



COUNCIL MEETING

27 April 2017

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

NOTICE OF MOTION

Councillor L Caffrey will move the following motion:

Due to a change to rules for obtaining Legal Aid, Domestic abuse victims applying for legal aid to have their case heard in court must first prove that they are victims of such abuse. One of the accepted forms of evidence is a letter from a GP, a letter that some GPs charge up to £75 to provide.

Many victims flee abuse with very little and often only have the clothes that they are wearing and very few personal items; many have limited access to funds. Without legal aid some victims simply cannot afford court proceedings against their perpetrator.

Last year Baroness Thornton tabled an amendment to the Children and Social Work Bill, which would force the Government to stop GPs charging for a legal aid letter when domestic violence is taking place in a family which includes children, but this was defeated.

Gateshead Local Medical Committee (LMC) have asked their GP members not to charge victims of domestic abuse when providing evidence to support a Legal Aid application, but in other areas this may not be enough to stop charges being made.

A campaign to 'Scrap the fee' has been initiated by Manchester Councillors and some MPs including Tom Watson and the LMC have offered their backing for this campaign alongside Gateshead Council.

Council agrees to:

Support the Scrap the Fee campaign

Write to the Government urging them to scrap this fee and emphasising the support from Gateshead LMC for such a measure.

Proposed by: Councillor L Caffrey

Seconded by: Councillor J Adams

Supported by: Councillor N Weatherley

Councillor K McCartney