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3<sup>rd</sup> September 2009

Dear BBC

**BBC COVERAGE – DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESTRAINING ORDERS**  
(21<sup>st</sup> August 2009)

As Chairman of a national charity (The ManKind Initiative) that supports male victims of domestic abuse and domestic violence, I am writing to complain about the coverage on the above subject and ask you to review your editorial guidance on the subject of domestic violence and domestic abuse.

The reason for the complaint is that the restraining order powers that come into force this month apply equally to both female and male victims. However, the coverage on the BBC of that day would suggest that they only applied to female victims.

This coverage on the BBC Today Programme, BBC Online, Breakfast TV and news bulletins throughout the day, only mentioned female victims and included interviews with a representative of a charity that supports female victims (none from a male victim's charity) followed by an advert depicting a female victim. The only mentions of men, and almost then only as asides, were on the Ten O' Clock News and BBC Breakfast (the presenter said it under his breath). The fact that a mention of male victims was slipped into the Ten O' Clock News would suggest that the BBC had received a number of complaints during the day.

The coverage is deeply damaging to the plight of male victims (the Home Office quote 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men will be a victim of domestic abuse in their lifetime) because it reinforces the impression that they are alone, because the media, society and others are only interested in supporting or raising the issue of female victims.

It is also of concern that the coverage had a gender-bias because the application of the restraining orders is gender-neutral but anyone watching or listening to the coverage would have thought that the orders were only applicable to female victims. Any male victim would have thought the same. An editorial line was chosen in the coverage (that is, to cover female victims only) which does not match the gender-neutral application of the restraining orders.

The BBC has made great strides over the past year in raising the profile of the plight of male victims. In addition to much coverage on regional BBC radio - at a national level, there has been coverage and features on BBC radio stations 1, 2, 4 and 5 as well as a feature on the BBC's The One Show. The coverage on the restraining orders has threatened to sweep away the previous good work that the BBC has achieved on this taboo subject.

By failing to include male victims when gender-neutral domestic violence issues are covered or where both female and male victims are included in statistics, it does great disservice to the plight of male victims and also endangers the BBC's guiding principles of "the highest standards of impartiality, accuracy and fairness."

I would be grateful therefore that the editorial guidelines in place for your editorial/news staff categorically state that male victims must be included in all editorial/news where the subject of domestic violence or domestic abuse is covered on gender-neutral initiatives or stories/statistics that cover both female and male victims.

Thank you for your consideration of this complaint and I look forward to receiving a favourable reply.

Yours sincerely

*Mark Brooks*

Mark Brooks  
Chairman  
The ManKind Initiative.