



Matthew Barber
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Emily Darlington MP
House of Commons
Westminster
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Dear Emily,

Support for victims of sexual violence

I note that yesterday in the Second Reading debate on the Victims and Courts Bill that you made an intervention stating that I do not provide funding for victims of sexual abuse in Milton Keynes. [HC Deb 20 May 2025 Vol 767 Col 983]

This is of course factually incorrect. I am sure that you had no intention of misleading Parliament and so I wanted to share a summary of all the services available that are funded through my office in order to allow you to correct the record.

As you will be aware there are a mix of services based within Milton Keynes, as well as those that are available to victims across Thames Valley, regardless of where they live, including in Milton Keynes.

In terms of specific Milton Keynes services, victims can be supported by:

- **MK ACT** - they received £46,608 for an IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocate) this year. We have funded this post since 2022/23 and were able to increase funding this year by £4,000 despite cuts imposed by the Ministry of Justice. I have provided a total of £174,432 over the last four years (including the current year)
- **Sexual Assault and Abuse Support Service Bucks and Milton Keynes** – they are the sexual violence service for MK. This year we have funded two ISVAs at £83,000, plus group work for male victims of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence for the whole of Thames Valley £11,700. Total for 2025/26 £94,700. Again, we have increased how much we fund per ISVA this year, due to the increased employment costs due to the rising in National Insurance; and funded an additional ISVA for this organisation. They have had an overall increase in funding this year of £19,888 despite cuts in our victims budget. This service has been funded for at least one ISVA since 2021. The funding is slightly complex for this as it has changed over the years but since 2022/23 and including this year they have received £259,172 (four years).
- **SAFE** – we fund four children and young people ISDVAs at SAFE for the whole Thames Valley and one of these is dedicated to MK. The total for the four officers is £179,844.36 per year. We have funded at least one CHISDVA with them since 2021 and have increased this provision over the years as demand has sadly increased.

Our commissioned services cover the whole of Thames Valley, including Milton Keynes:

Thames Valley Sexual Violence Service – We set up a dedicated commissioned SV service, provided by Hope After Harm, starting in April 2024 as we recognised the

need for a dedicated and holistic provision for SV victims in the Thames Valley. This service includes a range of support including ISVA, case worker, group support and peer support to meet the range of needs that SV victims may have. Prior to this the ISVA provision was within in the Adult Specialist Service but we have commissioned a Thames Valley wide ISVA provision in one form or another since 2015. The SV service is £597,689 this year and last year was £588,000. The first three years (2024/25 – 2026/27) of the contract is £1,803,862.

- **Children and Young People Service** – dedicated service for children and young people, provided by SAFE and a lot of their support is for victims of sexual violence and domestic abuse. The new service which we commissioned and started in April 2024 includes a range of provision i.e. case work, group work, peer support and counselling. The CYP service is £806,922 this year and last year was £784,964. The first three years (2024/25 – 2026/27) of the contract is £2,423,866 in funding.
- **Adult Victim Service** – Not a sexual violence service but provides our support to adult victims of all other crimes, including standard risk domestic abuse which is often a gap in provision. This includes a dedicated group support for domestic abuse victims and IDVA provision. The adult service is £555,823 this year and last year was £548,230. The first three years (2024/25 – 2026/27) of the contract totals £1,660,152.
- **Victims First Counselling Service** – Available across the Thames Valley and provides both counselling and trauma therapy to victims across the Thames Valley. Trauma therapy is a gap in provision for victims. Last year 63% of our victims presented as SV victims at referral (although this can often increase once you start working with them). The funding allocated to this service is £160,000 per year.
- **Victims First Hub** – We also have the Hub which prioritises sexual violence victims in their contact to ensure they have access to support, including those from the MK.

Other Thames Valley provision:

- **SAFE** – we also fund the DAY programme which is a DA programme for young people who have been victims of DA. This is £117,705 per year. This has been funded since 2022/23 at a total of £470,820 for the four years.
- **Hope After Harm** – fund three ISVAs (one per county). These are dedicated outreach ISVA to work with diverse communities (e.g. ethnic diverse communities, sex workers, homeless etc). Funded £124,500 per year (an increase of £11,596 this year). This has been funded since 2021. Since 2022/23 we have funded a total of £463,212 for the four years.
- **Flag DV** – Fund Thames Valley wide legal advice service for DA victims since 2022 at around £15,000 per year. We have also agreed to fund them a further £14,700 this year to develop some group support to assist victims going through the family court process.
- **Thames Valley Stalking Service** – we fund four stalking advocates who work across the Thames Valley and we have funded three since 2022.

Funding Cuts:

- As you may recall the Ministry of Justice have cut funding for our core victims service by 4.2% from 2025/26 after a number of years of static funding. We have seen increased financial demands on our services as a result of inflationary increases in overhead costs, cost of living impact on salary requirements and the recent National Insurance increases. These all represent further real time funding cuts. Despite these cuts, we made the decision locally to continue with supporting as many services as possible, with a focus on protecting posts. The focus on posts will maintain support

levels for victims and also offer stability for providers in the sector. We have also reviewed the individual circumstances of services and allowed for increases in funding for posts which had been static for a number of years, thus supporting pay rises for individuals and supporting provider overhead costs, both of which providers have said they needed help with.

- Currently we only have a funding commitment for 2025/26 for both the core funding and the dedicated SV/DA grant stream. We have expressed concerns to the MoJ that the unknowns in funding represent significant uncertainty in the victim sector in the Thames Valley and further cuts will impact the provision that we can provide to victims in the area,

In addition funding provided by my office to Milton Keynes Council through my Partnership fund, which I have increased by 15% in the current year has also been used to support the Family Drug and Alcohol Court in Milton Keynes which I am sure you will agree provides an indirect benefit to some victims.

As you will see, far from providing no funding for sexual abuse support services in Milton Keynes as you incorrectly stated in the House of Commons, there is significant funding for services to support victims in your constituency. I hope you will find an early opportunity to correct this in the official record.

Yours sincerely,



Matthew Barber
Police & Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley