



Ms Carole Easton
Acting Chief Executive, Refuge
Cordelia_TuckerOSullivan@refuge.org.uk

HOCS Reference: MIN 6003/20

14 October 2020

Dear Carole,

Please convey my thanks to Sandra for her letter of 3 April to the Prime Minister, copied to the Home Secretary, on behalf of the violence against women and girls sector about preventing and responding to an increase in violence and abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic. I am providing a response on behalf of the Government as the Home Office Minister for Safeguarding. I am very sorry indeed for the delay in responding to Sandra's letter. Events have moved on significantly since your letter (and we have of course spoken on the phone) so I have taken the opportunity to reflect that in this response.

All forms of violence against women and girls are abhorrent at any time and the Government recognises that the very necessary steps being taken to safeguard public health are likely to place some people in an even more vulnerable, isolated and dangerous situation.

The Government has maintained regular contact with the Domestic Abuse and Victims' Commissioners, who are very closely engaged in identifying and advising on the resolution of emerging issues. We have collaborated with and continue to work with domestic abuse charities on developing and publicising key messaging, aimed not only at victims and the general public but also at perpetrators. It is crucial that the police continue to investigate and prosecute offenders, sending a clear signal that the current situation can be no excuse for abusive behaviour. The Home Office has also launched an enhanced communications campaign on domestic abuse, #YouAreNotAlone, which signposts the support available.

As you know the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Ministry of Justice and the Home Office have provided additional funding to help support domestic abuse and sexual violence services during this period, from the £750 million package for charities announced by the Chancellor. This was in addition to the £2 million funding announced in April by the Home Secretary to bolster helplines and online services in the light of additional demand.

As part of ongoing work to tackle the consequences of domestic abuse, the Home Office also announced £3 million of funding to specialist services providing support for children affected by domestic abuse, as a continuation of the Children Affected by Domestic Abuse Fund.

In relation to no recourse to public funds (NRPF), the Government recognises that some people living in the UK as the spouse or partner of a British citizen or other settled person, although able to take employment, will be subject to the NRPF condition and may