

12th February 2021

To whom it may concern,

Upholding the rights of disabled survivors of domestic abuse

Stay Safe East is asking for your support for two critical amendments to the Domestic Abuse Bill, which is going to Report Stage in the House of Lords on 8th March 2021. **We have very little time and urgently need your help to ensure that this Bill protects ALL victims, including disabled victims.**

Disabled women are three times as likely to experience domestic abuse, and four times as likely to report abuse from multiple perpetrators, as non-disabled women. Disabled women are also up to three times as likely to experience domestic abuse at the hands of family members, some of whom will also be their carers. Disabled people also experience abuse from paid and unpaid carers or personal assistants. Our amendments seek to increase the legal rights of disabled survivors.

1. The previous Serious Crime and Domestic Abuse Act 2014 includes a clause, known as the 'carer's defence', which allows a family member or partner accused of abuse to claim they were acting in the victim's 'best interests'. If this landmark piece of legislation is to protect disabled victims as well as non-disabled victims, we must ensure that abusers are not provided with a clause to claim 'best interests' as justification for abusing us. Our first amendment aims to do this:

Amendment 1: Repeal of provisions relating to defence for controlling or coercive behavior offence (New clause)

This new clause seeks to repeal the 'carer's defence' for the offence of controlling or coercive behavior in intimate or family relationships.

2. Every year, disabled people are victims of abuse by paid and unpaid carers or Personal Assistants with whom they have a close relationship but are not family members, and there is very little legislation to protect us. We experience this as domestic abuse. In an effort to ensure that this Bill recognizes paid and unpaid carers who are not family members in the definition of a domestic abuser, we have also proposed a second amendment:

Amendment 2: Domestic abuse by people to paid or unpaid carers to whom the victim is personally connected but who are not partners or family members

(h) Unpaid carers (neighbours, friends or other individuals) who perform caring duties for the disabled person and with whom the victim has a 'personal connection'

(i) Paid carers – Personal Assistants, paid care workers and other paid individuals in a position of trust who perform caring duties for the disabled person and with whom the victim has a 'personal connection'

For a full explanation of why we are campaigning for change, please see [our website](#) and [official legal opinion endorsed by Bindmans](#).

Thus far, Baroness Jane Campbell of Surbiton and Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson have been invaluable in leading on our amendments and we have had a lot of support, but we need to take this further in order to ensure that our amendments become legislation. **To support us to make this change, we are asking you to:**

- [Contact members of the House of Lords to vote for our amendments](#)
- Contact your MPs

Please copy any e-mails or letters to policy@staysafe-east.org.uk

- Show your support by signing [our petition](#) on change.org
- Share our posts on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) to garner support

Thank you for your support. Together we can help keep disabled survivors safe.

for more information about Stay Safe East's work please see www.staysafe-east.org.uk

