

Press release

Date: 5th May 2017

Charity calls on BBC and producers to apologise and delete the ‘Mammy of the Week’ from All Round Mrs Brown’s episode

The ManKind Initiative, a national charity supporting male victims of domestic abuse, has today written to complain to both the BBC Trust and co-producers Hungry Bear Media and BocPix, over the last episode¹ of All Round to Mrs Brown's (first broadcast on 29 April 2017 on BBC1) over its humorous portrayal in a real-life situation of household objects being thrown at a husband/father, including a knife.

According to the Office for National Statistics², 450,000 men per year are victims of partner abuse – one in three of all victims with one in every six men suffering in their lifetime.

As well as an apology the charity wants the celebratory “Mammy of the Week”¹ segment to be deleted from any repeats and edits because it depicts actions where a knife and household objects (toasters and hairdryers) being thrown at a husband and father as being humorous and acceptable - to the point where someone is given an award. This type of action would fall under the definition of domestic abuse³ and shows how far society has to go before it treats domestic abuse against men seriously even more so when a national broadcaster and reputable production companies feel it is acceptable. This segment would never rightly have been broadcast if the genders were reversed.

The charity believes this segment:

- highlights and reinforces the continual belief that this type of abuse is acceptable and humorous (‘Andy Capp’ slapstick) when it is a man who is the victim. It normalises the belief that this behaviour is acceptable.

- highlights the double standards applied to male victims as rightly both the BBC and the production companies would never treat a similar insensitive situation where the genders were reversed as a 'celebration' or 'humorous' let alone broadcast it.
- makes male victims more vulnerable as it makes it far harder for them to find the courage to get help and feel they will be believed when they see a national broadcaster and society (as depicted by the audience) think this type of activity is a source of amusement, not one of equal importance to both male and female victims.

The charity believes the BBC needs to:

- delete the segment from all future repeats, DVDs, downloads and other broadcasts (including international) of this episode.
- issue a public apology and the charity will be asking the production companies and co-producers Hungry Bear Media and BocPix, the same.
- issue a reminder to all BBC staff and production companies that domestic abuse can never be treated in this manner, irrespective of the gender of those involved.

Mark Brooks, Chairman of the ManKind Initiative, a national charity supporting male victims of domestic abuse, said: "It is frankly staggering this was ever broadcast by the BBC let alone treated as funny and a cause for celebration. It shows how deeply ingrained society's view is in failing to understand or accept men are victims of domestic abuse too. This broadcast makes matters worse by reinforcing that view. Watching this would have been deeply upsetting to many men who are going through an abusive relationship or have done so in the past and still live with the memories - in fact it would have made matters worse.

"I am confident that the BBC understands both the sensitivity of the subject and the important role it plays in raising awareness. They should delete this segment thereby making it clear that this was unacceptable television that should never have made it to the nation's screens and living rooms".

Ian McNicholl, domestic abuse survivor and Ambassador for the ManKind Initiative said: "When I was experiencing domestic abuse, my biggest fears were that I would not be believed and that I would be laughed at if I told anyone.

"Had I been watching this at the time, it would have reinforced these views in my mind and made it even less likely that I would escape. As a society we have to be clear that domestic abuse is wrong whoever the victim is and this is why the content and tone is unacceptable as it is both completely insensitive and disrespectful to all male victims and survivors."

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1. Series 1 (Episode 6) of All Round to Mrs Brown's (42"20' in)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b08pj8bb/all-round-to-mrs-browns-series-1-episode-6>

2. In 15/16, 2.8% of men (equivalent to 451,000) and 5.8% of women (equivalent to 891,000 million) experienced partner abuse (non sexual). For every three victims of partner abuse, two will be female and one will be male.

ONS BCS Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences 2015/16 <http://bit.ly/2kqolyb>
Table 4.02 on <http://bit.ly/2l4azUK>

3. The cross-government definition of domestic abuse is:

any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-violence-and-abuse>

Complaint Letter

Dear BBC Trust

Re: All Round to Mrs Brown's (first broadcast on 29 April 2017 on BBC1)

I am writing on behalf of the ManKind Initiative, a charity that supports male victims of domestic abuse to formally complain about humorous portrayal of objects being thrown at a husband/father, including a knife in the so-called celebratory “Mammy of the Week” award in the above programme.

According to the Office for National Statistics², 450,000 men per year are victims of partner abuse – one in three of all victims with one in every six men suffering in their lifetime.

As well as an apology the charity believes the BBC should delete the “*Mammy of the Week*”¹ segment to be deleted from any repeats and edits because it depicts actions where a knife and household objects (toasters and hairdryers) being thrown at a husband and father as being humorous and acceptable - to the point where someone is given an award. This type of action would fall under the Government definition of domestic abuse³ and shows how far society has to go before it treats domestic abuse against men seriously, even more so when a national broadcaster and reputable production companies feel it is acceptable. This segment would never rightly have been broadcast if the genders were reversed.

The charity believes this segment:

- highlights and reinforces the continual belief that this type of abuse is acceptable and humorous (‘Andy Capp’ slapstick) when it is a man who is the victim. It normalises the belief that this behaviour is acceptable.
- highlights the double standards applied to male victims as rightly both the BBC and the production companies would never treat a similar insensitive situation where the genders were reversed as a ‘celebration’ or ‘humorous’ let alone broadcast it.
- makes male victims more vulnerable as it makes it far harder for them to find the courage to get help and feel they will be believed when they see a national broadcaster and society (as depicted by the audience) think this type of activity is a source of amusement, not one of equal importance to both male and female victims.

The charity believes the BBC needs to:

- delete the segment from all future repeats, DVDs, downloads and other broadcasts (including international) of this episode.
- issue a public apology and the charity will be asking the production companies the same.
- issue a reminder to all BBC staff and production companies that domestic abuse can never be treated in this matter, irrespective of the gender of those involved.

I look forward to your speedy response to this request.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

About the ManKind Initiative

The ManKind Initiative (www.mankind.org.uk), based in Taunton, Somerset, is a national charity which runs a help-line, information and referral service for male victims of domestic abuse and domestic violence. The help-line number is 01823 334244 (weekdays 10am-4pm).

It received 1,500 calls from male victims (or from people on behalf of victims – often mothers and sisters) every year.

It created the award winning #violenceisviolence social experiment highlight society's double standards when it comes to domestic abuse against men:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3PgH86OyEM>

Media

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