

**24 November 2020**

**Fortnightly Update from the Domestic Abuse Commissioner**

**Background**

1. Every fortnight, Nicole Jacobs chairs a conference call with national helpline providers, second tier organisations, and Government Departments to share emerging trends, facilitate cross-sector working, and to escalate issues as required.

**Helplines**

2. **Call volumes into national helplines continue to exceed pre-Covid levels, with the National Domestic Abuse Helpline run by Refuge reporting demand is approximately 50% higher than pre-Covid averages.** Welsh Women's Aid's Live Fear Free helpline has experienced increases in severity and complexity of calls post firebreak lockdown. Karma Nirvana's Forced Marriage helpline experienced a 52% increase in contacts following the announcement of England's second lockdown at the beginning of November.

**Funding and Policy Updates**

3. **Pre Spending Review the Home Office announced £7m in funding towards perpetrator programmes, and the MoJ announced £10m additional funding to support VAWG and DA organisations as part of emergency Covid-19 related funding through to March 2021.**
4. **The Domestic Abuse Commissioner and the Victim's Commissioner have written jointly to the PM and Chancellor calling for long-term, sustainable and effective funding for the domestic abuse and wider VAWG sector.** Following Departmental allocations on 25<sup>th</sup> November, they will follow up with more detailed letters to the HO, MHCLG and MoJ to encourage the prioritisation of domestic abuse/VAWG funding within their allocations.
5. **The Sector continue to voice serious concerns for front-line domestic abuse services facing a cliff-edge of funding in March 2021, with many organisations lacking funding certainty beyond this point.** Without funding certainty by Christmas organisations may be forced to issue redundancy notices to staff. Long-term funding certainty will be vital to retain staff expertise and keep critical services running.
6. **Staff burn-out has become an increasing issue for front-line staff, with clinical supervision often not covered by mainstream funding.** This has been particularly the case during the pandemic, when front-line workers have worked around the clock to support survivors - often in the absence of other services - and emergency funding does not cover the clinical supervision that is needed to address burnout, stress and vicarious trauma.