GOVERNMENT WHIPS' OFFICE
HOUSE OF LORDS
LONDON SW1A 0PW

Telephone 020-7219 3131
www.lordswhips.org.uk
holgovernmentwhips@parliament.uk

BARONESS VERE OF NORBITON
020 7219 6802

3 April 2017

Dear Lady Gale,

Thank you so much for your participation in a lively and enlightening International Women's Day Debate in the House on Thursday 9 March. I am writing to you in response to two questions you posed during the debate. Turning first to your query about funding for domestic violence services.

The Government is fully committed to ensuring that no victim of domestic abuse is turned away from the support they need, as we made clear in the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. The Spending Review tripled funding to support victims of domestic abuse to £40 million and on 17 February we announced that 76 projects across the country will receive a share of the £20 million fund to support victims of domestic abuse, creating more than 2,200 bed spaces and giving support to over 19,000 victims.

This builds on the £3.5 million funding to support 46 projects across the country to deliver 710 bed spaces and support for 3,798 victims of domestic abuse in 2015/16, and the 2014/16 £10 million funding to 148 areas to maintain and strengthen refuge provision.

We believe that local areas are best placed to understand local needs and the Government has therefore devolved power and responsibility for meeting those needs accordingly. However, we expect local areas to do the right thing and provide services that are responsive to the needs of victims fleeing from domestic abuse.

Local areas should assess their need for domestic abuse services and make decisions on the provision of safe accommodation and support to fit the identified needs for all domestic abuse victims, both from within and outside their local area.

Alongside the £20 million fund, we published our new 'Priorities for Domestic Abuse Services'. These have been developed with partners from the domestic abuse sector, and set out for the first time what local areas need to do to ensure their response to domestic abuse is as effective as it can be.

On 15 September 2016, the Government confirmed that refuges will be exempt from the 1% social rent reduction policy. Refuges will also be exempted from the LHA cap policy until 2019/20 when a new funding model will be introduced which will ensure the sector continues to be funded at current levels.

Let me now come to your second point around the Centenary next year. As you will be aware, the Chancellor announced on 8 March, a £5m fund to celebrate the centenary of the 1918 Representation of the People Act that, for the first time, extended suffrage to women. This support will help mark the decisive step in the political emancipation of women in this country and encourage more women to engage in democracy.

The funding will be for projects that will help build a legacy for the future, by celebrating the upcoming centenary, as well as educating young people about its significance. I understand that details of how organisations can apply for funding, what size grants will be available and when the scheme will start will be announced in due course.

As you rightly pointed out, it is important that Parliament itself takes the opportunity to properly mark this occasion. I know that the Parliamentary project, Vote 100, has been undertaking a four-year programme of activities that started in 2015 and will have a major public exhibition in Westminster Hall next year.

It is marking a number of anniversaries as well as the 1918 Representation of the People Act including, I was delighted to note, both the 60th anniversary of the Life Peerages Act 1958, allowing women to sit in the House of Lords, and the 60th anniversary of women peers taking their seats for the first time.

I would be very happy to meet you and others to discuss a programme of events for the Centenary. Please contact my PA James Anoom, 020 7219 6802 to find a suitable date and time for us to meet.

I hope you find this letter helpful. I will also place a copy in the House library.

BARONESS VERE OF NORBITON

Baroness Gale
House of Lords