

Specialist VAWG Organisations Statement

Recommendations for Government emergency funding (announced 2 May 2020) for VAWG work during the Covid-19 pandemic

6 May 2020

The specialist VAWG sector welcomes the announcement of £76m in emergency funding for charities which support victims/survivors of VAWG and vulnerable children.

We urge national Government and especially the Ministers in the principle grant-making departments of MHCLG, MOJ and the Home Office, all PCCs, and any others, including for example the Lottery, who may be involved in the distribution of these monies to:

Recognise:

That ‘demand’ for support from VAWG services right now is not completely predictable and not likely to be uniform across the sector – while it is clear that lockdown and isolation create a context where abuse in the home is more likely, the ability of victims to reach out is also curtailed; the different stages of restrictions are likely to produce different effects on ‘demand’, as well as greater complexity in casework.

The pandemic and necessary health measures are unprecedented - and have required transformation overnight in the way support services are provided, while funding, staffing and ‘demand’ are unpredictable.

The variety and scope of services offered; specialists in sexual violence, and specialists in domestic abuse offer a range of services and support, reflecting the different needs of survivors that is specific to the kind of trauma they have been subjected to.

There is a history of serious under-funding of the crisis and long-term VAWG support sector, whose costs are usually not met by statutory funders alone; this under-funding is chronic in the BME women’s and disabled women’s parts of the sector, where funding regimes have failed to recognise the additional specialisms, reach and trust in these services by the women who use them.

Agree to:

1. Ringfence or target specific funding streams for specialist ‘by and for’ BME and migrant women, disabled and LGBT support services.

2.State clearly that support services which are not currently commissioned by a statutory funder are eligible to apply for the emergency funding, and welcome such applications for work meeting local need.

3. Assess need by looking for qualitative as well as quantitative indicators, including taking advice from national and local VAWG sector experts on how women are seeking support, what they need and what might lie ahead.

4. Signal clearly to applicants what time period any emergency grant is to cover and have open conversations with recipients about the predictability of need, what can reasonably be spent in any time period, and how planning for an unpredictable long-term future is welcome – services on the ground are the experts, ensure grant implementation recognises this, is flexible and not accompanied by stringent monitoring or outcome requirements or any expectations of funding being clawed back if speculative demand levels are not reached in the initial period.

5. Do not use criteria, sometimes described as ‘resilience’, which set an unfair barrier to services with smaller annual income and lower reserves; instead use criteria which recognise track record and trust within the community, local profile, and additional specialisms.

6. Seek advice from the specialist VAWG sector on eligibility criteria, making grants accessible, communicating the availability of funding, and assessment criteria, with an openly stated aim of ensuring emergency funding gets to those who can best provide critical services.

7. Ensure that there is a robust mechanism for escalating concerns about decisions made by PCCs or others not to allocate funding to a local domestic abuse or sexual violence service. This process should be simple and resolve any appeal quickly.

8. Transparency over how much and where funding has been awarded or allocated.

For further information please contact:

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