the new duty in Part 4 of the Bill in respect of support to victims and their children within safe accommodation. In relation to community-based support services, the Spending Review also provided an additional £40 million funding for victims of crime. This brings Ministry of Justice victims' funding to nearly £140 million in 2021/22. £9.7 million of this will be for community-based domestic abuse services, with a further £8 million for Independent Domestic Violence Advisers who will be providing the majority of their support within the community. In addition to this, £800k of this will go to Finding Legal Options for

Women Survivors (FLOWS), a vital service for supporting domestic abuse victims to access legal advice and support.

I want to assure you that the Government is taking a strategic approach to preventing domestic abuse, supporting victims and tackling perpetrator behaviour. The forthcoming Domestic Abuse Strategy will build on the work of the Bill to transform our response to domestic abuse. The strategy will provide a comprehensive framework for supporting victims as well as a dedicated pillar on tackling perpetrators, ensuring that we address the issue from every angle. It will be published in summer 2021.

In recognition of the importance the Government places on the issue of community-based support, the Lord Chancellor, Minister Chalk and Lord Wolfson met with you on the 4th February. Following this constructive discussion, the Government has tabled for Lords Report the following Government amendments:

- I. A statutory duty on the Domestic Abuse Commissioner to publish a 'clause 8' report to Parliament on the provision of and need for community-based support services.
- II. A statutory duty on Tier 1 local authorities to keep under review and report on the impact of the safe accommodation duty on the provision of community-based support in their area.

At a further meeting on 3rd March, I underlined the Government's deep commitment to look at community-based support further. I can confirm that the Government will consult on the provision of community-based domestic abuse services in the upcoming Victims' Law consultation. The Victims' Law consultation will take place this summer and represents a seminal opportunity to examine these issues thoroughly. We will continue to work closely with you to ensure that you have the opportunity to contribute your views ahead of and during the consultation process.

I hope that this reassures you of the Government's deep commitment to ensure that all victims of domestic abuse, wherever they live, can access the vital support they need to cope, and as far as possible, recover from this abhorrent crime.

I am copying this letter to Lord Rosser, Lord Paddick and Lord Hunt of Kings Heath.



Baroness Williams of Trafford