



29 January 2021

## **National Emergencies Trust Commends Disregard Changes For Those Affected By Emergencies**

**Amendments to legislation will ensure those who receive charitable grants from emergency response charities can continue to receive state support**

The completion of changes to civil legal aid entitlement take place this week and have improved financial support for those affected by domestic disasters. This was campaigned for by the National Emergencies Trust (NET) on behalf of its sector peers.

The amendment by the Ministry of Justice to 'The Civil Legal Aid (Financial Resources and Payment for Services) Regulations and introduced into daily operations by the Legal Aid Agency mean that claimants of specific compensation schemes are not disadvantaged when applying for civil legal aid support. These changes will help anyone affected by a domestic disaster who has received a grant from the London Emergencies Trust, the We Love Manchester Emergency Fund or the National Emergencies Trust (NET), including from any of the NET's distribution partners.

This amendment means that those entitled to civil legal aid will still be able to receive this support, alongside any emergency funding. Previously, anyone who accepted an emergency gift or grant from a charity would have had that financial support taken into consideration as part of any application for civil legal aid and this could mean they might miss out on vital funding support for their legal case. [RO2]

The NET requested the amendment in 2019 to create a fairer, more compassionate experience for those affected by domestic disasters. It also requested an amendment to the 'The Social Security (Income and Capital) Regulations to introduce a disregard for anyone in receipt of state benefits who accepts financial support from the National Emergencies Trust. This amendment was accepted by the Department of Work & Pensions last year.

Mhairi Sharp, CEO of the National Emergencies Trust, said: "These are small amendments to legislation that will make a profound difference to those affected by emergency events. Those who are offered a charitable gift to rebuild their lives or their homes, for instance, will now be able to accept that vital support without worrying that they might lose their existing support from the state. We are delighted that the Government has recognised this and made these important changes."

Gerald Oppenheim, chair of the London Emergencies Trust (LET), said: "This is an important and much-needed change to make permanent the arrangements made after the 2005 and 2017 terrorist events in London and Manchester. It will enable those who suffer loss in future domestic disasters to gain access to legal representation or state financial assistance at a time when they are at their most vulnerable and often in desperate need of support."

## **ENDS**

### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

#### **About the National Emergencies Trust**

The National Emergencies Trust is a charity set up to raise funds from the general public in the event of a domestic disaster or emergency. When a disaster occurs, the NET collaborates with charities and other bodies to raise and distribute money to support those affected. For more information visit [www.nationalemergenciestrust.org.uk](http://www.nationalemergenciestrust.org.uk)

#### **About the We Love Manchester Emergency Fund**

The We Love Manchester Emergency Fund is a charity set up after the Manchester Arena attack of 22 May 2017, following a phenomenal outpouring of emotion and support from around the world. The fund raised £21.6m, thanks to the generosity of the public. The We Love Manchester Emergency Fund closed in 2020.

#### **About the London Emergencies Trust**

The London Emergencies Trust is a pop-up disaster-response charity. It distributes public donations to those who are caught up in a major emergency such as terrorist attacks or other civil disasters in London.

#### **About this week's legislation changes**

Changes to income and capital disregards came into force on the 8 January 2021 and changes in relation to removal of the mortgage cap are effective as of 28 January 2021.