

**Lucy Allan MP**

Member of Parliament for Telford



**HOUSE OF COMMONS**

**LONDON SW1A 0AA**

Heather Wheeler MP  
Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

24 January 2018

Dear Minister

Several constituents have expressed concern about the Government's proposed changes to housing funding and, specifically, to the funding of women's domestic violence refuges.

As you will know, currently, domestic refuges receive funding from a mixture of sources, including state support from:

- Support funding, which enables refuges to pay their specialist support staff and to fund additional services such as counselling and advice, via grants from local government or Police and Crime Commissioners.
- Housing funding, which funds the "bricks and mortar" costs of a refuge, derived from housing benefit.

The Government's proposals, as published in their October 2017 consultation paper, would fundamentally change this, and remove "short-term supported housing" – which is defined to include refuges from the welfare system.

This, as I understand it, would mean that all funding for housing costs (including rent and eligible service charges) previously met from Housing Benefit, would, thenceforward, be allocated and administered by local authorities.

In response to these proposals, the charity Women's Aid, said that the Government's changes would "mark the full devolution of responsibility and resourcing for domestic abuse refuges to local areas", and that, as a package, they put at "risk" our existing network of specialist domestic abuse refuges.

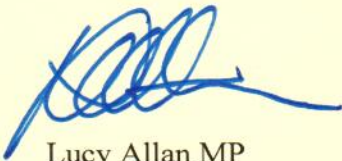
Women's Aid also conducted a survey of refuge providers, and found, from the responses, that if the Government's proposals were carried out:

- Over a third, 39%, of refuge services would have to close completely – seeing the loss of a total of 446 refuge spaces.
- A further 13% of the refuge services would reduce the spaces available in their refuges, by a total of 142 spaces between them.
- Just over half of refuges (52%) would either have to close the refuge service entirely or reduce the number of spaces available - a loss of 588 refuge spaces in all.
- And that, in total, these 588 lost spaces would have supported 2,058 women and 2,202 children during the year - resulting in 4000 more women and children turned away from the lifesaving services they desperately need.

Having formerly been involved with a local Women's Aid branch, this is an issue that is of particular concern to me. Therefore, I should be most grateful if you would outline what action the Government is taking to protect and improve our national refuge network, and, further, if you would detail what discussions your Department has had with charities, such as Women's Aid, as part of your consultation and review into future-funding arrangements.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Lucy Allan MP