



# WE Party Conference

15 – 18 October 2020

**Title:** Statutory funding for women escaping violence to rebuild their lives

**Proposed by:** The Women's Equality Party Policy Committee

**Proposer:** Tabitha Morton

**Secunder:** Christine Dean

**Type of motion:** Policy motion

**Motion text:**

**\*Content warning: contains details on violence\***

1 The Women's Equality Party Conference 2020:

- 2 ● *Reaffirms* its commitment to statutory funding for specialist services working to end violence  
3 against women and girls.
- 4 ● *Notes* that financial insecurity can keep women and children in violent and controlling  
5 relationships. Too often availability of services and financial support is a postcode lottery. In  
6 2019 1.7m women experienced domestic abuse,<sup>1,2,3</sup> 88,000 women were raped and 414,000  
7 women were sexually assaulted in the UK (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland);  
8 this is a pandemic of violence.<sup>4,5,6</sup>
- 9 ● Recognises that for women to rebuild their lives, seamless access to services and financial  
10 support is essential.

11 WE call on the governments of the four nations of the United Kingdom to:

- 12 ● Establish a nationwide statutory fund for survivors\* and their children to include: housing  
13 benefit, income support, mental health services, relocation, clothing and essentials grants,  
14 education and training. Applications to the fund will be available for those who are seeking to  
15 flee or have fled violence. Payment will be made when the survivor has an exit plan in place  
16 e.g. a place in a refuge or a court order in place to exclude the perpetrator from the home.

17 \*N.B. *This term is used to describe those who are currently experiencing or have fled violence: physical, sexual or*  
18 *coercive*

- 19 ● Administer the fund via Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVA) and Independent  
20 Sexual Violence Advocates (ISVA) with an online portal. Working closely with survivors and  
21 their children these are well placed to assess the individual needs. Payments will be made  
22 directly to the individual survivor from the fund.
- 23 ● Address the gaps in numbers of IDVAs and ISVAs across the nations. Train existing IDVAs



24 and ISVAs on assessment and accessing the fund, including this training in the IDVA and ISVA  
25 national certificates.

### 26 **Motion rationale:**

27 The act of leaving a violent or controlling relationship is the most dangerous moment for a woman and at  
28 this time she also faces navigating a complex system for financial, emotional, physical and legal support.

29 When public health was threatened by rubbish in the streets, we made sure that there was funding for  
30 statutory bin collection. Women's lives are at risk so we have to ensure statutory funding is available for  
31 specialist services as well as the financial, emotional and physical needs of survivors.

32 For survivors of domestic and sexual violence accessing IDVA/ISVA services<sup>7, 8</sup> can be a lifeline however  
33 this is far too often a postcode lottery.<sup>9</sup> If advocates are available, much of their time is taken up helping  
34 survivors navigate and access basic benefits such as housing and income support, which takes up so  
35 much time that only the most at risk survivors have the support of advocates. By ensuring a national  
36 statutory fund is in place, IDVAs and ISVAs can quickly assess the individual, tailoring a package for the  
37 survivors' unique set of needs. Their focus can then be on rebuilding the survivors' life and if appropriate  
pursuing the case through the criminal justice system.

38 Having a fund in place will also address the fact that the current benefits system only pays out after five  
39 weeks, another potential barrier to a woman fleeing, or at the very least a penalty to those that do. Refuge  
40 spaces are also far too often reliant on eligibility for housing benefit, which again takes time, resources and  
41 knowledge.<sup>10</sup>

42 For a woman to rebuild her life and the lives of her children, trauma informed mental health support is vital;  
43 this again is too often a postcode lottery with patchy and inadequate commissioning of services across the  
44 UK.<sup>11</sup> The fund removes this risk and enables the survivor to access the right mental health support she  
45 requires for the time she needs it.<sup>12</sup>

46 We do not believe violence is inevitable and our policy areas work together to dismantle the structures  
47 where control and violence thrive. Whilst this work is happening, we must support women now, support  
48 women to escape the violence and rebuild their lives. To not just live but to thrive.

### References:

1. <https://www.refuge.org.uk/our-work/forms-of-violence-and-abuse/domestic-violence/domestic-violence-the-facts/>
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3. <https://www.psnipolice.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/domestic-abuse-statistics/2019-20-domestic-abuse-bulletin-jun-19.pdf>
4. <https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/about/data-on-violence-against-women-and-girls/>
5. <http://www.gov.scot/publications/recorded-crime-scotland-2018-19/pages/15/>
6. <https://www.psnipolice.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/police-recorded-crime-statistics/2019/may/crime-bulletin-may-19.pdf>
7. <https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/National%20definition%20of%20IDVA%20work%20FINAL.pdf>
8. <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-help/looking-for-information/rape-crisis-services/advocacy-isvas/>
9. <https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Practitioner%20Survey%20Report%20summary.pdf>
10. <https://www.refuge.org.uk/get-help-now/government-benefits/>
11. <https://healthtalk.org/womens-experiences-domestic-violence-and-abuse/impact-of-domestic-violence-and-abuse-on-womens-mental-health>
12. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6998874/>