

Press release: Government unveils new support for survivors of domestic abuse

- For first time ever legal duty placed on local authorities to deliver support to survivors of domestic abuse in accommodation-based services backed by funding to place services on a sustainable footing
- This new requirement will end the variation across the country in support for those fleeing domestic abuse
- Consultation part of wider government drive to bolster protection for survivors of domestic abuse, including landmark [Domestic Abuse Bill](#)

Thousands of survivors fleeing abusive and violent relationships will receive greater protection thanks to a new package of support, confirmed today (13 May 2019) by Prime Minister, Theresa May.

For the first time ever, councils across the country will be legally required to provide vital life-saving support in secure accommodation for survivors of domestic abuse and their children – ensuring need in their local area is met.

Domestic abuse is a devastating crime which shatters the lives of over 2 million survivors and their families every year.

While many local authorities are already providing tailored support to those fleeing violent relationships, more needs to be done to end the variation across the country in support and ensure a consistent approach across the country so all families are able to recover and overcome their experiences.

Local authorities will also be required to work together with neighbouring councils to ensure domestic abuse services reflects the needs of local people – including targeted, specialist support for BAME, LGBT and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller survivors.

Today's [consultation](#) complements wider work across government, including a landmark Domestic Abuse Bill which will introduce the first ever statutory government definition of domestic abuse to specifically include economic abuse and controlling and manipulative non-physical abuse. The Bill will also establish a new Domestic Abuse Commissioner and prohibit the cross-examination of victims by their abusers in the family courts.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

I've always vowed to leave no stone unturned in tackling domestic abuse – this abhorrent crime has no place in our country.

And today we are ending the postcode lottery by placing on local authorities a legal duty to deliver support, including secure

housing, to survivors of domestic abuse and their children.

Whoever you are, wherever you live and whatever the abuse you face, you will have access to the services you need to be safe.

Communities Secretary, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP, said:

Domestic abuse destroys lives and I am determined to drive the change necessary to ensure families never have to endure the pain of domestic abuse in silence.

For the first time ever, local authorities will have to legally assess level of support needed in their local area and match that need with vital, life-saving services – helping untold numbers of families to safely rebuild their lives, free from the threat of pernicious abuse.

These important measures will help us shape the future of the invaluable support survivors of domestic abuse and their children receive.

For the first time, local authorities will also be required to develop and publish strategies which set out in detail the range of support services available for survivors and their children – including refuge accommodation and specialist support from safety through to independence.

Funding will also be provided to place these vital services on a long-term, sustainable footing. The exact level of funding will be determined with stakeholders as part of the consultation process.

Through the consultation, ministers want to hear from victims and survivors, service and housing providers, local authorities, police and prime commissioners and other public agencies, as well as other professionals who support victims and their children every day.

In November last year, ministers awarded a further £22 million for domestic abuse projects across the country – ensuring thousands more survivors have access to the help they need as they move towards a safe and healthy future, free from domestic abuse. Funding will help to provide over 2,200 new beds in refuges and other safe accommodation, as well as access to education and tailored employment and life skills guidance.

Minister for Housing and Homelessness Heather Wheeler MP said:

It is our duty to ensure survivors of domestic abuse can access the support they need to restart their lives – we owe it to everyone who has experience of this terrible abuse.

I know from meeting with brave survivors when I recently visited a

newly opened refuge the worth of such facilities and the important work they do. That's why the measures announced today are so crucial and will help ensure that survivors are supported right across the country.

Sandra Horley, CBE, Chief Executive of Refuge, said:

Refuge is delighted by the government's decision to place a legal duty on local authorities to provide funding for accommodation based support for survivors of domestic abuse.

This has the potential to end the postcode lottery for refuge places and could put these life-saving services on a secure financial footing for the first time.

It could provide vital protection to tens of thousands of women and children who experience violence and intimidation in the home. Women and children deserve and need to live in safety.

Nicki Norman, Acting co-Chief Executive of Women's Aid, said:

We warmly welcome this announcement which shows the government's commitment to the long-term funding of lifesaving refuges.

At Women's Aid we have been campaigning since 2014 with our SOS campaign to protect and fund the national network of refuges, and with many of our member services delivering services on a shoestring budget, a move to consistent, dedicated funding is desperately needed.

Safeguards to ensure that experienced women's services – including smaller specialist organisations led by and for black and minority ethnic women – are sustainably funded through a new statutory system will be vital.

Key to this is seeing quality standards, such as those developed by Women's Aid and Imkaan, at the heart of implementation – alongside real national oversight to end the postcode lottery and ensure no survivor is turned away from the support they need.

We look forward to working with the government to ensure that this important move to fund refuges is safe, sustainable and delivers the resources that services urgently require to support all women and children fleeing domestic abuse.

Suzanne Jacob, Chief Executive of SafeLives, said:

No one harmed by domestic abuse should have to leave their home. We

have long called for victims and their families to have the broadest range of housing options so they can choose to stay where they are and for it to be safe to do so.

We welcome this consultation and call for the fullest range of support to be considered, including sanctuary schemes and specialist community support alongside refuges. A new duty, properly funded, would be a welcome step and could help make the case for change at local level.

We want to see adoption of the standards devised by the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance which set out best practice for public, private and social landlords and for councils to accept the need to house people from outside their own area so survivors can be sure they are far from harm's way.

The [consultation](#) will last for 12 weeks. The government will set out its response in due course.

In November 2018, Minister Wheeler confirmed that 63 projects across England were to share £22 million to help domestic abuse survivors. Find [more information](#).

Funding will help to provide tailored support to more than 25,000 survivors and their families – including over 2,200 additional beds in refuges and other safe accommodation.

The funding builds on other actions being taken by the government to end domestic abuse, support survivors and ensure offenders are prosecuted. Such as:

- a new domestic abuse offence to capture coercive and controlling behaviour, the criminalisation of forced marriage and the introduction of new stalking laws
- a national roll-out of domestic violence protection orders and the domestic violence disclosure scheme
- the £15 million 3-year Violence Against Women and Girls Service Transformation Fund