



**domestic
abuse
commissioner**



Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales
2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4JA
commissioner@domesticabusecommissioner.independent.gov.uk

Victims Commissioner for England and Wales
5th Floor, 7 Petty France
London SW1H 9EX
Victims.Commissioner@victimscommissioner.org.uk

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Sent by email (cc Minster for Safeguarding, Victoria Atkins MP)

Dear Rt Hon Priti Patel MP,

As we move towards new national restrictions to help reduce and control the spread of the Covid-19 virus, we are writing to outline our priorities for ensuring that victims and survivors of domestic abuse can access support and perpetrators are brought to justice.

While Covid-19 has not in itself caused domestic abuse, it has created a conducive context for it to happen. For many, this period has led to an escalation of violence and abuse, closed down routes for people to safely escape and made it more challenging to bring perpetrators to justice. As you will be very aware, there has been a surge in demand for domestic abuse services. Beyond the period of the tightest lockdown, the demand for domestic abuse services has continued to remain high as the impact of abuse continues.

During the last lockdown period, with thanks to yours and the Prime Minister's strong national leadership vital funds were made available to domestic abuse services and there was a significant growth in public awareness as a result of the You Are Not Alone campaign.

As we enter into a second period of national lockdown it is essential that we renew and double down our efforts to tackle domestic abuse. We have attached a longer policy note outlining in more detail the specific measures which we believe are necessary to assist the government in meeting its objective to support victims during this period.

Continuing to raise public awareness through national briefings on the support available to victims of domestic abuse and maximising the impact of the You Are Not Alone campaign will be extremely important. Building on from the swift action during the last national lockdown, evidence from frontline services highlights both the value and necessity of a

second round of extraordinary funding due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic to support services through to the end of the financial year.

To maximise the resources for frontline domestic abuse services we are calling on the government to address the instability facing services by guaranteeing longer-term funding of at least a year from March 2021 until March 2022. Research carried out by Women's Aid in 2019, estimated a total cost of £393,326,676 to provide specialist community-based and refuge accommodation per year. This guarantee will help retain current staffing levels during the lockdown period. Furthermore, based on the patterns of demand for services, we also know that the pressure will continue to remain high for at least a six-month period following the tightest lockdown restrictions.

We want to thank you again for your support on this issue, and as ever, stand ready to support the government in its important work to help keep victims of domestic abuse safe and bring perpetrators to justice.



Nicole Jacobs
Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales



Dame Vera Baird QC
Victims Commissioner for England and Wales