

## **Conservatives Response to the End Violence Against Women Coalition**

***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?***

Every vote for Theresa May will help secure the strong and stable leadership we need to secure our growing economy and make Britain an even better place for everyone. In government we have made significant progress in tackling violence against women at home and abroad, and ensuring that those at risk of, and those who have survived, domestic abuse receive the support they deserve.

If elected on 8 June, Theresa May's Conservatives will create a domestic violence and abuse commissioner in law, to stand up for victims and survivors, monitor the response to domestic violence and abuse and to hold the police and the criminal justice system to account. And we will take action to support victims of domestic violence to leave abusive partners, reviewing the funding for refuges and ensuring that victims who have lifetime tenancies and flee violence are able to secure a new lifetime tenancy automatically.

***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.***

Conservatives in government have already acted to help victims of domestic violence to seek refuge. We can and should go further. We need the police to investigate allegations thoroughly and treat victims with the care they deserve. We need to bring to the justice system greater guidance and clarity about the impact of domestic violence and abuse on families. And we need to understand and respond to the devastating and lifelong impact that domestic violence and abuse has on children, who carry the effects into adulthood.

A Conservative government will bring forward a Domestic Violence and Abuse Bill in the next parliament to consolidate all civil and criminal prevention and protection orders and provide for a new aggravated offence if behaviour is directed at a child. There is currently no statutory definition of domestic violence and abuse. We will therefore also legislate to enshrine a definition of domestic violence and abuse in law, providing the legal underpinning for everything in our new act.

This will enable us to work with victim support groups, experts and agencies to determine whether the current statutory definition is wide enough, to help survivors understand more easily if they have a basis for a complaint, and to provide a more reliable basis for police forces to investigate and the Crown Prosecution Service to prosecute. We will also ensure that child victims and victims of sexual violence are able to be cross-examined before their trial without the distress of having to appear in court

***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 on 8 June, the Conservatives will stand up for victims of domestic violence and abuse and ensure all services take better account of abuse. Our new domestic violence and abuse commissioner will stand up for victims and survivors, monitor the response to domestic violence and abuse and to hold public services to account. We will introduce comprehensive Relationships and Sex Education in all primary and secondary schools.

We will offer asylum and refuge to people in parts of the world affected by conflict and oppression, including those affected by sexual violence, and continue to lead a global campaign for the education of women and girls, which is the key to progress in so many countries. We will lead the fight against modern slavery, just as we overcame the trade in slaves two hundred years ago.

***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.***

We will ensure that rights and protections are maintained and enhanced as we leave the European Union. We will not repeal or replace the Human Rights Act

while the process of Brexit is underway but we will consider our human rights legal framework when the process of leaving the EU concludes. We will remain signatories to the European Convention on Human Rights for the duration of the next parliament. We will, in fact strengthen the rights of women and girls as we leave the EU. Our Domestic Violence and Abuse Bill will consolidate all civil and criminal prevention and protection orders and provide a statutory definition for domestic violence and abuse for the first time. We will also put the rights of victims under the Victims' Code in law through a new Victims Bill and safeguard the right of child victims and victims of sexual violence to be cross-examined before their trial without the distress of having to appear in court.