

8 May 2019



Rt. Hon. David Gauke MP
Secretary of State for Justice
Ministry of Justice
102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9AJ

Our Ref: SC7065

Dear David,

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chair of the APPG on Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse.

Over the last six months, the APPG has been running an inquiry into the experiences of survivors in accessing support services and the criminal justice system. Data was gathered in various ways: a survey of 365 survivors; direct testimony from 12 survivors in Parliament; evidence from the sector including the Victims Commissioner, The Survivors Trust, NHS, and Victim Support; written evidence from survivors, academics and specialist third sector organisations.

The data we have collated has been drafted into three reports to be released through 2019. On Tuesday 7 May we launched the first report, which looks at the quality and availability of information and support for survivors. I have enclosed a copy of the report along with this letter.

I am writing to you specifically regarding the recommendations that I believe falls within the purview of the Ministry of Justice, while recognising it is a cross-departmental response that is required to improve outcomes for survivors.

Funding and commissioning

- The upcoming Spending Review, for 2020-2023, should create a discrete, cross-departmental strategic fund to transform Government's response to child sexual abuse. This should fund core services to meet demand and recognise the value of the specialist voluntary sector.
- Pilots for devolved commissioning must ensure that specialist sexual violence and abuse support services (SSVSS) are commissioned to meet survivors' needs. This is vital as their services are highly valued by survivors, and SSVSS provide additionality to statutory services through upskilling and advice.
- The 10 per cent increase in the Rape Support Fund is welcome but does not meet increases in demand. The Ministry of Justice should develop a mechanism for pegging the fund to increases in demand so that SSVSS are not forced to reduce provision of support to survivors.
- SSVSS umbrella agencies should be funded appropriately to ensure representation for member agencies and support for quality assurance standards.

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Guidance and training to frontline professionals to practice in trauma-informed way.

- Government departments should issue guidance to frontline professionals on how to respond in a trauma-informed way, developed in collaboration with specialist sexual violence and abuse voluntary sector (SSVSS) umbrella agencies.

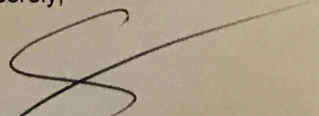
A nationwide public health campaign.

- The Government should fund a nationwide public health campaign to: raise awareness of the issues around childhood sexual abuse, highlight the potential impact on survivors, tackle social myths and stereotypes about sexual abuse and direct survivors and professionals to sources of support and information.
- The Government should provide and promote a one-stop-shop website where survivors can access information about the impact of abuse and be able to locate relevant services in their area. www.victimandwitnessinformation.org.uk should be reimagined as the first port of call for survivors independently trying to access information and should be co-designed with SSVSS to ensure survivors' priorities are reflected in the design.
- The website should be widely publicised so that frontline professionals such as GPs can direct survivors to the site, wherever they are based in the country, in the knowledge they can locate local services from there.
- The website should enable survivors to locate up-to-date information about local SSVSS, health and police services by typing in their postcode. The website should therefore integrate information with Police and Crime Commissioners' websites, as well as SSVSS locators, like The Survivors Trust's listings.
- Government should commission research into whether BAME, LGBT and disabled survivors have difficulty in accessing services and seek to address any shortfall.

I would welcome a response from your Department regarding the recommendations and would be pleased to discuss further with you at your convenience.

Our next report will explore survivors' experience of police and the Crown Prosecution Service; the third report will detail survivors' experience of the court process and compensation.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Champion MP.

Chair of the APPG on Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse.