



# General Election Campaigning Toolkit

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women's aid

campaign champions 

# Why campaign?

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## Campaigning delivers powerful change

From winning the right to vote a hundred years ago, to the criminalisation of controlling behaviour, it is campaigners and activists who drive progress and make history. You are part of this important movement.

Women's Aid strives for the change that is needed to stop domestic abuse from happening in the first place, and we need your support more than ever during the general election.

With a general election confirmed to happen this year, it's crucial that we shift away from a piecemeal response to this national emergency, and the next government takes a whole system approach to tackling this epidemic and ends domestic abuse for good.

**That's where passionate activists like you come in.** This toolkit will support you to campaign and get your voice heard.

## The 2024 General Election

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The 2024 General Election will take place on **Thursday 4th July**. There are 650 seats up for election across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

### Key dates during the election period include:

- Wednesday 22nd May 2024 – The Prime Minister announces the General Election will take place on 4th July 2024.
- Friday 24th May 2024 – The last day of Parliament sitting before being prorogued.
- Thursday 30th May 2024 - The formal dissolution of Parliament.
- Friday 7th June 2024 - Deadline for candidate nomination papers to be submitted by 4pm, followed by publication of statement of all persons nominated at 5pm.
- Tuesday 18th June 2024 - Deadline to register to vote.
- Thursday 4th July 2024 - Polling Day.

# What can we **change**?

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We campaign with survivors of domestic abuse and local services to amplify their voices and use our influence to press for change. In [Women's Aid's 50 years](#), campaigners like you have helped us achieve so much, from the criminalising coercive control in 2015 and the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act in 2021. Our recent [Deserve To Be Heard](#) campaign secured real change thanks to our [Campaign Champions](#), including recognition in the Women's Health Strategy and commitments in the Domestic Abuse Plan. **But there is still so much more to do - especially with ongoing cuts to essential services.**

Attitudes which enable and excuse domestic abuse are still worryingly prevalent in the United Kingdom – [our research](#) shows those who do not see the link between domestic abuse and sexism are also more likely to tolerate it [1]. It's also becoming harder than ever for specialist domestic abuse services to provide the support adult and child survivors so desperately need.

We must ensure adult and child survivors of domestic abuse can access the support and protection they urgently need, and urge the next government take action to finally end domestic abuse for good. **Campaign Champions are vital to our general election campaign work to ensure all women and children can live free from fear and abuse.**

# How do I **get started**?

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**When campaigning ahead of the election, you can rely on [Women's Aid's manifesto](#) and [accompanying summary](#) to provide you with all the key messages you need.**

Women's Aid created a [manifesto](#) in consultation with survivors and frontline services on the changes they need, and we've been sharing this far and wide. Now we're in the year of the election, it's time to ensure that domestic abuse is a key election issue and show politicians that ending domestic abuse is a priority for the public.

We need to see a seismic shift towards a **whole-system approach** that can better understand and address the needs of adult and child survivors, as well as recognise the value that specialist women's and 'by and for' domestic abuse services deliver.

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[1] Women's Aid. (2022). Come Together to End Domestic Abuse: a survey of UK attitudes to domestic abuse 2022. Bristol: Women's Aid. Available online

# Key messages

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**INVEST to save:** fund specialist women's services to save lives and money

Investment in specialist women's and 'by and for' domestic abuse services could not only help the next government to save **£3,898,100,000** [2] by reducing duplication of effort and pressure on public services, but it will also save lives.



**SUPPORT survivors:** deliver the right response the first time

Even before the start of a survivor's journey to safety, survivors need to know that no matter where they turn, they will be **supported and protected** – whether that be, for example, with their mental health, supporting their children's wellbeing, accessing emergency funds, or securing housing.



**PREVENT abuse:** transform societal attitudes and understanding

Attitudes which enable and excuse domestic abuse to continue are still worryingly prevalent in the United Kingdom [3]. To end domestic abuse, it is vital that we **raise awareness and improve understanding of the causes**, and to change attitudes to ensure we achieve a world where domestic abuse is no longer tolerated.

[2] Women's Aid. (2023) Investing to save: the economic case for funding specialist domestic abuse support. Bristol: Women's Aid.

[3] Women's Aid. (2022). Come Together to End Domestic Abuse: a survey of UK attitudes to domestic abuse 2022. Bristol: Women's Aid

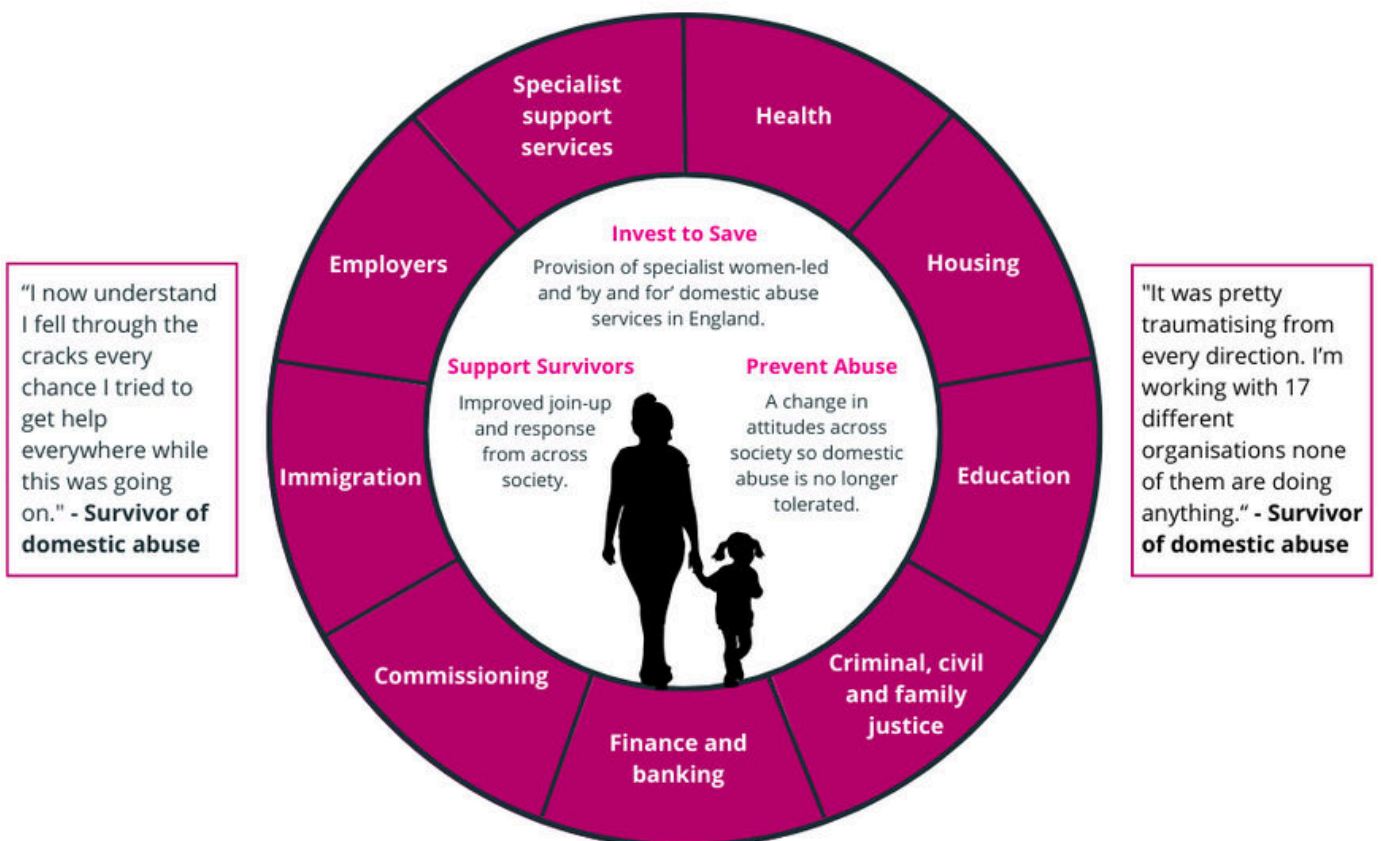


## We are clear that the following foundations must underpin these pillars:

- **A whole-system response** – recognising that all government departments and the public sector – including health, social care, criminal and family justice, education, housing - need to play their part in ending domestic abuse.
- **A gendered approach** – recognising that while anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, it is disproportionately committed by men against women [4] and is a form of violence against women and girls (VAWG).
- **Women’s rights are human rights** – a rights-based approach, which protects and supports all women, including those facing additional forms of inequality.
- **Government accountability** – including through the creation a dedicated ministerial lead for VAWG who attends Cabinet to drive forward action and hold all government departments, statutory agencies and local commissioners accountable for progress.

### A Whole-Systems Approach – the joined-up response to domestic abuse

women’s aid  
until women & children are safe



[4] CEDAW 1992: para 6.

# Influencing candidates

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## Who are my candidates?

- You should be able to find all the candidates standing in your local area here: **Who Can I Vote For?**
- You can find out more information about your candidates on local party's websites, local newspapers, social media and election materials you receive.
- Be mindful that independents may be standing in your constituency too and not every political party will put forward a candidate in your area.
- You can **find your local MP here**. However, your current local MP may not be standing for election again.
- Be aware of any additional role your MP has, are they a government minister, a shadow minister (in the opposition party), or a campaign coordinator for their party? This could mean they have even more influence, but equally depending on the role, it may mean they are more restricted in what they can do. **Find out more here**.

## Contacting candidates

- Make sure you contact the candidates for your local area, as they only have to respond to members of the public living in their constituency.
- You can contact candidates on social media, email them, write a letter to them and organise to meet with them in person.
- Write an email or letter to the candidates sharing our manifesto and ask them to commit to taking action to support specialist domestic abuse services and adult and child survivors if elected.
- MPs hold local 'drop-in surgeries' so you can request an appointment to meet with them.
- Please note that even if you disagree with your candidates or you are unsatisfied with their responses, it's important to always be respectful and polite in any discourse.

### Top tips:

- Focus on why ending domestic abuse and protecting specialist domestic abuse services is important to your local area and voters.
- Our monthly Campaign Champion newsletter regularly provides template emails and letters for writing to MPs and candidates that you can use.
- Remember to note any actions they agree to take and follow up!



## Campaigning actions



**Write to your local candidates** sharing Women's Aids manifesto, urging them to prioritise supporting specialist domestic abuse services and ending domestic abuse for good.



Ask all candidates to share Women's Aid's survivor support statement on their **social media channels** to demonstrate their commitment to supporting survivors of domestic abuse.



Ask your **current MP** to become a Women's Aid Parliamentary Champion, and your local candidates to commit to becoming a **Parliamentary Champion** if elected.



Support and share **Women's Aid's general election manifesto** on social media.



**Attend local hustings events** and ask candidates what they will do to support their local specialist domestic abuse services, and what their party will do to end violence against women and girls.



# How do I talk about **domestic abuse**?

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## What is domestic abuse?

We use the term '**survivors**' to talk about women and children who are experiencing, or have experienced, domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse can include: emotional abuse, physical and sexual abuse, economic abuse, harassment and stalking, online or digital abuse, and coercive control.

It can affect anyone regardless of gender, race, class, age, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, lifestyle or religion.

It can have a long-lasting and harmful impact on survivors and their children. Domestic abuse is a crime that is deeply rooted in the inequality between women and men in society. In the vast majority of cases, women are the victims and men are the perpetrators.

1

Domestic abuse can happen **to anyone**.

2

It is not always physical. **Perpetrators are always responsible for the abuse**.

3

Survivors need to be listened to, believed and supported - **not judged**.

4

Domestic abuse is about power and control, and **inequality between men and women**.

5

There are many reasons why women often **can't just leave** an abusive partner, from lack of access to money, to language barriers, or fear of the consequences of trying to leave.



## Your local community

When you are talking about domestic abuse within your community, some survivors may talk to you about their experiences. Remember to put your safety first. If you feel unsafe or have concerns about your own or someone else's relationship, seek advice from:

### The Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline ✕

**0808 2000 247** (run by Refuge) is available for help and support for a victim, friend or family member all day, every day.

### Helplines for minoritised groups ✕

The national LGBT+ domestic abuse helpline on 0800 999 5428 which is run by Galop, and Southall Black Sister's helpline on 020 8571 0800. You can find more helplines on [our website](#).

### Your local specialist domestic abuse services ✕

Find the local service providing support - such as refuge accommodation, counselling and legal help - in your area on [Women's Aid's directory](#).

### Women's Aid support services ✕

Includes our [Live Chat](#), [Survivors' Forum](#), the [No Woman Turned Away](#) project, [The Survivor's Handbook](#), [Love Respect](#) (our dedicated website for young people in their first relationships) and our [advocacy projects](#).

**In an emergency situation always call the police - 999.** The most important things you can do for a survivor is to listen to what she tells you, believe her and let her know that help is out there. ✕

You may hear lots of myths and stereotypes about domestic abuse. Find out how to challenge them [here](#).

# How do I **stay safe**?

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## **Should I talk about my own experience?**

When engaging with candidates or publicly speaking about the election, for example, at a local hustings, sometimes survivors may wish to talk about their own experiences of domestic abuse. While your own experience can be a powerful way to get across the importance of this issue, please never feel pressure to do this if you're not comfortable, and only do so if you are certain it will not compromise your safety or wellbeing.

**If you are a survivor of domestic abuse, you are the expert in talking about your experience.** Telling your story can be a powerful way to demonstrate the importance of prioritising domestic abuse, but it can be really hard. It is important to think about whether having your story and name in the public domain may be dangerous for you.

You might want to **remain anonymous** so you cannot be identified. You can do this by using a different name in your campaigning work, or ask to be anonymous if you speak to any local media.

Be aware of the possible impacts of speaking publicly about your experience with abuse. It is important to **prioritise your wellbeing**, including both your physical safety and emotional wellbeing. Consider what support you have in place in case you are impacted negatively by speaking publicly.

**Make sure that your personal contact details are not easily available online.** You can create an alternative email address for your campaigning work if you are worried about your email being misused. If you decide that you are safe and comfortable discussing your experience, take your time and remember that your safety and wellbeing is more important than anything else.

For further information, please see this **[Breaking the Silence resource](#)** for details on what to consider before speaking publicly about your experiences as a survivor of domestic abuse.



## Looking after yourself

- Raising awareness about a difficult issue like domestic abuse can be tough, so taking care of yourself is vital. The **Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0808 2000 247** (run by Refuge) is available for help and support for a victim, friend or family member all day, every day.
- Helplines for minoritised groups include the **National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0800 999 5428** (run by Galop) and Southall Black Sister's helpline on **020 8571 0800**. You can find more helplines on [our website](#).
- Our [Survivors' Forum](#) is a safe, anonymous space for women affected by domestic abuse to share experiences and support each other.
- Other Women's Aid support services include our [Live Chat](#), the [No Woman Turned Away](#) project, [The Survivor's Handbook](#), [Love Respect](#) (our dedicated website for young people in their first relationships) and our [advocacy projects](#).
- **It is important to take breaks.** Balance campaigning with setting aside time for yourself to reflect on what you've achieved, or switch off completely.









## Staying safe online

- Social media platforms like X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook are great campaigning tools, but there is a possibility of experiencing negative comments about your campaign.
- Find out lots more information about how to report online abuse, block abusers and keep your account safe [here](#).

# Start campaigning

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It may seem daunting, but you've got everything you need to get started. Remember, practice makes perfect, and these top tips will help to get you there:

-  Protect your safety and wellbeing - **this is always top priority.**
-  Make sure you are signed up to being a **Women's Aid Campaign Champion!**
-  Use the **Women's Aid manifesto summary** for key messages for the general election.
-  Use [facts and figures](#) to demonstrate **why action is needed.**
-  There is nothing more powerful than **your voice.**
-  **Learn and reflect** from every action or activity you undertake.
-  **Celebrate** your successes, big or small.
-  Let us know how you're getting on! Email **[campaigns@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@womensaid.org.uk)**



▶ **Thank you for your support and good luck with your campaigns!**

- For more information, or to get in touch, email [campaigns@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@womensaid.org.uk) or visit [www.womensaid.org.uk/campaign-champions](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/campaign-champions)
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