

“Landmark moment” as Domestic Abuse Bill introduced to Parliament

The government’s landmark Domestic Abuse Bill will be introduced in Parliament today, signalling a major step forward in transforming the response to this crime.

The Bill is the most comprehensive package ever presented to Parliament to tackle domestic abuse, both supporting victims and bringing perpetrators to justice.

Following extensive work with stakeholders and charities, the government carried out a public consultation on measures to be included in the Bill that saw more than 3,200 responses.

[A draft of the Bill was published in January](#) and has undergone extensive scrutiny by a Joint Committee of cross party MPs and Peers as part of the government’s collaborative approach to ensure this historic legislation is correct. The Committee published a report on the draft bill in June and made a set of recommendations which the government has considered carefully.

Measures in the Bill include:

- introducing the first ever statutory government definition of domestic abuse, which will include economic abuse
- establishing a Domestic Abuse Commissioner to champion victims and survivors
- introducing new Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders to further protect victims and place restrictions on the actions of offenders
- prohibiting the cross-examination of victims by their abusers in the family courts
- providing automatic eligibility for special measures to support more victims to give evidence in the criminal courts

The Prime Minister, who launched the consultation at Downing Street in March last year, said:

Domestic abuse can take many forms, from horrific physical violence to coercive behaviour that robs people of their self-esteem, their

freedom and their right to feel safe in their own homes, but the immense bravery I've seen demonstrated by survivors is consistent throughout. We have a duty not only to bring the perpetrators of these vile crimes to justice, but to support victims as they rebuild their lives.

This Bill will help us do just that and represents a true step-change in our approach. It couldn't have happened without the victims, charities, campaign groups and frontline agencies who have worked alongside government to ensure we get this right, and as we reflect on reaching this important milestone together I want to express my thanks to them once more.

Responding to the Joint Committee's report, the government has either accepted or partially accepted the majority of recommendations and has committed to consider several further as the Bill progresses through Parliament.

Also being announced today are government plans to support asylum seekers suffering domestic abuse by ensuring they have access to refuges, ensuring that victims can receive the specialist support they need.

The government will also undertake a review into the statutory response to migrant victims of domestic abuse.

Home Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Domestic abuse destroys lives and tears families apart, but all too often it is hidden behind closed doors.

This landmark Bill is an opportunity to help those who suffer this deeply harmful crime and support those who bring the perpetrators to justice.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said:

This Bill marks a fundamental shift in our response to domestic abuse – establishing greater protections for victims, whilst ensuring perpetrators feel the full weight of the law.

By banning abusers from cross-examining their victims in the family courts, and giving courts greater powers through new protection orders, we are making sure the justice system is better equipped than ever to tackle this horrific crime.

Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability, Victoria Atkins said:

Having spoken to survivors of domestic abuse, I have been both

shocked by their stories and moved by their resilience and strength. As a government, we must do all we can to support those who have suffered this horrendous abuse.

The Domestic Abuse Bill goes further than ever before and recognises the complex nature of domestic abuse, while putting the needs of victims at the forefront.

In January, the government published a report into the economic and social cost of domestic abuse, which revealed the cost to victims of domestic abuse in the year ending March 2017 in England and Wales was an estimated £66 billion. It is estimated that around 2 million adults experience domestic abuse each year, affecting almost 6% of all adults.

The introduction of the Domestic Abuse Bill follows a meeting, hosted by the Prime Minister in Downing Street last week with domestic abuse survivors, frontline experts and charities, including Refuge, SafeLives and Women's Aid. During the event the Prime Minister reiterated her personal commitment to tackling this issue, which has been a priority throughout her career. Discussions were intended to inform the delivery of the Bill through Parliament, with attendees urged to continue pushing for change to stamp out abuse and support victims, and to work with the Prime Minister's successor in taking this important policy forward.