

SUBMISSION TO HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE :

INQUIRY INTO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

From The ManKind Initiative

(A) Background

- (1) This submission covers the fourth area under consideration by the Committee – **Support for Victims, including finance and refuge services.**
- (2) It focuses on the lack of support by government and local authorities for male victims of domestic violence, who according to the British Crime Survey in the past six years, are victims of 24% of domestic violence incidents (see para 24). Home Office research also states that one in six¹ men will be victims of domestic violence during their lifetime.
- (3) This submission is from The Mankind Initiative, a small Taunton-based charity who provide a nation-wide helpline for male victims of domestic violence. They are one of only three organisations in the UK that provide such specialist support.
- (4) It is the Mankind Initiative's view that whilst statistics are available from the government itself, the government and local authorities do not recognise the male victims when it comes to financial and pro-active support and help. This leaves men with few support mechanisms. This is likely to be in breach of the Gender Equality Duty which came into force in April 2007 and a breach of the Human Rights Act (Article 5 : security of person and Article 14 : discrimination).

- (5) The Mankind Initiative would like to make it clear that it recognises domestic violence as a social issue with both female and male victims.
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(B) Executive Summary

- (6) According to the British Crime Survey, 24% of incidents of domestic violence (see para 24) over the past six years have been perpetrated against a man. The Home Office have also published evidence that one in six¹ men will become a victim in their lifetime.
- (7) There are only three charities that offer specialist support for male victims and these are very small and find it difficult to attract funding.
- (8) There are over 470 refuges available to women but there are no dedicated refuges for heterosexual men and only one for homosexual men. There are only approximately twelve rooms available for heterosexual men nationwide in the 470 refuges and these are only available when there are no female occupants. These places are dependent on the goodwill of those who run the refuges.
- (9) The Home Office provide local authorities with £60 million per year in financial support under the Supporting People initiative for Women at Risk of Domestic Violence. This funding does not support men and local authorities cannot bid for money from this fund to support men at risk of domestic violence.
- (10) As part of the Best Value regime, local authorities are measured through Best Value performance indicator 225 (definition of places (2) and sanctuary schemes (7)) on their provision of refuges and sanctuary schemes for domestic violence victims. However, this indicator only

measures support for women and children. There is no measure for supporting male victims. Again, this means there is no institutional recognition or pressure put on local authorities to provide specialist support for male victims.

- (11) Under the Gender Equality Duty, local authorities and government have a duty to collect information and then make sure that services meet the needs of all genders. As well as the British Crime Survey, many local police authorities provide figures for male and female domestic violence victims. However, local authorities do not act upon the statistics as they do not supply specialist support services and provide signposting for male victims. If police figures are not available, many local authorities do not attempt to find out the number of male victims within their community.
- (12) In paragraphs 9, 10 and 11 above, the ManKind Initiative believes that there is a case that many local authorities and the government are in breach of the Gender Equality Duty and Human Rights Act (Article 5 : security of person and Article 14 : discrimination).
- (13) The ManKind Initiative believes that:-
 - (a) Government and local authorities have a duty to offer specialist support including refuge spaces and sanctuary provisions for male victims of domestic victims.
 - (b) Government and other state agencies such as local authorities, the police and the NHS must publicly recognise that there are male victims of domestic violence. They must provide support, information, publicity and funding to support male victims. Anecdotally, some men find the authorities (police, GP's) do not believe that a man can be a victim and are met with a response based on incredulity.

- (14) Men are the forgotten victims of domestic violence with few places to turn to for specialist support. This has to be rectified.
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(B) The ManKind Initiative

- (15) The ManKind Initiative is a charity that manages a help-line that supporting male victims. Based in Taunton, the charity is supported through donations from individuals, trusts and private sector donations. Effectively it works on a shoestring, and the helpline may close in early 2008 because of the lack of funding. The charity is one of only three small charities who provide such support. Male Advice Line and Mens Aid are the others. It also provides training to the police and local government and only receives formal local authority support through Taunton Council, which provides an office for the charity at a subsidised rental.
- (16) The help-line is manned by trained staff, but due to funding problems, it has limited opening hours.
- (17) The calls the charity receives, consist mainly from victims, or members of their family. Often a family will ring because the male victim feels ashamed that they are victims (it is not socially acceptable for many men to admit they are victims) or they do not want to admit to it, or both.
- (18) Some telephone calls are referrals from local authorities, housing agencies or the police.

- (19) From 1st January 2007 to 10th September, the help-line has received 235 calls. For the months of June, July and August, the numbers of calls were 109.
- (20) The breakdown of calls below are from 1st January 2007 to 10th September :-

Table 1 : Calls to the Mankind Initiative's office:

Victims	186
Friends of Victims	10
Fathers of Victims	2
Mothers of Victims	10
Other Family Members	9
Referrals from Housing Agencies	16
Referrals from Police	2

- (21) The charity tries to refer victims to refuges, when appropriate. However, because of the very limited number of places available, suitable placements cannot often be found. Of the referrals that the charity has made since 1st January 2007, refuges accepted the placement on only 11 occasions, on six occasions the referral was refused and on four occasions no place was found.
- (22) As testimony, the transcript below sets out the experience one of the female support workers who man the helpline:-

What happens when someone calls the helpline

Some callers do not know where to start and some are so relieved to eventually talk to someone.

Using our survey sheet can sometimes be of assistance, if the person agrees to it being used, as it directs their thoughts to following a chronological order of events and can also start to give the person confidence to confide.

Sometimes the caller is very distressed and you have to wait for them to calm down, but also give them that permission, that they seem to need, to cry and then to reassure them that that it is not a sign of weakness and is perfectly understandable and acceptable. Some you have to coax and some want to get everything out in two minutes flat. Once you are able to take control of the situation, then you can then do your best to help.

What it is like working on the helpline

It can be a rollercoaster of emotions although you cannot become involved emotionally. One can feel anger at certain injustices and one can feel a great deal of frustration at the fact you can make no difference since you know that no matter what you say the person is not going to do anything about his situation because 'he still loves his abuser'.

The other frustration is not knowing if you have made a difference, although some ring back to say they have followed some of the options given and their life has changed for the better.

Refuges and Places Available

There are six known refuges that have given up spaces for men, one of these is in London and is solely for gay men. Of the other five, the one in Somerset takes local people as a priority.

That usually leaves only four to choose from each offering one – three spaces, although the West Midlands have recently informed me that they may be able to give up to five spaces now if they are not being filled by female victims of domestic violence. The other refuges are another in Somerset, one in Dorset and one in Powys.

(C) Government statistics: Male Victims of Domestic Violence

(23) The Home Office definition of a domestic violence incident is:

Any incident or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or are family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.

(24) British Crime Survey statistics (2001-2007) show that 24% of all incidents of domestic violence are perpetrated against men and that 40%, one in six men and one in four women¹ will be victims in their lifetime.

Table 2 : British Crime Survey

Thousands

Year	Total	Male Victims	Female Victims	% of Men
2001/02	621	117	511	19
2002/03	501	135	366	27
2003/04	446	150	298	34
2004/05	401	92	308	23
2005/06	357	72	285	20
2006/07	407	94	313	23
Total	2733	659	2080	24

All figures subject to BCS roundings

(25) Whilst it is acknowledged that there are more female victims, the fact that 24% of incidents are against men shows that domestic violence is not a gender specific crime, it is a wider social problem.

(D) Institutionalised Bias

- (26) What concerns the charity is the fact that one part of government (the Home Office) publishes these British Crime Survey figures, but other parts of the government and the wider agencies of the state, then ignore them or fail to act on them. This is because they do not provide specialist support for men, only for women. There is a clear disconnect and therefore a lack of joined-up government.
- (27) A good example is that in North Yorkshire, the police² reported that from April 2006 to January 2007, 21% of reports to them of domestic violence were from men as victims. However, The ManKind Initiative understands that despite the significant prevalence of male victims in the county, there are no specialist services for male victims and no places at refuges in the North Yorkshire area. So where are these male victims in North Yorkshire expected to turn to for help?
- (28) One male victim stated he had tried to seek support for three months in his local authority area. No agency, police, solicitors, local authority or any other agency could offer or had any resources for support
- (29) This lack of support for men suggests a bias against male victims, amounting to an institutionalised discrimination.
- (30) Further evidence for this statement is as follows:-
- (a) Firstly, the government through the Supporting Initiatives budget offer c£60 million per year. In 2005/06, £59 million was allocated to local authorities through the Supporting People initiative to provide services for people suffering from domestic violence. However, this money is only

- for Women at Risk of Domestic Violence. This money is not available to help male victims. Local authorities have to fund any provision for male victims themselves and the majority therefore do not.
- (b) There is no pressure on local authorities to provide support. The government measures the ability of local authorities to provide refuges and sanctuary schemes for domestic violence victims (Performance Indicator BV 225 - definition of places (2) and sanctuary schemes (7)). Again, this is only for women and children. There is no measure for supporting male victims. The Audit Commission has been challenged over this but claims their hands are tied. They can only measure what they have been asked to measure.
- (31) The lack of recognition for male victims throughout the state system means that local authorities, the police and others do not have specialists who are trained or educated to identify and support male victims. Training for those who specialise on helping victims of domestic violence should also include recognition and training to identify and support male victims.
- (32) The government only ever make announcements on female victims. The ManKind Initiative is not aware that the government has ever campaigned to help male victims. There is a need for a re-education process to take place and the government has the authority to take the lead. So far, it has not. This is despite the government's own figures showing 24% of incidents are perpetrated against men. To help men, announcements and publicity supporting the fact that men are also victims of domestic violence would help in a number of ways:-
- (i) Firstly, it would give confidence for male victims to come forward, so they do not feel as though they are alone and also the fact that their problems are recognised. It would help to de-stigmatise the issue for male victims;

- (ii) Secondly, it would place pressure on the authorities (councils and the police) to take action, to recognise the problem and help to support men;
 - (iii) When writing stories on domestic violence the media generally only ever concentrate on female victims. Again, this leaves male victims feeling alone. If the government properly addressed this issue, this would put pressure on the media when they are reporting on domestic violence to include men in their reporting.
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(E) Conclusion

- (32) The Mankind Initiative considers the government has a duty to take the lead on highlighting and providing support for male victims of domestic violence.
 - (33) Currently, the government offers little support to male victims concentrating all its support on female victims through publicity, the Supporting People grant system and through the Best Value indicator.
 - (34) This is institutionalised discrimination, when the government itself produces statistics through the British Crime Survey that shows 24% of incidents are perpetrated against men and that one in six men¹ will be a victim of domestic violence in their lifetime. The government needs to review this especially because of the Gender Equality Duty and Human Rights Act making sure that it and state agencies provide adequate support to male victims.
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1. Walby, S. and Allen, J. (2004) Domestic Violence, sexual assault and stalking : Findings from the British Crime Survey. Home Office Research Study No. 276. London : Home Office

2. www.thisisyork.co.uk/display.var.1251857.0.fifth_of_all_domestic_violence_victims_are_men.php

The Mankind Initiative : 27th September 2007