



## All-Party Parliamentary Group on Domestic Violence and Abuse

### APPG Inquiry into Domestic Abuse and Mental Health

#### Terms of Reference

Launch date: 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Closing date: 24<sup>th</sup> September 2021

#### The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Domestic Violence and Abuse

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Domestic Violence and Abuse is an informal cross-party group of MPs and Lords with an interest in tackling domestic abuse. The APPG meets in Parliament to discuss issues impacting survivors and specialist support services, and to contribute to the development of policy and legislation in this area. The APPG is chaired by Apsana Begum MP and the vice-chair is Baroness Bertin.

#### Inquiry and Purpose

The APPG on Domestic Violence and Abuse inquiry will focus on the barriers and issues currently faced by survivors of domestic abuse in respect of seeking support for their mental health, and conclude with recommendations for the government on how to address these.

#### **Aims:**

- To understand the current the barriers survivors of domestic abuse face when seeking support for their mental health.
- To set out recommendations for the government on what needs to change within the health system to better meet the mental health needs of survivors.
- To raise the political profile and public awareness of the barriers' survivors of domestic abuse face when seeking support for their mental health.

#### Background

Domestic abuse can have a devastating and long-lasting impact on the mental health of survivors and their children and causes significant trauma. For groups facing forms of discrimination and inequality these impacts are compounded further still. Survivors also report that perpetrators use mental ill-health as a key tactic as part of control and abuse, and that the current health system response fails to meet their needs.

Over the past decade mental health has seen increased attention both by the Government and the public. This in part is due the legal responsibility to create parity of esteem between physical and mental health through the Health and Social Care Act in 2012, and subsequent increased political attention and commitment to funding mental health services. However, survivors continue to face huge barriers to accessing mental health support, and the Covid-19 pandemic has increased the trauma experienced by many survivors and shut off routes to help and support.

### Scope and Format

The inquiry will be held over two parliamentary hearings, at which the group will hear evidence from *experts by experience* (survivors), academics, practitioners and decision makers. The APPG will also put out a call for written evidence. This evidence will be collated and analysed by Women's Aid Federation of England as the Secretariat, informing a short report written with clear recommendations for Government and statutory agencies.

The first oral evidence session will be held on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021 with contributions from *experts by experience* (survivors) and key experts from the domestic abuse sector on barriers to accessing mental health support for survivors. This will be followed by the second hearing on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021 focused on recommendations and best practice to meet the mental health needs of survivors. The second hearing will also hear evidence from key decision makers including the Domestic Abuse Commissioner.

The Group invites written evidence from survivors, experts, academics and practitioners on the barriers and recommendations to meet the mental health needs of survivors. The questions for the written call for evidence are as follows:

- What are the most significant barriers to meeting the mental health needs of survivors of domestic abuse?
- What needs to change to ensure the health system can better meet the mental health needs of survivors and support long term healing and recovery?
- What changes are required to ensure the domestic abuse sector can meet mental health needs of survivors?

### Responding to the Call for Evidence

- To submit written evidence to the inquiry please email your submission in a **word document** to [appg@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:appg@womensaid.org.uk) by **24<sup>th</sup> September 2021**. Please ensure any submissions adhere to the word limit, and provide the information outlined below.
- Your submission should be **no more than 1500 words in length.**

- Please clearly state who the submission is from i.e. if you are submitting evidence in a personal capacity or sent on behalf of an organisation.
  - If you are submitting on behalf of an organisation - please state the name of the organisation and provide a brief description of the organisation.
  - If you are submitting in a personal capacity, and feel comfortable sharing – please state if you have personal experience of domestic abuse.
- Please state clearly if you wish for your submission to be kept confidential and your name withheld.
  - For all personal submissions all information and quotes included in the final report will be anonymised unless otherwise instructed.
  - For submissions made by organisations, unless otherwise requested, the APPG will assume your submission can be referenced in full and reserves the right to reference the content of your submission in future reports and publications.
- Please include the following statement: *I give my permission for Women's Aid to safely store my personal data and outputs relating to my evidence submission.*
  - If you would like more information, please email [appg@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:appg@womensaid.org.uk) or refer to Women's Aid's privacy policy at <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/privacy-cookie-notice/>
- Please reference any data or research submitted in your evidence.
- The deadline for submissions is **Friday 24<sup>th</sup> September.**

### **Next Steps**

Both the oral and written evidence will be collated and analysed by the Secretariat, and written up in to a recommendation report. The APPG aim to publish this report towards the end of 2021.

Information and invites to attend the oral evidence sessions and report launch will be sent to the APPG mailing list.

For more information about the APPG on Domestic Violence and Abuse, including how to sign up to the mailing list, please visit: <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/appg/>

For any queries please email: [appg@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:appg@womensaid.org.uk).

**If you need help and support**, you can access Women's Aid direct services which include our Live Chat Helpline, the Survivors' Forum and the Survivor's Handbook at <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/>. You can also email Women's Aid at [helpline@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:helpline@womensaid.org.uk) or contact a local domestic abuse service by using the Domestic Abuse Directory <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic-abuse-directory/>.

If you are experiencing domestic abuse and want to access support over the phone, you can call:

- National Domestic Violence Helpline – 0808 2000 247
- The Mix, free information and support for under 25s in the UK - 0808 808 4994

- National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline – 0800 999 5428
- Samaritans (24/7 service) - 116 123
- Rights of Women advice lines, there are a range of services available – got to <https://rightsofwomen.org.uk/get-advice/advice-lines/>

### Covering your tracks online

If you are worried about someone seeing what you have been doing online, use a different computer, either at a local library, internet cafe, at a friend's house or at work. Please see our information on covering your tracks online: <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/cover-your-tracks-online/>

If you are **campaigning from personal experience** of domestic abuse, and would like some support thinking through the impact of this and support available, please click [here](#).