**Domestic Abuse Bill response: A letter to send to your MP**

Dear [name of your MP],

**[Begin with an introductory paragraph, thanking your MP for their involvement in the Domestic Abuse Bill. You can see your MP’s voting record** [**here**](https://www.mysociety.org/wehelpyou/how-did-my-mp-vote/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI4p2ipKf_6wIVjuJ3Ch2OYQNyEAAYASAAEgJGIfD_BwE)**. Remember to mention that you live in your MP’s constituency.]**

I am writing to you in response to the Domestic Abuse Bill, which you will be aware has now passed to the House of Lords. Now, more than ever, domestic abuse is prevalent in every sphere of society, with 1 in 4 women in the UK being affected by domestic abuse. The Covid-19 pandemic has escalated abuse and closed down routes to safety for women to escape.

**[Add something about why domestic abuse matters to you. Is it because of your faith? Or a personal experience? Passion shines through!]**

I am really pleased at how much is covered in the draft Bill, but there are areas that remain particularly concerning:

* Women with insecure immigration status experiencing domestic abuse are routinely refused access to support of any kind, owing to the government’s ‘No recourse to public funds’ (NRPF) policy. These women are left unprotected, often having already experienced pain and hardship travelling to the UK. Devastatingly, many are forced to choose between homelessness or returning to their abuser.
* I support the charity Restored, who have been campaigning for change in the area of faith and domestic abuse. The Bill neglects the fact that particular theologies can be used as a justification for domestic abuse. Those being abused would benefit from this being recognised in law. The Bill also neglects to recognise the key role that faith leaders can play in recognising and responding to domestic abuse. Restored advocates that this training would ensure there is someone prepared to respond to domestic abuse in every community in the country.

As a Christian, I am deeply concerned that we are neglecting our moral duty. I would prefer the Bill itself to cover these points but, at the very least, there should be Home Office guidance covering the issues I’ve mentioned. Restored suggest that the government should:

* Provide domestic abuse training to enable faith leaders to respond well to suspected domestic abuse in their communities; this can be handled badly if church leaders aren’t supported.
* Develop faith literacy training which should be offered to those making decisions and offering support in relation to complaints of domestic abuse so that these cases can be responded to more appropriately.
* Appoint faith representatives to the Domestic Abuse Commissioner’s Advisory Group and the Local Partnership Boards in order to cover matters of faith and spiritual abuse.

During lockdown, the UK’s largest domestic abuse charity, Refuge, reported a 700% increase in calls to its helpline in a single day, while a separate helpline for perpetrators of domestic abuse seeking help to change their behaviour received 25% more calls after the start of the Covid-19 lockdown. With new lockdown measures coming into play, and potentially others on the cards, action is needed in order to ensure women are protected; we do not want to see rates of domestic abuse soar again.

I am, therefore, asking you to do whatever you can to raise the issues I’ve referenced with your contacts in the Lords, with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner-designate, and with the Home Office. Please let me know the responses you receive.

I look forward to hearing from you, and will be most grateful for anything you can do to make the Bill even more supportive of some of the most vulnerable people in our communities.

With best wishes,

**[Add in your postal address so your MP knows you’re a constituent (this means they have to respond).]**