

Written evidence submitted by Mike Buchanan on behalf of the political party he leads, Justice for Men & Boys (and the women who love them) – ‘J4MB’ – to the Health Committee of the House of Commons, in relation to the inquiry into the action which is necessary to improve suicide prevention in England

Date of submission: 7 September 2016

Deadline for submission: 9 September 2016

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1	<p><u>Terms of reference for written submissions</u> The first term of reference is this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The factors influencing the increase in suicide rates, with a focus on particularly at-risk groups <p>Men account for more than three-quarters of all suicides, and are therefore <i>by definition</i> a ‘particularly at-risk group’. Suicide has for some years been the leading cause of death for men under 50 in the UK. In 2014, out of the total of 6,122 people who committed suicide, 4,620 (75.6%) were men, and 1,492 (24.4%) were women.¹</p>
2	<p><u>Executive summary</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The state assaults the human rights of men and boys through its actions and inactions, usually to advantage women and girls. In our 2015 general election manifesto we explored 20 such areas.² 2. Suicide has always been a highly gendered issue, and is becoming more so over time. In 1983 the male:female suicide rate differential was 1.7:1, by 2013 (just 30 years later) it had risen to 3.5:1. Yet no government resources – or taxpayers’ money – are being expended on exploring suicide as a primarily male issue, with a view to reducing the male suicide rate. 3. The state’s actions and inactions are directly contributing to the high male suicide rate in at least 11 areas, outlined in this document. 4. J4MB is the only political party in the English-speaking world campaigning for the human rights of men and boys, on many fronts. As party leader, I am in a unique position to give oral evidence to the select committee, with men accounting for over three-quarters of suicides in the UK, a proportion which is increasing year after year.
3	<p><u>Introduction about our organization, and why we’re submitting evidence</u> J4MB is a political party. Registered in 2013, it remains the only political party in the English-speaking world campaigning for the human rights of men and boys, on many fronts. In our 2015 general election manifesto we explored 20 areas where the human rights of men and/or boys are assaulted by the actions and/or inactions of the British state, usually to advantage women and/or girls. There are no areas today in which the British state <i>specifically</i> assaults the human rights of women and/or girls.</p>

¹ <http://www.samaritans.org/sites/default/files/kcfinder/files/Samaritans%20suicide%20statistics%20report%202016.pdf>

² <https://j4mb.wordpress.com/2015-general-election-manifesto/>

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4	We are submitting evidence because the government continues to ignore the fact that suicide is a highly gendered issue, and becoming ever more so over time. Most of the reasons men commit suicide are attributable (in whole or in part) to the actions and/or inactions of the state. Suicide was covered in our 2015 general election manifesto. ³
5	The <i>International Business Times</i> published my article on male suicide in March 2015. ⁴ My central thesis was that the high male suicide level is largely attributable to reactive depression brought on by events for which the state bears some responsibility e.g. failing to ensure fathers have reasonable access to their children following family breakdowns.
6	<u>Factual information from which the committee might be able to draw conclusions, or which could be put to other witnesses for their reactions</u> Suicide is the leading cause of death of men under 50. In the space of just 30 years, the male:female suicide rate differential has more than doubled, from 1.7:1 to over 3.5:1. While this has primarily resulted from a decline in the female suicide rate, we should not lose sight of the fact that suicide has always been a highly gendered issue, <i>and is becoming more so over time.</i>
7	In our 2015 election manifesto we pointed out that the government's response to the continuing epidemic of male suicide has been derisory. The response would surely not be derisory if suicide were the leading cause of <i>women</i> under 50, or if an increasing proportion of suicide victims were women.
8	In February 2014 the government published 'Preventing suicide in England: First annual report on the cross-government outcomes strategy to save lives', ⁵ from which we learned that the government was spending a paltry £1.5m over three years on six research projects, <i>none of them focusing specifically on male suicide.</i> By comparison, the government was spending £30m on encouraging more women into engineering, ⁶ clearly indicating where the government's priorities lie.
9	Of the 20 areas in which the state assaults the human rights of men and boys, as explored in our manifesto, we contend that at least the following 11 areas are known drivers of male suicide. More details are in our manifesto, the specific pages are provided in the References.

³ <https://i4mb.wordpress.com/2015-general-election-manifesto/> pp. 46-8

⁴ <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/male-suicide-scandal-uk-men-are-paying-system-that-drives-thousands-them-death-1493340>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/suicide-prevention-report>

⁶ <http://i4mb.wordpress.com/2014/07/06/government-launches-30m-fund-to-get-women-into-engineering/>

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10	<p>Access to children after family breakdowns:⁷ Through their actions and inactions, family courts deny fathers access to their children after family breakdowns. Even when men go to the considerable expense of obtaining Contact Orders, if their ex-partners frustrate the orders – for example, by taking the child(ren) out of the area temporarily – courts rarely punish the women. We would not be surprised to find that women, denied access to their children, commit suicide. We should not be surprised that men in the same situation do so. Many people who attend fathers’ rights groups for a time will encounter men who later committed suicide.</p> <p><i>By denying fathers access to their children, the state is driving men to suicide.</i></p>
11	<p>Education:⁸ The replacement of ‘O’ Levels by GCSEs in 1987/8 enabled teachers’ tendency to award better marks to girls than boys to be manifested in higher grades for girls, leading to the education gender gap which has been with us ever since, as the blogger William Collins has outlined.⁹ Today 40% of university students are men.</p> <p><i>By reducing the number of men with good educational qualifications, thereby depriving them of good life chances, the state is driving men to suicide.</i></p>
12	<p>Employment:¹⁰ Although male unemployment has been higher than female unemployment for many years, the government’s relentless objective is to drive ever more women into paid employment, and to drive them in particular into disciplines historically dominated by men, such as medicine and engineering. Driving up female employment leads to higher male unemployment, as Belinda Brown, a social anthropologist, has demonstrated.¹¹ Unemployment is known to be a bigger driver of male suicide than female suicide, in part because women are more likely than men to have partners who will support them financially during periods of unemployment.</p> <p><i>By driving up female employment and in turn male <u>un</u>employment, the state is driving men to suicide.</i></p>
13	<p>Domestic violence:¹² 343 scholarly investigations inform us that women are as physically aggressive as men (or more aggressive) towards opposite-sex partners.¹³ The state is in denial of this reality, the default position being that men are perpetrators of intimate partner violence (IPV), women victims. Virtually no support is available to male victims of IPV, and if IPV-related suicides are added to IPV-related homicides, more men than women die as a result of IPV.¹⁴</p> <p><i>By denying support to male victims of IPV, the state is driving men to suicide.</i></p>

⁷ <https://i4mb.wordpress.com/2015-general-election-manifesto/> pp. 24,25

⁸ <https://i4mb.wordpress.com/2015-general-election-manifesto/> pp. 15-17

⁹ <http://mra-uk.co.uk/?p=121>

¹⁰ <https://i4mb.wordpress.com/2015-general-election-manifesto/> pp. 18-23

¹¹ http://www.men-for-tomorrow.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/B-BROWN_GETTING-WOMEN-INTO-WORKFORCE.pdf

¹² <https://i4mb.wordpress.com/2015-general-election-manifesto/> pp. 26-30

¹³ <https://i4mb.wordpress.com/2015/04/30/domestic-violence-women-are-as-physically-aggressive-towards-opposite-sex-intimate-partners-as-men-or-more-physically-aggressive/>

¹⁴ <https://i4mb.wordpress.com/2014/06/24/more-men-than-women-die-as-a-consequence-of-domestic-violence/>

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14	<p>Homelessness:¹⁵ When male victims of domestic violence approach their Local Authorities for social housing, they will be told that if they leave their homes they will be considered ‘voluntarily homeless’, and ineligible for social housing. Many become homeless as a result, and 87% of the street homeless are men. Homelessness reduces longevity by an average of 30 years, often by suicide.</p> <p><i>By failing to provide homeless men with sufficient support, including affordable accommodation, the state is driving them to suicide.</i></p>
15	<p>The criminal justice system:¹⁶ Philip Davies MP (C, Shipley) gave a presentation¹⁷ on the justice gender gap to an event J4MB co-hosted in July 2016, the second International Conference on Men’s Issues.¹⁸ He showed that the courts treat male criminals far more harshly than women in prison sentencing terms.</p>
16	<p>William Collins, a leading British men’s issues blogger, has written an important piece on suicide.¹⁹ In a later piece he explained that if men were treated as leniently as women in sentencing terms, <i>five out of six men in British prisons wouldn’t be there.</i>²⁰ Around 76,000 of the 80,000 people in prison at any time are male – around 96%. Conditions for male prisoners are markedly worse than for female prisoners, and the inequality even manifests itself in the fact male prisoners are forced to wear prison clothing, while female prisoners aren’t. The suicide rate among prisoners recently reached a 25-year high, while the rate of death by natural causes doubled in the space of the past 15 years.²¹</p>
17	<p>The 283-page report (2015) following the Harris Review on the suicides of young people (15-24) in custody over 2004-13 revealed that 87 ‘people’ had committed suicide over that period.²² 85 of the 87 ‘people’ were male. This fact attracted no interest or comment, and <i>none of the 108 recommendations in the report related specifically to males.</i></p> <p><i>By treating male criminals far more harshly than female criminals, the state is driving men to suicide.</i></p>
18	<p>Armed Forces veterans’ mental health issues:²³ Resources available to treat Armed Forces veterans for mental health issues, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, are inadequate. Many veterans turn to alcohol or other drugs to help them deal with anxiety disorders such as PTSD, yet the NHS will not treat veterans with the double diagnosis of a mental health disorder and a substance abuse problem, until they have managed to have a lengthy period without the drug (usually alcohol). Many veterans commit suicide during this period.</p>

¹⁵ <https://j4mb.wordpress.com/2015-general-election-manifesto/> pp. 40-45

¹⁶ <https://j4mb.wordpress.com/2015-general-election-manifesto/> pp. 49-51

¹⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8VoFdG4cSAM>

¹⁸ <http://icmi16.wordpress.com>

¹⁹ <http://mra-uk.co.uk/?p=133>

²⁰ <http://mra-uk.co.uk/?p=215>

²¹ <https://j4mb.wordpress.com/2016/08/19/deaths-by-suicide-and-from-natural-causes-in-prisons-in-england-and-wales/>

²² <https://j4mb.wordpress.com/2015/07/02/the-harris-review-on-suicides-of-15-24-year-old-people-in-custody/>

²³ <https://j4mb.wordpress.com/2015-general-election-manifesto/> pp. 38,39

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	<p><i>By denying adequate support to Armed Forces veterans with mental health issues, the state is driving men to suicide.</i></p>
19	<p>Anonymity for suspected sexual offenders:²⁴ The police are making public the names of men suspected of having carried out sexual offences, sometimes even before they've been charged with crimes. In some cases no charges have been brought (e.g. Sir Cliff Richard, Paul Gambaccini...).</p>
20	<p>Charges are pressed by a deeply gender-politicised Crown Prosecution Service, and brought to court even when the evidence against the men is non-existent, as was the case with Mark Pearson, an award-winning artist. He was charged with sexually assaulting a 60-something actress at Waterloo station, although CCTV camera footage showed that the alleged assault could not possibly have taken place.²⁵ He gave a presentation on the matter at the International Conference on Men's Issues,²⁶ and admitted in a television interview that he'd suffered panic attacks, and came close to committing suicide.²⁷ The actress will enjoy lifelong anonymity. Women can make false allegations, and ruin men's lives, with no consequences for themselves.</p>
21	<p>Many male suicides have been directly attributed to false accusations of sexual abuse.²⁸</p>
	<p><i>By denying anonymity to men suspected of having committed sexual offences, the state is driving men to suicide.</i></p>
22	<p>Divorce:²⁹ In 2003 the <i>Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health</i> – 'an international peer-reviewed journal for health professionals and researchers in all areas of epidemiology' – published information on the impact of divorce on the suicide rates of men and women in the United States.³⁰ Extracts below, it's worth bearing in mind that in the UK, women file for around three-quarters of divorces:</p>
23	<p>For every divorced woman that committed suicide, <i>over nine men divorced men killed themselves</i>. [My emphasis.] These results dramatize the terrible consequences of being a divorced man in America, and lead to the question: why are divorced men killing themselves? Some analysts argue that the research community has ignored a plausible explanation for the excess suicide risks experienced by divorced men. As Perrault and Farrell observe, while social, psychological, and even personal problems facing women are readily denounced, <i>societal institutions tend to ignore or minimize male problems as evident in suicide statistics</i>. [My emphasis.]</p>

²⁴ <https://j4mb.wordpress.com/2015-general-election-manifesto/> pp. 55,56

²⁵ <https://j4mb.wordpress.com/2016/02/07/trying-for-a-sex-crime-because-i-brushed-past-a-60-something-film-star-in-rush-hour-mark-pearson-artist-51-accused-of-bizarre-hit-and-run-assault-on-award-winning-actress-despite-no-evidence/>

²⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CaDswx3KRmU>

²⁷ <https://j4mb.wordpress.com/2016/02/09/mark-pearson-and-erin-pizzey-interviewed-on-itv-this-morning/>

²⁸ <https://hequal.wordpress.com/2016/08/01/bbc-still-silent-on-jay-cheshire-case-even-after-a-second-tragic-death-from-the-false-rape-allegation/>

²⁹ <https://j4mb.wordpress.com/2015-general-election-manifesto/> pp. 57-60

³⁰ <http://jech.bmj.com/content/57/12/993.full>

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24	For instance, in many jurisdictions in the US there seems to be an implicit assumption that the bond between a woman and her children is stronger than that between a man and his children. As a consequence, in a divorce settlement, custody of children is more likely to be given to the wife. In the end the father loses not only his marriage, but his children.
25	The result may be anger at the court system, especially in situations wherein the husband feels betrayed because it was the wife that initiated the divorce, <i>or because the courts virtually gave away everything that was previously owned by the ex-husband or the now defunct household to the former wife.</i> [My emphasis.]
26	Events could spiral into resentment (towards the spouse and ‘the system’), bitterness, anxiety, and depression, reduced self-esteem, and a sense of ‘life not worth living’. As depression and poor mental health are known markers of suicide risk, <i>it may well be that one of the fundamental reasons for the observed association between divorce and suicide in men is the impact of post-divorce (court sanctioned) ‘arrangements’.</i> [My emphasis.]
27	The legislation surrounding divorce settlements is an anachronism in an age when women have long enjoyed the same career opportunities as men. Far too much discretion is given to family courts to assault the financial and emotional interests of men, at the behest of ex-wives. <i>By not defending the legitimate interests of men in divorce settlements, the state is driving men to suicide.</i>
28	Genital mutilation: ³¹ Non-therapeutic circumcision of male minors – Male Genital Mutilation (MGM) – is known to cause considerable physical and psychological suffering to some men and boys, sometimes leading to death from the operation itself, ³² or later suicide. ³³ At the recent second International Conference on Men’s Issues, ³⁴ Tim Hammond, an American researcher, presented the latest findings from The Global Survey of Circumcision Harm. ³⁵
29	The default position of the criminal law is that MGM is a crime, and a parliamentary override would be required to make it legal. <i>No such override exists</i> , yet the police in conjunction with the CPS refuse to prosecute those carrying out the crimes, and the government is in receipt of income taxes from the money earned by the criminals for mutilating male minors’ genitals.
30	MGM breaches numerous Articles of United Nations and European Union conventions. <i>By failing to protect male minors from non-therapeutic circumcision, the state is driving men to suicide.</i>

³¹ <https://j4mb.wordpress.com/2015-general-election-manifesto/> pp. 9,10

³² <https://j4mb.wordpress.com/2015/03/29/tim-alford-why-im-supporting-j4mb/>

³³ <https://hequal.wordpress.com/2016/08/01/bbc-still-silent-on-jay-cheshire-case-even-after-a-second-tragic-death-from-the-false-rape-allegation/>

³⁴ <http://icmi16.wordpress.com>

³⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8izzCSRhKXs>

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	<p><u>Recommendations for action by the Government or others which we would like the committee to consider</u></p>
31	<p>1. The appointment of a Minister for Men & Boys, at cabinet level. The continued existence of a Minister for Women & Equalities – a similarly-titled post was first held by Harriet Harman MP, a radical feminist Labour MP, in 1997 – while there has never been a Minister for Men, is an increasingly unjustifiable anachronism, especially given men in the UK contribute almost 75% of the income taxes which largely fund the state which relentlessly assaults their human rights. In 2013/14 British men collectively paid £75.4 BILLION more income tax than women.³⁶ There needs to be a central reference point in government for those concerned about issues disproportionately affecting men and boys, including suicide.</p>
32	<p>2. The funding of research studies specifically charged with investigating why men commit suicide.</p>
33	<p>3. The end of state actions and inactions which contribute to men committing suicide.</p>
34	<p>4. In relation to the show trials of men, particularly elderly prominent men, for sexual offences allegedly carried out many years ago – sometimes 50 years ago, or more – we agree with Herbert Purdy’s article³⁷ in which he argued the time has come for a full public inquiry to be instigated to carry out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A full analysis, case by case, of the evidence collected by police and the CPS, to include an analysis of all charging decisions in these recent cases, including those where no further action was taken, to ascertain what rationale was applied when initiating the investigation, and particularly what steps were taken to ascertain that the complainant was credible, rather than just being implicitly believed; - A detailed examination of the use of the public interest clause consistently offered by the CPS as their justification for proceeding in these cases; - An assessment of the extent to which feminist dogma have been part of the evidence collection process, and charging decisions. For example, the implicit belief that the claimant must be implicitly believed without objective corroboration being sought, and whether the ‘rape crisis’ myth was a factor in the process; - An assessment of the extent to which feminist dogma are being incorporated into criminal justice policy. In particular, have organizations such as Women’s Aid and Rape Crisis been actively at work drafting policy? - An assessment of the extent to which individuals in public office might have been applying their feminist beliefs to the execution of their public duties.

³⁶ <http://tinyurl.com/zfnnko8>

³⁷ <http://herbertpurdy.com/?p=2295>

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