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Honorary Patrons – Lord Cotter, Ian McNicholl, John Penrose MP, Sara Westle and Erin Pizzey

Cllr Kate Lymer
Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Safety
Members' Room,
Bromley Civic Centre,
Stockwell Close,
Bromley, Kent.
BR1 3UH

17 February 2017

Dear Cllr Lymer

Re: Domestic Violence and Violence against Women and Girls Service

I am writing as chair of a national domestic abuse charity which supports male victims of domestic abuse to urge you to change the tender specification for the commissioning of the above service. This is to ensure that you comply with the Equality Act 2010 and commit to providing the level of support for all victims of domestic abuse based on their individual need.

Service Specification

The current wording of the tender specification discriminates against male victims as it does not state that the service provider has to provide standard, medium or high level support for male victims, as it rightly does for female victims. In fact, the specification does not state what level of support has to be provided to male victims at all.

A male victim (including those with children) has a statutory right to the same level of support, based on their need, as a female victim in the same situation – and a statutory authority has a legal duty to provide this either directly or through a commissioned service. The specification, as with most local authority contracts, should state:

“Standard, Medium and High level support to Females and Males” (most local authorities just use the term ‘adults’)

Currently, the service specification states:

“Standard, Medium and High level support to Females”

While the specification states “*An appropriate service for male victims and relevant signposting when necessary*”, this does not state what level of support that service should provide and whether there should be a Bromley based service, which we would expect. The phrase “*relevant signposting*” could suggest that the provider would be signposting men onto national helplines or support organisations outside of the Borough when there should be this support within Bromley.

For clarification, the charity supports the Council in its efforts to provide an excellent service for female victims of domestic abuse and does not believe there should be a competition between victims of difference genders. In addition, we fully believe in proportionality in terms of resource allocation for female and male victims, so we would not expect that same amount of overall resourcing for men and women. However, they should receive the same level of support based on identical individual needs.

Male victims in Bromley and accessing support

Lastly, having reviewed the Council report “Domestic Violence and Violence against Women and Girls Service (Protection and Safety Policy and Scrutiny Policy Committee on 29th November 2016)”, there is a clear need for an assessment or explanation on how and where male victims in Bromley are receiving support. Too many, it would seem are not accessing or receiving support.

The Council report states that at a national level 8.5% of women and 4.5% of men every year suffer from domestic abuse – in effect one in three victims are male. This is in keeping with estimates from the Office for National Statistics¹ that 143,000 women (66%) and 74,100 men (34%) were victims of domestic abuse in 2015/16. At a Metropolitan Police level, in 2015, 24% of people who report² as victims of domestic abuse are male.

Given that in 2014/15, the Council report states that Bromley Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) reported 2,289 offences/cases (there is no detail on gender) it can be assumed that approximately 20% will be male, thereby equating to 450 men. However, according to the Council report only 3% of users accessing the current Domestic Abuse Advocacy Project are male and only five men out of 267 victims were supported by the Borough’s three IDSVAs (there is no criticism regarding the excellent work the three IDSVAs undertake). There clearly is a drop off in the number of men reporting as victims and then going on to accessing and being assessed for support. The specification for this proposed new service will not only fail to address this, it may well exacerbate it.

As set out, without a change in the contract specification, the London Borough of Bromley leaves itself open to a breach of the Equality Act 2010 as it is not setting out that both male and female victims will receive the same level of support based on their individual need. In effect, male victims will be second class victims and this is a situation which would not be acceptable.

Thank you for your time and consideration and I look forward to hearing your response.

Yours sincerely

Mark Brooks

Mark Brooks
Chair of Trustees

Sources:

- 1 Office for National Statistics: Domestic Abuse in England and Wales (datatool): <http://bit.ly/2l1zugl>
- 2 Freedom of Information Request: The ManKind Initiative to Metropolitan Police:
<http://new.mankind.org.uk/statistics/> (Number of domestic abuse victims reporting to the police)