

Press release: First domestic abuse consultation event held in Birmingham

Victims minister Dr Phillip Lee joined more than 100 frontline professionals, police and charity representatives today in Birmingham, as part of a new blueprint to transform how the country deals with domestic abuse.

Some 50,000 domestic abuse incidents and crimes were reported to West Midlands police last year. Today (22 March 2018) the Minister heard views from a range of local experts and charities on what more can be done to support victims and tackle this devastating crime.

The event is a key part of a major government consultation on the issue, and the first of 6 to be held across the country— where the crucial insight gathered will be used to inform a landmark Domestic Abuse Bill.

Taking part in discussion groups, the Minister took away productive contributions on promoting awareness of abuse, improving services for victims and suggestions on how, together, we can best put an end to domestic abuse once and for all.

The consultation was launched earlier this month (8 March) with vital contributions also being sought from survivors and the public.

Victims Minister Dr Phillip Lee said:

Domestic abuse is an appalling crime, which destroys too many lives.

It is so important that we get this legislation right. Events such as this will help us understand how we can come together and end this devastating form of abuse, that can have a lifelong impact on its victims and on families.

Maureen Connolly, Birmingham & Solihull's Women's Aid said:

Through events like today we are ensuring we get the multi-agency and cross-government response needed to tackle this issue which devastates so many lives.

This is a once in a generation opportunity to shape legislation that has the potential to make real and effective change for women and children affected by abuse.

We owe a duty to women and children brave enough to seek our support to match their courage and provide the necessary social and welfare infrastructure to enable them to be safe.

Since 2010 the government has made tackling domestic abuse an absolute priority, with the consultation being a significant step in developing measures to be included in the draft Domestic Abuse Bill.

Proposals set out in the consultation include new Domestic Abuse Protection Orders to better shield victims against further abuse by enabling courts to impose a range of conditions on abusers. Measures also include plans to toughen sentences in this area, including where the abuse involves or affects a child; and the creation of a Domestic Abuse Commissioner to hold the government to account.

Economic abuse will be recognised for the first time as a type of domestic abuse, covering controlling circumstances in which victims have finances withheld, are denied access to employment or transport, or are forced to take out loans and enter into other financial contracts. This recognition will help frontline professionals, law enforcement officers and prosecutors take action more quickly and effectively to better support victims. Further events will be held in Newcastle, Cardiff, Manchester, London and Exeter.

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