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Jennifer Dunne  
Equality and Human Rights Commission  
3 Callaghan Square  
Cardiff  
CF10 5BT

1 November 2010

Dear Ms Dunne

**Ref: 'Domestic abuse is your business' campaign**

As chairman of The ManKind Initiative, a charity that supports male victims of domestic abuse and violence, I am writing to complain about the Equalities and Human Rights Commission for Wales' recent 'Domestic abuse is your business' campaign.

It is the opinion of The ManKind Initiative that all victims of domestic violence should be treated equally and individually, not according to gender group. The ManKind Initiative considers that, as a body promoting equality, it is concerning that the Equalities and Human Rights Commission for Wales ignores male victims in the workplace, and in general.

The overriding impression left by the Commission's campaign is that male victims do not exist in Welsh businesses and are of no interest to the Commission.

The issues the charity is concerned about are set out below:

**One-sided statistics**

The web pages related to the 'Domestic abuse is your business' campaign and the associated materials for employers provide a number of statistics relating to female victims of domestic violence. They say nothing of the male victims of domestic violence. This includes that one in three victims of domestic violence are men<sup>1</sup> and one in six will be a victim in their lifetime.

The use of statistics which do not address male victims of domestic violence creates a distorted view of domestic violence:

- 1) Statistics relating to female absences from work, loss of employment and impact on productivity at work because of domestic violence are given for female victims<sup>2</sup>. Equivalents for men are not given.
- 2) Stated in associated documents is that "One in four women will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime"<sup>3</sup>. There is a total failure to mention that one in six men

experience domestic abuse in their lifetime<sup>4</sup>.

- 3) The documents state that “Two women each week are murdered by their partners or ex-partners in the UK”<sup>5</sup>. The exact figure for this is 101 women. 31 men are also murdered a year by a partner or ex-partner<sup>6</sup>. This means that over a quarter of victims of murder by a partner or ex-partner are men.

### **Ignoring male victims**

The guidance on developing a policy suggests that for the workplace it is helpful to take account of the different needs and experiences women may have and sets out different examples. There are no details on how an employer should taken into account the different needs and experiences of male victims.

In addition, the British Crime Survey shows<sup>7</sup> that only 10% of male victims of domestic abuse in 2008/09 disclosed their experience to someone at work, while the figure for female victims is 13%. The figure is far too low for both genders but would have been useful to portray that the plight of male victims is staying silent at work. The only mention in the campaign is about female victims staying silent at work.

Men are also significantly less likely than women to report the abuse committed against them<sup>8</sup>.

### **Case studies**

In addition to omitting the statistics about male victims of domestic violence, the campaign ignores male victims in other ways. For instance, where there are the stories of female victims there are no personal stories of male victims, this lack of balance contributes further to a distorted view of domestic violence and its victims. The ManKind Initiative can provide case studies of male victims, including some from Wales.

In the document ‘*Guidance for developing a workplace policy*’ it is stated that “This document is set firmly within the context of violence against women”. The ManKind Initiative argues that this is improper and any campaign regarding domestic violence should be in the context of equal treatment of all victims, regardless of gender, orientation, etc.

### **‘Myths and Facts’**

The ‘Myths and Facts’ section of the Employers’ Campaign Pack is of utmost concern. The following statement for example states:

**“Myth: violence against women is the same as violence against men**

**FACT:** Statistics do demonstrate that men can be victims of violence at the hands of partners and ex-partners. Nevertheless, men’s experiences of violence are different. Male victims are less likely to suffer sustained violence, be seriously injured and report feeling fearful.”<sup>9</sup>

One in three victims of domestic violence are men<sup>10</sup>. The ManKind Initiative is dismayed that a whole third of victims of this crime are disregarded on the basis on being male. The gender of a victim is a secondary issue behind the fact - which is embedded in all equalities and domestic violence legislation as well as British common law - that domestic violence is a crime against an individual and is legally seen as such.

The ManKind Initiative is concerned that the Commission tries to downplay the domestic violence that occurs to men as set out by the answer to the question above.

### **Changing the campaign**

Based on the concerns expressed in this letter The ManKind Initiative most strongly urges the Equalities and Human Rights Commission in Wales to review the 'Domestic abuse is your business' campaign and amend it to include equivalent male statistics for the female statistics published, express the campaign in a gender neutral manner (or mentioning female and male victims) and focus on victims as victims rather than gender groups.

The ManKind Initiative believes strongly in equality and human rights, and the legislation we have to protect these. We urge the Equalities and Human Rights Commission in Wales to examine the 'Domestic abuse is your business' campaign, and any other domestic violence campaigns to ensure that they address victims equally regardless of gender.

Thank you for your time and consideration and I look forward to receiving a favourable reply to this pressing issue.

Yours sincerely

### **Mark Brooks**

Chairman

The ManKind Initiative

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<sup>1</sup> British Crime Survey - <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs06/rdsolr1206.pdf> (Table 1.1. page 4)

<sup>2</sup> Equalities and Human Rights Commission Employers Campaign Pack (and repeated elsewhere)

<sup>3</sup> Equalities and Human Rights Commission Employers Campaign Pack (and repeated elsewhere)

<sup>4</sup> British Crime Survey (2008/09) – Statistical Volume 2 (England and Wales) – see Chapter 3

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs10/hosb0110.pdf> (Table 3.01 page 70)

<sup>5</sup> Equalities and Human Rights Commission Employers Campaign Pack (and repeated elsewhere)

<sup>6</sup> British Crime Survey (2008/09) – Statistical Volume 2 (England and Wales) – see Chapter 3

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs10/hosb0110.pdf> (Table 1.05 page 25)

<sup>7</sup> British Crime Survey (2008/09) – Statistical Volume 2 (England and Wales) – see Chapter 3

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs10/hosb0110.pdf> (Table 3.18 page 81)

<sup>8</sup> British Crime Survey (2008/09) – Statistical Volume 2 (England and Wales) – see Chapter 3

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs10/hosb0110.pdf> (Table 3.18 page 81)

<sup>9</sup> Equalities and Human Rights Commission Employers Campaign Pack, page 7

<sup>10</sup> British Crime Survey - <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs06/rdsolr1206.pdf> (Table 1.1. page 4)