



Coronavirus

Urgent actions needed to tackle domestic and sexual violence

The Coronavirus crisis has thrown a spotlight on the very high levels of domestic abuse and male violence against women and girls in our society. The crisis will also create additional opportunities for abusers. We need action now that will minimise such opportunities, but we also need a long-term commitment to tackling this endemic problem once this crisis has receded.

We believe that much more needs to be done to address the needs of anyone facing violence or exploitation but we make no apology for reasserting our commitment to the provision of separate single-sex services which meet the needs of women and girls.

We urge you to call on the relevant policy makers and funders to implement these demands:

1. **Increased, additional, centrally administered funding for core services** which must be maintained in the long term. This must include planning for the increase in demand for services when restrictions are lifted as many women will not be able to seek help at the moment. Such funding should be targeted at under-funded and specialist services which may not have benefited from generalised funding such as those meeting the needs of BME women, women with alcohol/drug problems or providing single-sex provision.
2. **An immediate commitment to [repurpose the last Tampon Tax Fund](#) to fund specialist women's charities** in the form of unrestricted grants. This fund was not previously ring-fenced and specialist women's charities lost out.
3. **Additional provision of safe, properly resourced and staffed accommodation** including specialist single-sex provision for homeless women.
4. **A guarantee that all restraining orders will automatically be extended** until after social distancing measures are removed.
5. **Quicker Disclosure and Barring Service checks (DBS)** to enable more efficient appointment of staff to specialist services.
6. **More central funding for specialist services to provide additional IT infrastructure**, including the capacity to ensure that confidentiality/security issues can be enhanced, especially during this lockdown when women cannot meet in person.
7. **Additional funds to support women in refuges isolating** and/or with the virus.
8. **Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)** for those delivering face to face services.

9. **An amnesty on sanctions for those with insecure or no immigration status** including suspension of 'no recourse to public funds policies' with a commitment to an end to such policies in the long term.
10. **Support for women in prostitution with a focus on facilitating an exit from the trade.** This should include specific measures for those with insecure immigration status, drug problems and any other additional needs.
11. **Specific support to women accessing drug and alcohol services,** many of whom end up 'sofa-surfing' where they are vulnerable to sexual abuse.
12. **End the presumption of parental involvement in s.1(2A) of the Children Act 1989. Centre the rights of women and children** to live free from the risk of harm in Family Court decisions regarding contact with an abusive parent.
13. **Better protections around child maintenance payments** to ensure they reach the primary caregiver and are not withheld as a form of financial abuse.
14. **Better access to emergency and regular forms of contraception** and other sexual & reproductive health services.
15. **The provision of mobile phones** (that are unknown to the abuser) and panic/alarm systems.
16. **IT companies to be responsive to women's requests** to identify on-line tracking, spying and stalking systems and remove them or find ways round them.
17. **Police and other agencies to look at their data on known abusers and take proactive steps to protect women and children** from domestic violence, child sexual abuse and sexual violence. Ensure that multi-agency support to women identified as being at high risk of serious and repeated violence from known perpetrators, continues to be coordinated via Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs), that high risk perpetrators are proactively monitored, and that the Domestic Violence Disclosure scheme continues to operate.

Woman's Place UK

10th April 2020