



Helping Men Escape Domestic Abuse

Press Release: 14 June 2019

New Parliamentary Report on the Domestic Abuse Bill will have the effect of treating male victims of domestic abuse (and their children) as second class

(See Paragraphs 52 to 74 and the Conclusions)

Following the publication of the Joint Committee of the House of Commons and House of Lord's report on the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill, Mark Brooks OBE, Chair of the ManKind Initiative charity supporting male victims of domestic abuse, said:

“By the Committee advocating, both in the Bill and the resulting guidance that the definition of domestic abuse should be gendered in favour of female victims, means men in this situation officially become viewed as second class victims. It gives unequal status to victims based on their gender. This is not acceptable in a modern and diverse country.

“It is essential that while acknowledging the very serious nature of domestic abuse against women, all authorities and service providers must do the same for male victims and survivors. This will recognise their existence and needs at the same time. To exclude this, while specifying explicitly that domestic abuse is a crime that 'disproportionately affects women and girls' carries a clear implication that male victims are less important or deserving of support than women.

“Ensuring that all victims of domestic abuse are recognised equally has to be at the heart any domestic laws and guidance. This principle means that no matter what someone's background, gender or sexuality are, they are supported primarily on their level of need and risk. Gender is important of course, which is why we supported a gender-informed and inclusive approach but it cannot override basic principles of equality and equity. There should never be a competition between genders when it comes to recognising domestic abuse.

“Defining domestic abuse in this way will give a clear signal that male victims do not matter, that they are not equal to all victims, and continues to allow society to fail to recognise that domestic abuse affects them too. This makes it harder for men to escape and places them and any children they have at greater risk. It will also risk signalling to service providers and the justice system that they should prioritise one gender over another when the only factor should be an individual's level of need.

Male victims already face a range of barriers, as acknowledged by both the Home Office and the Crown Prosecution Service and this only makes their plight worse."

Core statistics:

- 4.2% of men and 7.9% of women stated that they have experienced domestic abuse in 2017/18, equivalent to an estimated 695,000 male victims and 1.316 million female victims. **For every three victims of domestic abuse, two will be female, one will be male**
- 13.2% of men and 28.9% of women aged 16 to 59 had experienced some form of domestic abuse since the age of 16, equivalent to an estimated 2.2 million male victims and 4.8 million female. For every three victims of domestic abuse, two will be female, one will be male. One in four women and one in six to seven men suffer from domestic abuse in their lifetime.
- Nearly half of male victims fail to tell anyone they are a victim of domestic (only 51% tell anyone). They are nearly three times less likely to tell anyone than a female victim (49% as opposed to 19%). This has worsened since 2015/16 where the figures were 61% for men (88% women).

Domestic abuse: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales: year ending March 2018 (published on 22 November 2018) : <https://bit.ly/2qYxYZF>
(Appendix Tables - <https://bit.ly/2FY8UYc>

Conclusions in the Report

19. The Government has described this Bill as a once-in-generation opportunity to transform the response to the terrible crime of domestic abuse. Given the landmark nature of the proposed legislation, we believe it is crucial that the gendered context of domestic abuse is recognised on the face of the Bill. Without this recognition the Bill cannot begin to fulfil the Government's ambitions for it and achieve the transformative response required to combat the scourge of domestic abuse.
(Paragraph 71)
20. We believe many of the objections to a gendered definition of domestic abuse come from concerns that it could exclude men from the protection of the Act. We recognise this concern but our evidence shows it is based on a misunderstanding of what a gendered definition means in practice. A gendered definition of abuse does not exclude men. Anyone can, sadly, suffer from domestic abuse just as anyone, regardless of gender, can perpetrate it. In recommending a gendered definition of domestic abuse we want to embed a nuanced approach to the most effective response to domestic abuse for all individuals who suffer such violence, and to ensure that public authorities understand the root causes of this complex crime. We also believe our recommendation on how a gendered definition should be drafted allows the courts to continue to judge the raft of cases they currently hear without any fear of perpetuating discrimination towards men and boys. Incorporating a gendered definition of domestic abuse ensures compliance with the requirements of the Istanbul Convention in demonstrating a gendered understanding of violence against

women and domestic abuse as a basis for all measures to protect and support victims. (Paragraph 72)

21. *We recommend the Government introduce a new clause into the draft Domestic Abuse Bill in the following, or very similar, terms: When applying Section 1 and 2 of this Act public authorities providing services must have regard to the gendered-nature of abuse and the intersectionality of other protected characteristics of service users in the provision of services, as required under existing equalities legislation.* (Paragraph 73)
22. *We recommend that the statutory guidance the Government is committed to issuing on the operation of the statutory definition of domestic abuse should require public authorities to acknowledge the disproportionate impact of domestic abuse on women and girls when developing strategies and policies in this area. We believe this will make the Bill the landmark legislation the Government intends and transform the way we as a country respond to the scourge of domestic abuse. We recommend draft guidance on the Bill be published at Second Reading and that all final guidance be published within six months of the day the Act comes into force.* (Paragraph 74)

ENDS

Notes to Editors

About the ManKind Initiative

The ManKind Initiative (www.mankind.org.uk), is a national charity which runs a help-line, information and referral service for male victims of domestic abuse and domestic violence. It receives 1,800 calls every year from men (or from people on behalf of victims – often mothers and sisters seeking help).

Journalists requiring further information please contact Mark Brooks on 07834 452357 or chairman@mankind.org.uk

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