

April 2020

JOINT VAWG SECTOR EMERGENCY FUNDING STATEMENT

The Chancellor has announced a £750 million pot to support frontline charities, including those supporting domestic abuse victims, during the coronavirus outbreak. The Violence Against Women and Girls Sector welcomes this funding to ensure the provision of life saving VAWG services, but calls on the government to ensure that funding is made available in accordance with the following core principles:

1. Urgency

Emergency funds announced by the Chancellor and Home Secretary for domestic abuse and violence against women and girls (VAWG) organisations need to make its way to specialist frontline services within the next couple of weeks. This funding is needed to cover costs now – services are operating in a 'perfect storm' of lost fundraising income, additional costs of remote working, increasing complexity of caseloads, and staff shortages. It is also essential that there is attention to further funding which will be needed when demand for support rises as expected after lockdown. A long-term, sustainable funding model for VAWG services remains a fundamental priority.

2. Ring-fenced VAWG fund that is simple, flexible, and fair

At least £65 million of the £750 million package announced by the Chancellor must be ring-fenced for specialist VAWG service providers, so that the VAWG sector receives the unrestricted funding we need to respond to VAWG during the COVID 19 crisis. There should be one fund that organisations can access through a single streamlined process, which is fair to both smaller and larger services and avoids having to spend time or resources on making complex and multiple bids. Funding must not be administered through bureaucratic, time-intensive mechanisms that fund services in silos - such as via Police and Crime Commissioners and Local Authorities, where statutory bodies are not aware of specialist community led services, ignoring non-commissioned services would be disastrous. There should also be equivalent and coordinated devolved and non-devolved funding streams to ensure investment across the national network of VAWG organisations.

3. Ring-fenced funding for specialist BME 'by and for' services and marginalised groups

Funding must also be ring-fenced for specialist VAWG services led by and for BME women, deaf / disabled women, and LGBT survivors. These services are essential for fulfilling duties under the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty, as well as meeting survivors' specific support needs, but have been marginalised and excluded from existing funding systems. Their inclusion, through a specific ring-fence, is essential for an equitable funding system which does not further entrench inequality and social injustice, which has been exacerbated in this pandemic.

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