



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Caroline Lucas MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Mrs Heather Wheeler MP
Minister for Housing and Homelessness

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Dear Caroline,

18.7.19

Thank you for your email of 27 June to Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP about safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse. I am replying as this matter falls within my ministerial responsibilities.

Firstly, I want to assure you that we are absolutely committed to protecting victims of domestic abuse. This is why we are consulting on the future delivery of support to victims and their children in accommodation-based domestic abuse services in England. I believe that our proposals to introduce a statutory duty on local authorities to provide support in safe accommodation will make a real difference to the lives of victims of this abhorrent crime.

I agree we must ensure that the issue of funding for these services is properly considered, and we will continue to engage with local authorities and Departments across Government through the consultation to collect further evidence. Funding beyond March 2020 will be subject to a decision at the next spending review. Through consultation, we will carefully consider all the responses to ensure that our proposal for implementing the duty works for everyone.

We have spoken to domestic abuse sector partners, including specialist providers, to understand how we can safeguard the provision of support to victims and their children with protected characteristics. We are proposing a duty which requires a partnership approach to supporting victims and their children based on a robust understanding of local need for support. We will continue to work with stakeholders to ensure we have the fullest picture of what is required locally and that it meets the needs of all victims.

Additional protections for this provision are set out in our proposals and include the introduction of guidance. This guidance will clarify Government expectation regarding support for *all* victims of domestic abuse and their children, including those with protected characteristics and those that serve a national need. Further protection will be facilitated through our proposed Ministerial-led National Steering Group, which will monitor provision that serves a national need.

I recognise the importance of victims and their children being able to access safe accommodation outside of their local area. That is why we propose within the statutory duty councils across the country are to work closely with local providers, and will be required to undertake a robust assessment for all survivors and their children both within and outside of their local area and use this to inform their local strategy.

Councils will also be required to report back to central Government, so we can better understand how the system is working, where the challenges are and ensure councils are held accountable where the needs of victims and their children are not being met.

Thank you for taking time to write on this important issue. We will of course continue to closely engage with a range of stakeholders, including domestic abuse sector partners, local authorities and across Government, to better understand how we can safeguard this crucial provision and protect vulnerable women and children who rely on it.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mrs Heather Wheeler', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

MRS HEATHER WHEELER MP