

Local Government Association Briefing

Support for survivors of domestic abuse

House of Lords

22 March 2018



Key messages

- Domestic abuse is a horrendous crime, which can have a long-term and devastating impact on families, particularly children. It can take the form of psychological, physical, emotional or economic abuse, and occur in a wide range of domestic settings.
- The Government's consultation on the Domestic Abuse Bill and other non-legislative announcements is a positive step towards tackling domestic abuse. We particularly welcome the Government's allocation of £8 million towards support for children who witness domestic abuse, which followed the [LGA's call](#) for an urgent injection of funding into early intervention initiatives that provide support for children experiencing domestic violence.
- Councils want to prevent domestic abuse from happening, rather than just tackling the impact of it. The safety of victims has to be paramount, and where necessary they and their families should have the support to move somewhere safe. However, it still feels as if our default approach is to disrupt the lives of the victims, rather than disrupt the lives of perpetrators and this is not fair. Where it is safe and appropriate to do so, we should ensure it is perpetrators that have to move out the family home, not the victims.
- The LGA has called for an early intervention and preventative approach, to tackling domestic abuse. Reducing domestic abuse over the longer term means looking at what young people are taught about relationships. It must also include looking at what children and young people are watching online and the impact this is having on their views about appropriate behaviour in a relationship.
- It also means looking at funding perpetrator programmes. With a lack of evidence available regarding the most effective interventions for perpetrators, we need to know what works and why it works so we can put in place effective interventions. There is an important role for the Commissioner in this agenda.
- We will continue to work with the Government and our local government partners on this important issue – and will be encouraging councils to respond to the Government's consultation.

Background information

Domestic violence and abuse

Addressing all forms of domestic violence and abuse, which have a profound and devastating effect on victims and their families, is a high priority for councils. We support the Domestic Abuse Bill's objectives of ensuring that victims feel able to report abuse and are confident that organisations will do everything possible to support them and their families and pursue their abusers.

Providing a clear definition in law of domestic abuse will provide useful clarity for councils and other agencies in undertaking their work, as well as underpinning the remainder of

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the Bill. We welcome the inclusion of economic abuse as part of the new definition in the legislation.

The creation of a Domestic Violence and Abuse Commissioner will be a useful step in raising the profile of domestic violence abuse and ensuring momentum in strengthening organisations' approach to it, as has been the case with the appointment of a Modern Slavery Commissioner. Councils will expect to work collaboratively with the new Commissioner to support the objectives of the Bill and embed good practice across the country.

National Statement of Expectations

Councils are working towards achieving the objectives set out in the National Statement of Expectations (NSE). The NSE, published in December 2016, aims to provide a framework for collaborative, robust and effective local provision. The objective is for local services to be victim-centred, strategically commissioned, and include a focus on safeguarding individuals, managing perpetrators and local awareness-raising. It covers five key areas for councils that will support the objectives of this Bill: putting the victim at the centre of service provision; managing perpetrators; a strategic approach to commissioning; safeguarding individuals, and raising awareness.

This is a framework which is broadly supported across sectors. Councils have, for example, used the NSE as a tool to help inform how they map needs and want partners to work together; changed commissioning processes, so that the focus is on gender-based violence; and, broadened their focus from domestic violence to include issues such as trafficking.

A VAWG Service Transformation Fund was also launched by government to support areas to work towards achieving the aims of the NSE, with areas invited to bid for funding to cover specific work. Recipients of funding, including local authorities, were announced in October 2017.

It will be important that there is consistency between the approach of the new Commissioner and the NSE.

Media releases

- [LGA responds to Domestic Abuse Bill consultation](#)
- [LGA responds to new sentencing guidelines around domestic violence incorporating text and email abuse](#)
- [Half of children in need referred to councils experience domestic violence](#)
- [Queen's Speech: LGA responds to draft Domestic Violence and Abuse Bill](#)