**Major overhaul of family courts to protect domestic abuse victims**

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Survivors of domestic abuse and their children will receive greater protections after the government today (25 June 2020) announced an overhaul of how the family courts deal with the horrific crime.

Sweeping reforms will see more victims of domestic abuse given access to separate building entrances and waiting rooms as well as protective screens to shield them from their alleged abuser in court.

Ministers will also make it easier for judges to prevent abusive ex-partners from repeatedly dragging their victims back to court – which can be used as a form of continuing domestic abuse.

The move comes after an expert-led review into how the family courts handle domestic abuse and other serious offences raised concerns that victims and children were being put at unnecessary risk.

“Every day the family courts see some of the most vulnerable in society and we have a duty to ensure they are protected and not put in danger. This report lays bare many hard truths about long-standing failings, but we are determined to drive the fundamental change necessary to keep victims and their children safe,” said Justice Minister Alex Chalk.

The expert panel was made up of representatives from charities, the judiciary, family law practitioners and academia, and took the views of more than 1,200 individuals and organisations.

Nicki Norman, Acting CEO at Women’s Aid, said: “This report marks a major step forward in exposing what women and children experiencing domestic abuse have been telling us for decades.”