Noble Lords,

The government has published its response to the consultation on the Future Delivery of Support for Victims and their Children in Accommodation-Based Domestic Abuse Services.

Through the consultation we heard from victims and survivors, service providers, local authorities and other public agencies, as well as other professionals who support victims including children every day. All responses to the consultation were carefully considered and I am grateful to everyone who took the time to respond, providing vital insight and evidence.

The majority of respondents agreed with the proposals as set out. Government will therefore introduce a statutory duty on local authorities, placing clearer accountability on local areas to ensure the needs of survivors and victims within safe accommodation are met in a consistent way across England. By introducing this statutory duty, we want to ensure all victims of domestic abuse are able to access support within safe accommodation that meets their specific individual needs. All victims, no matter their background, should feel safe and supported as they recover from this unacceptable crime.

Under this new duty Tier One local authorities in England (County Councils, Metropolitan and Unitary Authorities and the Greater London Authority) will be required to convene a Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Board to support them in undertaking local needs assessments and developing local strategies. Tier One authorities will also be required to effectively commission services based on a robust needs assessment, and report back to Government demonstrating how they have met the needs identified. The duty will also require Tier Two authorities in two tier areas (District, City and Borough Councils) to co-operate with the lead tier one authority.

To support local authorities, my department will develop statutory guidance which will set out government’s expectations of local authorities in delivering this duty. We will also establish a ministerial-led National Steering Group to monitor and evaluate delivery of support within safe accommodation – working closely with the newly appointed Domestic Abuse Commissioner.

The full response can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/support-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse-in-safe-accommodation
The Domestic Abuse Bill demonstrates the Government's commitment to supporting all victims of domestic abuse. The Government will now introduce this new statutory duty as an amendment to the Domestic Abuse Bill at the earliest opportunity, to enable proper parliamentary scrutiny.

My officials will continue to work closely with local authorities, national organisations, and specialist domestic abuse service providers to ensure the proposals are effectively delivered on the ground.

I am also pleased to share with you that ahead of this new duty coming into force in 2021 we are confirming a further domestic abuse accommodation services funding round for 2020/21. Councils in England will be invited to bid for a share of £15m – a 20% increase on 2019/20 – to ensure essential support services are able to run for those that need them.

I wish to deposit in the library of both Houses a copy of my Dear Colleague letter and the Government response to the consultation.

[Signature]

THE VISCOUNT YOUNGER OF LECKIE