

Respect is supporting Rights of Women on the following campaign to

Save legal aid for women experiencing violence

- **Please take 5 minutes NOW to write to your MP and save legal aid for women experiencing violence**
- **Please circulate this message**

Dear all,

Last Tuesday the Government published the **Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill and its response to the consultation on the reform of legal aid in England and Wales**. The Bill had its first reading in the House of Commons on the same day and is being fast-tracked through Parliament: the second reading will be **this Wednesday**.

We urge you to **take 5 minutes out to write to your MP now** and let them know that the proposals will have a negative impact on women and are entirely inconsistent with Government commitments on violence against women and girls. Because the Bill is moving so quickly, we have attached a **template letter** for you to download that you can use to write to your MP (further help and instructions on how to do this below).

Overview

Essentially, the majority of the proposals in the original consultation are being taken forward. Significantly for those of us working on violence against women and girls issues, this includes the very restrictive evidence that will be required of women who need legal aid in private family law matters, and the removal of immigration law (not asylum law) from the scope of civil legal aid. This means that legal aid will **no longer** be available to victims of domestic violence making applications under the domestic violence rule. Other vulnerable migrants, such as domestic workers and those who have been trafficked will also no longer be able to access legally aided advice and representation to assist them resolve their immigration status. The only positive development is that legal aid for asylum-seekers who are seeking help with accommodation will be retained.

How to send the letter to your MP

1. Go to www.writetothem.com
2. Type your postcode into the box that appears and click "go"
3. You will now have been taken to a page which sets out all of your elected representatives
4. Look at the column which is headed "Select your member of parliament". Now click on the name of your MP
5. You will now have been taken to a page where you can enter your name, address, and a message to your MP
6. Now cut and paste the text of the letter to your MP from the attached template into the large white text box on the screen. Remember to insert the name of your organisation where you are prompted to (highlighted in yellow) and sign off in your own name
7. When you have done all of the above, click on "preview your message" and if you are happy with it, click "send message".

