

Rt Hon Alex Chalk MP

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State of Justice

By email only

1 December 2020

Dear Alex Chalk,

Review of the Presumption of Parental Involvement

Thank you for your letter of 23 November 2020. We are pleased that Women's Aid have been added to the advisory group and note that their involvement in the Harm Report panel will enable some continuity in that respect.

However, we do not consider your response to our other points satisfactory. Your response did not address the points raised in our letter about representation from services supporting survivors of sexual violence, child sexual abuse, survivors from minoritised backgrounds, deaf and disabled women and those holding other protected characteristics despite the obvious need to include their voices and ensure their specific needs and experience of marginalisation are at the heart of the review.

You have also not addressed the inequality in the prominence of a group advocating on behalf of fathers and not having an equivalent organisation speaking to the views of mothers.

The importance of having these voices on the advisory group is to address exactly the issue identified in your response – to identify and challenge gaps in the evidence. Women with experiences of intersectional oppression are in the best position to identify gaps in the evidence in a way that other organisations cannot and this is why it is important their voices are included in the advisory group.

We do not consider the reason provided – that the group needs to be small to enable constructive discussion – a proportionate reason to exclude these perspectives from the advisory group and find it surprising that with the use of technology, the Ministry of Justice does not consider it possible to facilitate constructive discussion with the addition of a small number of organisations.

We urge the Ministry of Justice to reconsider its position on the composition of the advisory group including considering varying ways in which the advisory group could work together.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Estelle du Boulay, Director, Rights of Women

Nicki Norman, Acting CEO, Women's Aid Federation of England

Baljit Banga, Executive Director, Imkaan

Ruth Bashall, CEO Stay Safe East - supporting disabled survivors

Gudrun Burnet, CEO, Standing Together
Sheila Coates MBE, Policy and Strategy, Rape Crisis England & Wales
Donna Covey CBE, Chief Executive, AVA (Against Violence and Abuse)
Fiona Dwyer, CEO, Solace Women's Aid
Senay Dur, Director, IMECE Women's Centre
Sarbjit Ganger, Director, Asian Women's Resource Centre (AWRC)
Sarah Green, Director, End Violence Against Women Coalition (EVAW)
Sarah Hill, CEO, Independent Domestic Abuse Services
Umme Imam, Executive Director, Angelou Centre
Suzanne Jacob, CEO, SafeLives
Medina Johnson, Chief Executive, IRISi
Sara Kirkpatrick, Chief Executive, Welsh Women's Aid
Shani Lee, Co-ordinator, London VAWG Consortium
Pragna Patel, Director, Southall Black Sisters
Yenny Tovar, Executive Director, Latin American Women's Aid (LAWA)
Natasha Rattu, Executive Director, Karma Nirvana
Heidi Riedel, CEO, Woman's Trust
Dr Nicola Sharp-Jeffs OBE, Chief Executive, Surviving Economic Abuse
Jessica Southgate, Interim Chief Executive, Agenda
Jo Todd, CEO, Respect
Gisela Valle, Director, Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS)
Harriet Wistrich, Director, Centre for Women's Justice