



## Removal of the Five Year Limit for Domestic Abuse Claims is a Victory for Victims

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The recent news that the Government are scrapping time limits for obtaining appropriate written evidence of domestic abuse victims is a victory for all those who have been victims of domestic abuse. This will go a long way in ensuring that vulnerable persons are eligible for legal aid, particularly in cases involving children, in which a period of time has passed since incidents of domestic abuse.

Welcomed also are the expansion of types of written evidence that will now be considered acceptable in terms of proof: statements from organisations working with domestic abuse victims, along with letters from solicitors and housing officers will also now be sufficient. Sometimes victims fear going to see doctors, police or others in 'authority' due to a fear of not being believed or of being vilified during criminal proceedings. As a result of this, solicitors or charities are often the first people that victims will report their experience of domestic abuse to.

With the changes, victims will no longer be penalised for being frightened. Previously, when they were not eligible for legal aid, the victims would sometimes be subject to facing their perpetrators in a court room without any protection from a solicitor. In 2015, the Commons Justice Select Committee produced a highly critical report, which found that more than a third of victims of domestic violence were unable to provide the evidence required to obtain legal aid. Almost two years later it is finally being recognised that the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO) requirements were too restrictive. With these changes the legal profession can now help those most vulnerable in society, which is what most legal aid practitioners came into this field to do.

The full extent of the changes are eagerly awaited by solicitors, charities, victims and all organisations working with domestic violence victims. Author Laila Bhunnoo is a Solicitor-Advocate and a Director in the Family and Childcare department. Laila is currently recommended by Chambers UK 2016, a Client's Guide to the Legal Profession, as a leading lawyer in her field for her family work in London. Headed by 18 Director Solicitors, and boasting over 40 Law Society Family & Childcare Panel Specialists, the Duncan Lewis Family & Childcare department are specialists in all aspects of family and private/public children law matters from offices across London and throughout the UK.

Duncan Lewis is recognised by Legal 500 2016 as a leading family practice. We have also acquired a number of kite-marks which are testament to the quality of the specialised work our staff undertake. We were shortlisted by Jordan's Family Law Awards 2015 for 'Family Law Firm of the Year'. If you have any family related queries or require representation please do not hesitate to contact our team of expert solicitors on 0333 772 0409.



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