

## Women's Aid General Election 2017 Pledge

### ***Hear Her, See Her, Support Her***

*Women's Aid is calling all Prospective Parliamentary Candidates to hear, see and support survivors of domestic abuse if they are elected.*

*Can survivors of domestic abuse count on you?*

**Tweet your support:**

***I pledge to Hear, See, and Support survivors of domestic abuse  
with @womensaid as part of my election promise  
#hearher #GE2017***

### **Hear Her**

Listen to what survivors tell us needs to change. Pledge to keep them safe in the family court by banning perpetrators of domestic abuse from cross-examining survivors. Safeguard their democratic rights by reforming voting rules, enabling them to vote anonymously and participate in the democratic process.

*Hear her now by posting a link on your website to, and tweeting about, the Women's Aid and Electoral Commission [guidance](#) on registering to vote anonymously. Pledge to support Women's Aid [#ChildFirst](#) campaign for safer family courts.*

### **See her**

See survivors receive quality support in your constituency by helping end the postcode lottery response to domestic abuse. Help Women's Aid ensure the new Government establishes an independent Domestic Abuse Commissioner. The Commissioner should oversee how all parts of the country, and relevant agencies, deliver on national expectations of high quality service provision and take a robust approach to perpetrators.

*If elected, champion Women's Aid's call for a Domestic Abuse Commissioner to end the postcode lottery response to domestic abuse.*

### **Support her**

Support women and children fleeing abuse escape to safety by protecting specialist refuges where they can recover and regain independence. In 2015-16 one in four referrals to refuges in England were declined due to a lack of space.<sup>1</sup> Pledge to press the Government to deliver a sustainable, [long-term model of funding for specialist refuges](#), which meets the urgent national need for bed spaces.

*Support her now by organising a local roundtable meeting with your specialist domestic violence services and survivors to discuss funding for local domestic abuse services. If elected, call on Ministers to secure a sustainable funding solution for life-saving refuges.*

## What is domestic abuse?

Women's Aid defines domestic abuse as an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence. In the majority of cases by a partner or ex-partner, but also by a family member or carer. It is very common. In the vast majority of cases it is experienced by women, and is perpetrated by men. Domestic abuse can include, but is not limited to: coercive control (a pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation and control with the use or threat of physical or sexual violence), psychological and/or emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, financial abuse, harassment, stalking, and online or digital abuse.

Domestic abuse is a gendered crime which is deeply rooted in the societal inequality between women and men, and exists as part of violence against women and girls (VAWG).

## Why is domestic violence an issue in your constituency?

- Domestic abuse is a serious crime that has a devastating and long-term impact on victims. On average, two women every week in England and Wales are killed at the hands of a partner or ex-partner.<sup>2</sup>
- Domestic abuse accounts for 10% of total crimes recorded. On average the police receive over 100 calls relating to domestic abuse every hour.<sup>3</sup>
- The risk of domestic abuse increases during pregnancy, when around a third of cases start<sup>4</sup> and at the point of separation or after leaving a violent partner, when women are at highest risk of homicide.<sup>5</sup>
- More women and children were turned away from refuges than were let in throughout 2015-16 due to a lack of available space.<sup>6</sup>
- Domestic abuse is estimated to cost society an estimated £15.73 billion a year.<sup>7</sup>

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## Who is Women's Aid?

Women's Aid is the national charity for women and children working to end domestic abuse. We are a federation of over 220 organisations who provide lifesaving services to women and children across the country. The 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline (run in partnership with Refuge) and our range of online services, including the Survivors' Forum, help hundreds of thousands of women and children every year. We empower survivors by keeping their voices at the heart of our work, listening and responding to their needs. Our policy, campaigns and awareness work helps to build a future where domestic abuse is no longer tolerated.

**For more information about Women's Aid, or anything in this briefing, please contact Lucy Hadley on [l.hadley@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:l.hadley@womensaid.org.uk).**

**For help and support please contact the 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline (run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge) on 0808 2000 247.**

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<sup>1</sup> Women's Aid, [Annual Survey](#), 2016

<sup>2</sup> Office for National Statistics, 2010

<sup>3</sup> Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2015

<sup>4</sup> Department of Health, Domestic Abuse Guidance, 2017

<sup>5</sup> Women's Aid, The Femicide Census, 2017

<sup>6</sup> Women's Aid [Annual Survey](#), 2016

<sup>7</sup> Walby, S, The Cost of Domestic Violence, 2009