

Kelly Tolhurst MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rough Sleeping & Housing
MHCLG, 2 Marsham St
Westminster
London
SW1P 4DF

8th October 2020

Dear Minister

Housing pathways for perpetrators of domestic abuse to facilitate their rapid removal from family home

We are writing to congratulate you on your new role and introduce ourselves as individuals and organisations who are dedicated to ensuring that the Home Secretary Priti Patel's welcome intention that, where possible and safe, "perpetrators should be the ones who have to leave the family home, not the supposed loved ones whom they torment and abuse"¹ becomes a reality.

We are committed to working with you and your team to build models that are cost-effective for local authorities and central government to enable the safe removal of perpetrators of domestic abuse from the home and prevent the homelessness of adult and child victims.

We believe that there is a significant and innovative role the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government could play in turning the tide on domestic abuse.

We recognise that there will be times when the only safe option available for victims is for them to leave and welcome the considerable efforts of your department in ensuring that this option is always available.

However, we are increasingly aware of circumstances where a perpetrator is unable to access alternative accommodation and is returning to the family home, thus putting the victim at continued risk. There are particular challenges around:

- Perpetrators being classed as 'intentionally homeless'.
- Perpetrators being released from prison and navigating back to victims' addresses for want of alternative accommodation.
- The reluctance of some judges to make someone homeless through the granting of a Domestic Violence Protection Order or Occupation Order (see case study below), thereby preventing the police from using this tool effectively.
- The onerous cost and nature of the process by which landlords can transfer a tenancy from a joint tenancy into a victim's name, in cases where there has been domestic abuse, to remove the perpetrator. There is scope for streamlining this so that when a charge has been made and a DV Protection Notice has been issued, the landlord can simply and quickly transfer the tenancy to the victim's name.
- There are also many cases of those who voluntarily recognise the need to move out of the family accommodation linked to their behaviour but are unable to do so.

Without a viable housing pathway for the perpetrator – which can sit as one element of a Whole Housing Approach² – we risk exposing past, current or future victims to abuse. The perpetrator may be rightly removed from one address to enable the adult and child victims to stay in their own home,

¹ Home Secretary Priti Patel, public coronavirus briefing, No10 Downing St. April 11th 2020

² The Whole Housing Approach (WHA) endeavours to improve the housing options and outcomes for people experiencing domestic abuse so that they can achieve stable housing, live safely and overcome the abuse and its harmful impacts. <https://www.dahalliance.org.uk/what-we-do/whole-housing-approach/>

but without a proper plan around the perpetrator's housing and behaviour, they will likely move in with another partner, ex-partner or family member. This just transfers the problem elsewhere and puts further people at risk. Whilst the behaviour change element is being discussed with the Home Office and Ministry of Justice, it would be very helpful to progress the housing question with you.

A fresh approach to this issue could be timely as the government puts through its flagship Domestic Abuse Bill. The Bill includes provision for the new Domestic Abuse Protection Order (DAPO) which will be piloted over the next two years. These pilots are an opportunity to address some of the accommodation related challenges that have limited the effectiveness of DAPO's predecessors, DVPN and DVPOs, and ensure that – from an MHCLG point of view – DAPOs are fit for purpose.

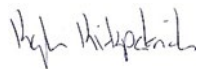
Secondly, the new legislation proposes that local authorities consider the accommodation needs of victims and it is our view that there will be times when those needs are best served by re-housing the perpetrator. If we can work together with you to prepare local authorities to be ready for those times, we anticipate better outcomes for victims.

We fully recognise that availability of housing is a huge challenge and that any models we develop will need to be financially sustainable. Given the significant costs of rehousing adult and child victims we are confident that this approach has the potential to generate cost savings, though it will always need to exist alongside emergency housing for victims.

We are keen to explore the potential of social investors in this area and share with you details of good work already underway which MHCLG might like to help highlight going forward.

If possible, we would welcome a meeting with you to discuss these important matters and to explore how we can work with you and your team. Please contact with Veronica Oakeshott, Head of Public Affairs, Drive Partnership at veronica.oakeshott@respect.uk.net.

Yours Sincerely,



Kyla Kirkpatrick, Director, The Drive Project

Suzanne Jacob OBE, CEO, SafeLives

Jo Todd, CEO, Respect

David Hutchison, CEO, Social Finance

Karen Evans, Chair, North East Hampshire Domestic Abuse Forum

Gudrun Burnet, CEO, Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse and Co-Founder, Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance

Kate Henderson, CEO, National Housing Federation

Polly Neate, Chief Executive, Shelter

Sophie Linden, Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime

Tom Copley, Deputy Mayor of London for Housing

David Jamieson, West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner

Kim McGuinness, Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner

Councillor Darren Rodwell, Council Leader, London Borough Barking and Dagenham

Councillor Maureen Worby, Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration, London Borough Barking and Dagenham

Superintendent Sharon Donald, Domestic Abuse Lead, Devon & Cornwall Police

Pragna Patel, Director, Southall Black Sisters

Dr Nicola Sharp-Jeffs, CEO, Surviving Economic Abuse

Professor Amanda Robinson, Professor of Criminology, Cardiff University

Professor Marianne Hester OBE, University of Bristol

Shigufta Kahn, CEO, The Wish Centre

Maureen Connolly, Chief Executive, Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid

Rebecca Bryant OBE, CEO, Resolve

Anthea Sully, CEO, White Ribbon UK

Abigail Ampofo, Director of Operations, Hestia

Michelle Hill, CEO, Talk Listen Change

Umme Imam, Executive Director, The Angelou Centre

Fran Lewis MBE FCMI FRSA, Executive Director, Splitz Support Service

Hannah Hoare, Executive Director, The Blue Thread

Amanda McIntyre, CEO, The For Baby's Sake Trust

Peter Glass, Executive Director of Operations, Cranstoun

Mark Brooks OBE, Chairman, The ManKind Initiative

Case Study 1

A male perpetrator was sentenced to custody relating to a physical assault on his mother who he was living with at the time of the offence. Upon his release, his mother (rightly) refused to let him return to her home and having (in his mind) no other options, he returned to the home of his ex-wife who he had repeatedly abused for many years and who had spent the past few years re-building her life and that of her children. She felt unable to 'make' him homeless and reluctantly agreed for him to stay for a short while, however, the coercive control and abuse re-commenced, compromising again her safety and that of their children.

Case Study 2

During Covid-19 lock-down restrictions, an application was made for a Domestic Violence Protection Order, however, the judge ruled against the application due to lack of alternative accommodation being available to the perpetrator for the 28-day period. The abuser returned home putting the victim at risk again. In response to this case, the police worked with the relevant Local Authority to identify ways in which temporary accommodation could be made available to try and avoid this situation in future cases.