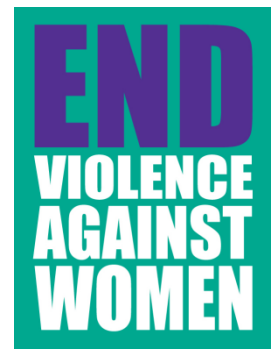


Tim Farron
Leader of the Liberal Democrat Party
Liberal Democrat Party Headquarters
8-10 Great George St
London
SW1 3AE



09 May 2017

Dear Mr Farron,

Your policies to end violence against women and girls

We are writing in advance of the General Election on 8 June to ask you to set out your policies to end all forms of violence against women and girls in the UK.

The End Violence Against Women Coalition is a UK-wide coalition of more than 80 women's organisations and others working to end abuse of women and girls in all its forms, including: sexual violence, domestic violence, forced marriage, FGM, stalking and harassment, child sexual exploitation, trafficking and prostitution. Our members include many frontline support services who run refuges and helplines in their local communities – and literally save lives – as well as researchers, lawyers and campaigners who lobby all levels of government, all year round, to improve their policy and practice to end abuse.

Ending violence against women and girls

Since the 2015 election, the Government has committed to significant work in this area, not least renewing the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. National funding streams have maintained some Rape Crisis services, and ongoing investment in the excellent teen relationship abuse prevention campaign, 'Disrespect NoBody' demonstrates that these issues remain a high Government priority.

But as we're sure you know, the prevalence and impact of violence against women and girls means that there is still so much to be done. Please find enclosed our new paper '**Ending Violence Against Women: Priorities for Government**,' which is based on consultation with our expert members and sets out what we believe the next Government should do to improve law, policy and practice in this area.

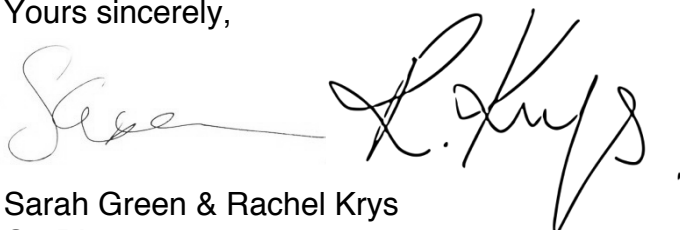
We are calling for urgent action to ensure that every woman who needs support to escape or to help her recover from abuse can access a high quality support service. We want the next Government to ensure that all public services - including the criminal justice system, welfare, schools, health and the immigration system - make tackling violence against women and girls a priority. We want to see local commissioners held to account for the decisions they make about funding in this area. And, we want to see a step change in the way women who experience multiple forms of discrimination - because they're BME, because they have a mental health problem, because they're disabled, because they're economically disadvantaged, because they're seeking asylum – are supported and their needs addressed.

We would like to ask you the following questions in relation to your policies if re-elected:

- If elected, how would your Government ensure that every woman and girl at risk of, or who has survived abuse, can access a high quality support service, whether it be crisis accommodation, counselling for abuse that happened many years ago or legal advocacy and advice? And, given the known funding crisis facing many of these local, independent and women-led services, will you consider new laws or provisions to enforce commissioning guidelines which hold local commissioners to account for the decisions they make?
- If elected, would your Government continue to make changes to the criminal justice system to ensure that survivors have access to justice and perpetrators are held to account for these very serious crimes? This means urgently acting to stop the use of victim-blaming sexual history and other evidence used to undermine rape survivors. It means ensuring all women have access to legal aid and advocacy for as long as they need it. And it means instructing local areas not to roll out restorative justice for these crimes unless women's organisations are confident it is being done in a way which will not harm survivors.
- If elected, would your Government make it a priority for all public services, especially the health service, schools and the welfare system, to play their part in tackling abuse? This means health workers being trained not to miss abuse. It means welfare policy which doesn't stigmatise women or minimise the impact of abuse. It means schools delivering high quality Relationships and Sex Education which is accompanied by better school policies and training in detecting and responding to abuse. And, it means asylum and immigration systems which do not deter women from seeking protection.
- If elected, would your Government ensure that women and girls' rights are protected in any negotiations to leave the EU? This means that the many advances in equality and human rights law which benefit women in the UK are protected and there is no slip backwards because of Brexit.

Thank you for your attention to our letter and we look forward to receiving any response, which we will publish and share widely, alongside any responses from other party leaders. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions about our priorities or our work more broadly.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Green & Rachel Kryz
Co-Directors
End Violence Against Women Coalition