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BBC Complaints

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20 January 2014

Dear Sir / Madam,

Complaint about *Newsnight* report on domestic abuse/violence – 7 January 2014 edition

I lead a political party which campaigns for the human rights of men and boys. Those rights have been increasingly assaulted by governments and state institutions, including the BBC, for 30+ years. We wish to register the following complaint about a recent episode of *Newsnight*:

The report on domestic abuse/violence in the 7 January 2014 episode of *Newsnight* was grossly misleading. It followed in the long BBC tradition of downplaying or ignoring altogether male victims and female perpetrators of domestic abuse, about which a great deal has been known (by academics, independent researchers, *and the government*) for many years.

In the *Newsnight* episode in question, the existence of male victims and female perpetrators of domestic abuse/violence (henceforth 'DA') wasn't acknowledged:

- (1) On the introduction and video clips, only a female victim and a male perpetrator were presented.
- (2) The presenter (Jeremy Paxman) stated that, 'although a figure of over one million women a year is often given as an indication of the scale, many women have difficulty persuading the police to take them seriously.' The figure (1.2 million) will have been drawn from the Home Office's annual British Crime Survey¹ but the same survey *on the same page* also said that 800,000 men suffer every year. *Newsnight* must have taken an editorial decision not to include the figure for male victims. With regard to the point about women not being taken seriously by the police, men are even *less* likely to be taken seriously by them.
- (3) The two studio guests spoke only of female victims and male perpetrators. In our view the report violated – to a greater or lesser extent – more than 50 of the BBC's Editorial Guidelines, and a detailed analysis substantiating this claim is enclosed.

A large number of supporters emailed us after the 7 January episode to complain about the piece, and we viewed it on iPlayer not long afterwards. We then posted the following piece on our website:

<https://j4mb.wordpress.com/2014/01/08/bbc-newsnight-abuses-male-victims-of-domestic-violence-yet-again/>

We posted the piece to our YouTube channel, and suggest you read the comments people sent in:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J_arobNtUyU

Newsnight – along with other high-audience BBC programmes, most notably *Today* and *Woman's Hour* – has a long history of broadcasting pieces on DA which downplay or (like the 7 January episode) ignore male victims and female perpetrators of DA *altogether*. A particularly bad example was a lengthy report broadcast on *Newsnight* on 5 April 2013:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vy8TxOQcWdU>

So, what is *known* about male victims of DA, which is so resolutely ignored in *Newsnight* pieces? Mankind Initiative <http://mankind.org.uk> is one of the few British charities which support male victims of DA. Mark Brooks, the charity's chairman, has compiled '21 key facts' about DA which are downloadable through this link:

<http://mankind.org.uk/factsmalevictms.html>

For ease of reference I've attached the list of key facts to this document.

Hopefully you'll now understand that the relentless narratives on *Newsnight* – that all (or almost all) victims of DA are women, and all (or almost all) perpetrators of DA are men – don't reflect what has *long* been known about DA. If you need any more persuading, almost 300 international studies have found that compared with men, women are as physically aggressive, or more physically aggressive, towards their intimate partners:

<http://j4mb.wordpress.com/2013/05/08/women-are-as-physically-aggressive-or-more-aggressive-in-their-relationships-with-spouses-or-male-partners/>

Dr Nicola Graham-Kevan, who works at the University of Central Lancashire, is a recognized expert on the subject of DA. Some months ago she gave an illuminating presentation at the second National Conference on Male Victims of Domestic Violence. It was titled, 'Female perpetrators of intimate partner violence'. A copy of the slides she presented is attached. All the content is well worth reading, but for the purpose of supporting our complaint, I'd like to point you to two slides:

Slide 7 – Where one sex is the sole perpetrator (of DA) it's more likely to be a woman than a man.

Slide 11 – The least endorsed motive by women themselves – only 4% of them – for abusing an intimate partner was to protect themselves from physical harm.

We've included Slide 11 because often the narrative around female perpetrators of DA is that they're only acting in self-defence. This narrative is demonstrably *untrue*.

We believe it's long overdue for *Newsnight* to allow the truth about DA to be told, and we'd be happy to point you towards potential interviewees. Obvious candidates include Erin Pizzey, the founder of the first women's refuge in the world (Chiswick, 1971) who's been speaking the truth about DA for 40+ years. Then there's Mark Brooks, chairman of the Mankind Initiative. Academic experts include Dr Nicola Graham-Kevan.

Given the exposure provided on *Newsnight* to individuals and organisations which have peddled highly discredited narratives about DA – such as Polly Neate of Women’s Aid – we believe it’s time for recognized experts such as Erin Pizzey, Mark Brooks and Dr Graham-Kevan to be interviewed on their own (or collectively) on the programme, to provide a measure of long-overdue balance. And we expect future episodes of *Newsnight* to accurately reflect what’s long been known about DA.

We’ve posted this document (and associated documents) on our website:

[**<URL>**](#)

Given the time and effort we’ve put into preparing this complaint and the associated documentation, would someone please email me mike@j4mb.org.uk to confirm receipt? Thank you. We look forward to hearing from you in due course, and we’ll post your response on our website.

Best wishes,

Mike Buchanan
PARTY LEADER

¹ Office for National Statistics: Crime Survey (Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2011/12 - http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_298904.pdf Page 62). 7% of women and 5% of men were estimated to have experienced any domestic abuse in 2011/12, equivalent to an estimated 1.2 million female and 800,000 male victims.

Mankind Initiative

Male victims of domestic and partner abuse: 21 key facts

1. 40% of domestic abuse victims are male. For every five victims, three will be female, two male.
2. 7% of women and 5% of men were estimated to have experienced any domestic abuse in the last year, equivalent to an estimated 1.2 million female and 800,000 male victims.
3. 31% of women and 18% (one in six) of men had experienced any domestic abuse since the age of 16. These figures were equivalent to an estimated 5.0 million female victims of domestic abuse and 2.9 million male victims.
4. Partner abuse (non-sexual) was the most commonly experienced type of intimate violence among both women and men. 24% of women (3.9 million) and 13% of men (2.1 million) reported having experienced such abuse since the age of 16. For every three victims of partner abuse, two will be female, one male.
5. In 2011/12, 4% of women (675,000) and 3% of men (491,000) experienced partner abuse, a split of 57% - 43%. For every seven victims four will be female, three male.
6. In 2011/12, 4% of women and 3% of men reported experienced stalking, a split of 57% - 43% (for every seven victims – four will be female, three will be male).
7. Both women and men with a long-term illness or disability were more likely to be victims of domestic abuse in the last year (12.8% and 7.3% respectively), compared with those without a long-term illness or disability (4.6% and 6.1%).
8. 1.1% of men and 1.3% of women were victims of severe force at the hands of their partner during 2011/12. Over a lifetime the figures are 6.1% and 13.2% respectively.
9. More married men (2.3%) suffered from partner abuse in 2011/12 than married women (1.8%).
10. More men in managerial and professional occupations (3.0%) in 2011/12 than women with the same occupations (2.6%).
11. Men with children (3.0%) are as likely to be victims of partner abuse as men without children. The figure is the same for female victims (3.5%).
12. Men in the North West are twice (4.5%) as likely to be victims of domestic abuse as men in the South West (2.0%) in 2011/12.
13. The most prevalent age group in 2009/10 for male victims is 25-34, where 4.4% of men stated they were a victim of partner abuse compared to 2.1% of 54-59 year old men. 2.3 of 16-19 year old men were also victims.
14. The percentage of gay or bi-sexual men (6.2%) who suffered partner abuse in 2008/09 is nearly double the number for heterosexual men (3.3%). Lesbian women (12.4%) as a percentage also suffered far more partner abuse compared to heterosexual women (4.3%).
15. The number of women convicted of perpetrating domestic abuse has more than quadrupled in the past seven years from 806 (2004/05) to 3,231 (2012/13). The figure peaked at 3,968 (2010/11).
16. Twice as many male victims (28%) as female victims (13%) don't tell anyone about the domestic abuse they are suffering, highlighting the level of under-reporting. Men are three times (10%) less likely to tell the police they're victims than women (29%). Only 4% of male victims will tell a health professional, compared to 19% of female victims.
17. In 2011/12 – 17 men (one every 21 days) died at the hands of their partner or ex-partner compared with 88 women (one every four days).
18. One in every five victims of forced marriage is a man (20%).
19. The average male victim is 43, 5ft 9in tall and weighs 13st. The average female perpetrator is 40, 5ft 4in tall and weighs 10st 7lb.
20. 13 organisations offer refuge or safe house provision for male victims in the UK - a total of 78 spaces, of which 33 are dedicated to male DV victims only (the rest being for victims of either gender), and of these 33 dedicated spaces, 18 are for gay males only. There are over 260 organisations with around 4,000 spaces dedicated to female victims.
21. On at least 120 occasions in 2010 a caller decided not to consider a refuge or safe house because they were too far away and it would mean having to completely uproot their lives, often having to leave their children and their job behind.

References

ONS figures are for men and women aged 16-59 in England & Wales

- (1) Office for National Statistics: Crime Survey (Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2011/12 - http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_298904.pdf Page 62) - Seven per cent of women and 5% of men were estimated to have experienced any domestic abuse in 2011/12, equivalent to an estimated 1.2 million female and 800,000 male victims.
- (2) See (1) above
- (3) Office for National Statistics: Crime Survey (Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2011/12 - http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_298904.pdf Page 64)
- (4) Office for National Statistics: Crime Survey (Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2011/12 - http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_298904.pdf Page 64 and Table 4.02)
- (5) Office for National Statistics: Crime Survey (Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2011/12 - http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_298904.pdf Page 66 and Table 4.03)
- (6) Office for National Statistics: Crime Survey (Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2011/12 - http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_298904.pdf Page 66)
- (7) Office for National Statistics: Crime Survey (Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2011/12 - http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_298904.pdf Page 71)
- (8) Office for National Statistics: Crime Survey (Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2011/12 - http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_298904.pdf Table 4.01)
- (9) Office for National Statistics: Crime Survey (Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2011/12 - http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_298904.pdf Table 4.08)
- (10) Office for National Statistics: Crime Survey (Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2011/12 - http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_298904.pdf Table 4.08)
- (11) Office for National Statistics: Crime Survey (Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2011/12 - http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_298904.pdf Table 4.09)
- (12) Office for National Statistics: Crime Survey (Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2011/12 - http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_298904.pdf Table 4.09)
- (13) Office for National Statistics: Crime Survey (Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2011/12 - http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_298904.pdf Table 4.08)
- (14) British Crime Survey 2008/09 Table 3.07 (page 76) - <http://tinyurl.com/7u7nvm4>
- (15) Parliamentary questions <http://tinyurl.com/73etslm> and CPS <http://www.mankind.org.uk/pdfs/CPS%20Prosecutions.pdf>
- (16) British Crime Survey 2010/11 (page 88) Table 3.16 (page 111) - <http://tinyurl.com/7slnnom>
- (17) Office for National Statistics: Crime Survey (Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2011/12 - http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_298904.pdf Page 29 Table 2.06)
- (18) Source: Department of Children, Society and the Family <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RR128.pdf> (page 26)
- (19) The ManKind Initiative help-line survey 2009
- (20) The ManKind Initiative and estimates via Women's Aid/Refuge and government reports
- (21) The ManKind Initiative

Produced by Mark Brooks, The ManKind Initiative (Feb 2013)