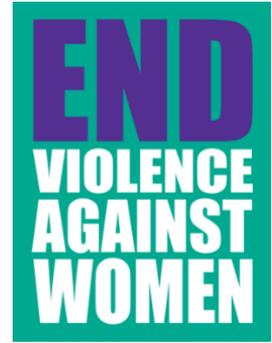


Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London
SE1 2AA



16 April 2020

Dear Sadiq,

It is now clear that Covid-19 is creating opportunity for abusers, evidenced by examples of rises in domestic abuse and sexual violence in countries such as China and Italy, as well as what we are seeing here in the UK. It is therefore important that support for victims is recognised as a priority alongside work to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG) during this time to prevent this secondary crisis taking hold. This means not cutting off lifelines provided by VAWG organisations.

Lockdown has resulted in an urgent need for VAWG organisations to reconfigure services to remote provision, home working and greater web-based support for women who are not safe to make calls. However, limited funds and lack of significant reserves across the sector make this service reconfiguration a challenge. We know that many organisations have an urgent need to buy mobile phones and (funds permitting) laptops to continue working. This is while the VAWG sector remains seriously concerned about a dire funding landscape that poses a risk to them being able to continue lifesaving work.

While we know funding has been made available for food and other essentials, vital services for survivors such as therapeutic support, casework, as well as advice specialisms and language support that BME organisations provide are more important than ever.

We note your office's work with hotel chains to protect homeless people from Covid-19 as well as your call for football clubs to support NHS workers. These initiatives are great examples of private sector support for key workers and marginalised communities at risk during this pandemic. Recognising Sophie Linden's recent social media video about support for domestic abuse survivors, we hope you would be willing to similarly lend support to the VAWG sector.

We therefore ask whether you would be willing to commit to writing to leading figures in the technology and telecoms sectors and ask them to support the VAWG sector at this critical time with the following:

- Equipment in the form of laptops, mobile phones and supporting software;
- Expertise that would support the development of online tools, e.g. webchat, which will enable women to stay in touch with specialist support services

This type of support would make the greatest difference to smaller, grassroots organisations who are least equipped to adapt to this change in provision at speed and, with lower reserves, may

not survive the crisis without additional funds and support. As a coalition of over 80 VAWG organisations we would be happy to help put technology and telecoms companies in touch with individual organisations who would be able to explain their specific needs at this time.

The magnitude of the current crisis requires all of us in society to work together. We hope that you will support the VAWG sector in reaching out to the private sector so that these organisations can continue to provide the lifelines women so badly need.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Green
Director, End Violence Against Women Coalition

End Violence Against Women Coalition

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