

Dear <insert name of MP>

I am writing as your constituent because I am one of more than 150,000 people who have signed Fern Champion's petition calling on the government to make sure that life-saving counselling is available to rape victims when they need it. Fern waived her anonymity and started her petition after she could not get help from local rape crisis centres because their waiting lists were closed or too full.

Last year Rape Crisis England and Wales reported 6,355 victims of sexual violence were on waiting lists. These waiting lists can be as long as 14 months and often when waiting lists are longer than a year centres make the difficult decision to close their services to new clients. This means that if a survivor calls to look for support they are turned away.

This is happening because successive governments have failed to sufficiently fund these vital life-saving services meaning that they are unable to meet the unprecedented demand for support. Current funding levels promised by the government are just not enough to ensure that Rape Crisis centres across England and Wales can keep their waiting lists open, and there is a worrying lack of accountability at government level for ensuring that support is available.

Survivors who access support are able to engage in long term therapeutic work which helps them to process the trauma and move towards recovery. Therapeutic and advocacy interventions need to be trauma-informed and delivered by experienced and skilled workers, and centres need to be independent and able to offer confidential support so that victims and survivors can talk about their experiences in trusted space.

You may be aware that the Government is committed to ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). The Convention recommends there should be at least 150 Rape Crisis Centres in England and Wales. Currently there are only 44. To meet these standards the government would need to invest a minimum of £195 million per annum into specialist, independent, community-based provision. A significant proportion of that would need to be ring fenced for specialist BME services that cater to the needs of the most marginalised in our society.

As your constituent, I am asking you to please take action today and sign an [Early Day Motion on The Istanbul Convention and Rape Crisis Services](#) tabled by Wera Hobhouse MP and co-sponsored by Jo Swinson MP; Dr Rosena Allin-Khan MP; Ann Coffey MP; Layla Moran MP; and Caroline Lucas MP. This calls on the government to finally enshrine the Istanbul Convention into law and make it possible for survivors to access services which facilitate their recovery from sexual violence.

You can find out more about Fern's campaign from the [End Violence Against Women Coalition](#) website. I hope I can count on your support.

Your sincerely

<Insert name and address with postcode here>