

Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Secretary of State for Health
Department of Health
Richmond House
79 Whitehall, London
SW1A 2NS



06 February 17

Re: "Scrap the fee" for domestic violence victims

We are writing to urge you to address a serious issue affecting domestic abuse victims across the UK.

Due to recent legislation changes, domestic abuse victims now have to apply for legal aid. However to qualify for support they need to provide specific evidence to prove that they have been subjected to such abuse. One of the accepted forms of evidence is a letter from a GP – a letter that some GPs are charging fees to provide.

Domestic abuse victims and those in need of legal aid are already some of the most vulnerable people in our society – emotionally and financially. This wholly unnecessary step of obtaining a letter, with or without a fee, piles on additional pressure to individuals already in distress.

Of course not all GPs are charging such fees, but if we are to ensure that victims receive a consistent, equitable, and fair service across the UK, this service needs to be provided by the NHS, and the fees abolished.

GPs are under a terrible strain at the moment, and complex organisational structures and commissioning processes make resolutions to issues such as this difficult. But no matter what the difficulties are, it's clear that some victims are receiving a service that falls well short of what's expected.

Health and government partners need to work together to ensure that survivors of domestic abuse don't face unnecessary barriers to justice, and GPs must be supported fully to deliver the service their patients deserve.

Locally, we're doing all we can as Police and Crime Commissioners to effect change, but to ensure no one falls between the gaps, this issue must be tackled by central government. We therefore call upon the government to scrap this unfair and unjust charge by bringing this service under NHS contract.

Reports of domestic abuse are increasing across the country. Two women are killed every week in England and Wales by their partner or former partner. Escaping abusive relationships is a struggle; it takes a great deal of strength and courage, and the government must do all it can to avoid placing unnecessary barriers in front of people who are clearly desperate to change their circumstances.

It should not be a privilege for victims of domestic abuse to gain legal aid. There should be no further burden on victims to chase a letter to verify their claim.

As Secretary of State for Health, you have the power to change this process, and we trust you will do all you can to rectify this issue. We will also be sending a copy of this letter to the Secretary of State for Justice Liz Truss MP calling for her support on this issue and asking for the letter to be scrapped all together.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours,



Tony Lloyd
Greater Manchester PCC



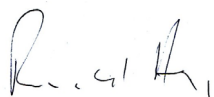
David Keane
Cheshire PCC



Barry Copping
Cleveland PCC



Hardyal Dhindsa
Derbyshire PCC



Ron Hogg
Durham PCC



Jeff Cuthbert
Gwent PCC



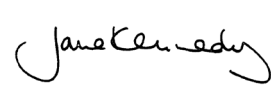
Keith Hunter
Humberside PCC



Clive Grunshaw
Lancashire PCC



Lord Bach
Leicestershire PCC



Rt Hon Jane Kennedy
Merseyside PCC



Vera Baird
Northumbria PCC



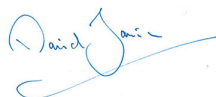
Nottinghamshire PCC
Paddy Tipping




Alun Michael
South Wales PCC



Alan Billings
South Yorkshire PCC



David Jamieson
West Midlands PCC



Mark Burns-Williamson
West Yorkshire PCC