

Email received from Ms Isabelle Kerr, Rape Crisis Centre on 21 March 2017

Dear SLSC

REF: UK GOVERNMENT TAX CREDITS RAPE CLAUSE AND FAMILY CAP

The Rape Crisis Centre in Glasgow condemns the decision of the UK Government to implement the tax credits rape clause and family cap on April 6th 2017. We cite the following reasons:

1. No woman should be forced to prove her own rape, or even to speak about it until she decides the time is right for her, and elects to do so to a person of her own choosing.
2. The physical, emotional, and psychological impact of all forms of domestic abuse, including intimate partner sexual violence, is well documented. Forcing a woman to relive her experiences at a time not of her choosing could retraumatise the woman, with significant long term psychological impact.
3. The clause states that a third-party evidence model should be used but if adequate training was to be provided for the suggested health care professionals, social workers, police officers, registered counsellors and “*other organisations ... approved by the Secretary of State (in the case of Universal Credit) or the Treasury (in the case of Tax Credits)*” the cost would be so prohibitive that it would be cheaper to maintain the status quo.
4. If there is no intention by the UK Government to fund adequate training for all of those professionals who may be called upon to provide ‘third party evidence’, untold damage could be done to women.
5. Rape Crisis Centres do not exist to gather evidence for benefits claims. Our role is to provide specialist support, counselling and advocacy services to survivors of any form of sexual violence, abuse and/or exploitation. Indeed we are poorly resourced to do this job yet we deliver a service that is second to none. We are not an arm of the Treasury.

Finally, and most frighteningly, the “Requirement to not be living with the alleged perpetrator” is possibly the least well-thought-out part of this ill conceived piece of legislation. We have more than 30 years worth of empirical evidence that tells us that the most dangerous time for a woman and her children is at the point of leaving an abuser. In the UK a woman is murdered every three days by a partner or ex-partner. Yet a woman would be forced to make that choice, perhaps knowing the level of danger she faces, in order to have enough money to feed and clothe her family. This is not a choice women should be forced to make.

This clause puts women and children in an untenable position. It also potentially puts women’s lives, and the lives of their children. in danger.

The Rape Crisis Centre in Glasgow urges the UK Government to agree an emergency debate on this issue.

Yours sincerely

Isabelle Kerr

Manager

Rape Crisis Centre