



Flock House, Belvedere Road, Taunton, TA1 1BT
admin@mankind.org.uk : www.mankind.org.uk
01823 334244

Registered Charity No. 1089547 – Company Registration No. 3869893

Consultation on legislation to end violence against women and domestic abuse (Wales)

ManKind Initiative submission (17 February 2013)

1. Do you agree with the creation and function of the Adviser? *

- Yes
 No
 No view

In principle, the answer from the charity should be yes, because an adviser focussing on ending violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (Wales) would be of benefit. However, by stating this person should be just called an "Independent Ministerial Adviser for Ending Violence Against Women" would mean that the adviser's work would ignore domestic abuse and sexual violence committed against men.

Therefore, this position would not be in keeping with any known definition of equality, or service provision and support based on need.

In 2011/12, Welsh police forces reported that 2,554 men reported to them as victims of domestic abuse and the latest 2011/12 Crime Survey (anonymous survey) shows that one in three (36%) victims of partner abuse in Wales is male - the equivalent of c24,000 Welsh men per year.

If the adviser's title is left as proposed, it would give a clear signal both to those men who are victims of domestic abuse as well the statutory sector supporting victims of domestic abuse, that the Welsh Government views them as second class victims and not of equal standing to female victims.

The adviser's title therefore must include the words domestic abuse and sexual violence to ensure men are not forgotten and also to ensure consistency with the title of the White Paper.

2. Do you think the proposed leadership changes will achieve the specified outcomes? *

- Yes
 No
 No view

The leadership changes give no comfort to male victims of domestic abuse in Wales and organisations wishing to support them unless it is explicit that the independent review and the requirement for public authorities to collaborate will include male victims.

While the White Paper does recognise male victims, due to the acceptance of a 'gendered-based approach' (therefore a policy based on gender - not on need), there is no guarantee that it will be clear that such a review and collaboration will include male victims.

If such a review does not include a review of support for male victims then the independent review will be in breach of the Equality Act (2010) with regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty. It will be a form of institutional discrimination against men.

5. Do you agree that ensuring education on healthy relationships in schools will achieve the outcomes sought? *

- Yes
 No
 No view

Ensuring education on healthy relationships will of course achieve the outcomes sought, however, the charity believes that as well as educating boys about ensuring they have healthy relationships with girls and boys - girls must also have the same education about ensuring they have healthy relationships with boys and girls.

If the education is only focussed on boy's then this gender bias will ignore the fact that boys (men) will also be victims of partner abuse from girls (remember one in three victims of partner abuse in Wales are men), and in fact girls in same sex relationships will also not be educated about ensuring the health in those relationships.

6. What other measures could we use to ensure that schools do provide evidence based education on healthy relationships?

It is vital in terms of equality and for young people to fully understand the full context of violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence that the figures applying to both genders are used in tandem.

For example, if domestic abuse is the subject to be discussed then all statistics should highlight both the level of women/girls who are victims of domestic abuse and also the level of men/boys who are victims of domestic abuse.

Deliberate failure to highlight both genders in the use of statistics will not only likely show institutional bias, it will also mean the Welsh Government has failed to provide evidence based education on healthy relationships.

7. Do you agree that a National Training Framework will support a consistent approach to training of professionals across Wales? *

- Yes
 No



No view

This National Training Framework must ensure that male victims are equally recognised as female victims and the belief that by adopting a gender-based approach rather than a needs-based approach will mean that male victims will not be supported adequately by the framework.

As part of this framework, a failure to provide training on supporting male victims while providing training on supporting female victims will mean that the National Training Framework will be in breach of the Equality Act (2010) especially with regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty. This is because the framework would not pay due regard to the protected characteristics of all victims of domestic abuse.

This is because practitioners will not be trained to support all domestic abuse victims, as one in three victims of domestic abuse in Wales are men (2011/12 Crime Survey) and 2,544 men reported to Welsh Police Forces as victims in 2011/12.

8. Which key professionals would you like to see captured in the National Training Framework?

There are two distinct groups we would like the training to be focussed on bearing in mind the need to ensure that the National Training Framework fully recognises male victims and the support they need.

Firstly, we would certainly want to see GP's and hospital staff to be captured so that they recognise the signs and symptoms of a male victim of domestic abuse as much as they rightly do for female victims. The charity receives calls to its helpline from men who have reported the abuse to GP's or doctors/nurses at an A&E and have not been taken seriously enough.

Secondly, we want to see that housing officers are captured. This is especially with regard to ensuring that they recognise their legal duty to provide emergency accommodation to male victims (and their children) of domestic abuse as they do for female victims (and their children).

This supports is legally underpinned by the duties towards domestic abuse victims under the Housing Act (1996). This Act is based on support victims of domestic abuse with emergency housing based on need not by gender. So a man suffering from the same level of abuse as a women has the same right to emergency accommodation as the female victim rightly does. Including examples such as this in the framework will ensure housing professionals understand the law.

10. Do you agree with the proposals for work place policies? *



Yes



No



No view

All proposals for the workplace must fully recognise male victims of domestic abuse as equals to female victims.

Any policies that do not recognise male victims will be in breach of the Equality Act (2010). All awareness campaigns that do not recognise male victims (or are not reciprocated proportionally) will also likely to be in breach of the Act.

Failure to ensure such policies include male victims, will mean one in three victims of partner abuse in Wales are being ignored and are not recognised in the public sector workplace.

11. Do you agree that making it a statutory duty for non-devolved public sector bodies to contribute to multiagency fora will achieve the outcomes sought? *

- Yes
 No
 No view
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12. Do you agree that this could identify serial perpetrators and ultimately protect victims? *

- Yes
 No
 No view

This will only fully work, if this approach includes identifying serial perpetrators from both genders. If it is only aimed at men, then this approach will not protect all victims, including those 2,554 male victims who reported to Welsh police forces in 2011/12 and estimated 24,000 Welsh male victims of partner abuse identified in the Crime Survey 2011/12.

13. Do you think these changes will help increase confidence of practitioners to share information? *

- Yes
 No
 No view
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14. Which key public sector professionals do you think should 'ask and act'?

The most relevant professionals are those in health sector, police, community safety, housing and social services.

15. What barriers might there be for professionals who are required to 'ask and act'?

A clear barrier for professionals will be the lack of awareness that men are victims of domestic abuse too. Therefore, they may not 'ask and act' men in the same way they would rightly 'ask and act' women. This is why the full understanding and recognition of male victims of domestic abuse in the training framework and awareness campaigns is vital if all victims are to be supported equally based on their need not their gender.

17. Do you think that the proposals will improve the safe accommodation choices for victims? *

- Yes
- No
- No view

The level of safe accommodation choices for male victims in Wales (like in the UK as a whole) is pitiful. The charity believes there are only 10 dedicated safe spaces for men in the whole of Wales run by three organisations.

The focus in the proposals on female victims, and not on all victims based on need, will mean that safe accommodation for male victims, many of whom will have children with them, will continue to be pitifully low. It is likely, that many local authorities are in breach of their legal duties under the Housing Act (1996) in not providing adequate emergency housing for all victims of domestic abuse (including men). An issue the proposed independent review must investigate.

The focus on female victims in the White Paper gives little confidence that this situation will change which is why the needs-based approach is far better than a gender-based approach. Only a needs-based approach will ensure equality for all victims of domestic abuse including the provision of safe accommodation.

18. Do think the proposals in the strengthening services section will achieve the outcomes sought? *

- Yes
- No
- No view

The charity has concerns that the proposals will not ensure that male victims (and their children) receive the support they need based on the focus in the White Paper on a gender-based approach to domestic abuse rather than a needs-based approach

19. Do you have any other comments on the proposals in this White Paper?

Overall, while the charity welcomes the focus of the Welsh Government in tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, we are deeply concerned that by adopting a gender-based approach instead of a needs-based approach will continue to mean men suffering from domestic abuse or sexual violence in Wales will continue to be 'second-class victims'

In 2011/12, Welsh police forces have stated that 2,554 men reported to them as victims of domestic abuse and the latest Crime Survey (2011/12) shows that one in three (36%) victims of partner abuse in Wales is male - the equivalent of c24,000 Welsh men per year.

A gender-based approach rather than a needs-based approach will mean those men outlined will not be treated equally as female victims if this is applied to the policies, practices and frameworks (training framework, for example) at a national, regional or local level. Male victims will simply not receive the recognition, support and services they need based on the fact that they are men, not because they are a domestic abuse victim.

The lays public authorities in Wales open to claims under the Equality Act (2010), the Housing Act (1996) and specific domestic violence legislation. Any such claims that have merit will be publicly supported by the charity.

The Welsh Government has the chance to ensure all victims of violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence receive the support they need - it is vital that this includes support for victims from all genders with priority solely based on need and not gender. That would be the true meaning of equality for all victims.