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Susie Uppal,  
Director of Legal Enforcement  
Equality and Human Rights Commission  
3 More London, Riverside,  
Tooley Street,  
London,  
SE1 2RG

10th December 2009

Dear Ms Uppal

**Freedom of Information Act: Gender Equality Duty - Compliance**

As Chairman of a national charity that supports male victims of domestic abuse (The ManKind Initiative), I welcome your recent tough action on local authorities who are not complying with their statutory duties under the Gender Equality Duty.

As you have issued letters to 14 councils *“for failing to properly investigate, develop plans or deliver services that address gender inequality for women. These include providing services specifically to help women who have experienced violence”* I am formally writing to ask for information (under the Freedom of Information Act) on the following:-

- (1) What investigations has the Equalities and Human Rights Commission undertaken on whether local authorities are properly investigating, developing plans or delivering services that address the needs of male victims of domestic violence and domestic abuse within their communities?
- (2a) If such investigations have taken place, what were the outcomes of those investigations and what action does the Equalities and Human Rights Commission intend to take against those local authorities that fail to meet their statutory obligations under the Gender Equality Duty?
- (2b) If no such investigations have yet taken place, could you please set out the timetable the Equalities and Human Rights Commission will be undertaking to carry out such investigations.

As the Gender Equality Duty applies to both women and men as individuals (Equality Act 2006 Clause 8(2) which states that 'Equality means equality between individuals'), local authorities have a duty to properly investigate, develop plans and deliver services for both genders. In addition, while the charity

**Equality and  
Human Rights  
Commission**

**equalityhumanrights.com**

**Mr Mark Brooks**  
ManKind Initiative  
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Email: [admin@mankind.org.uk](mailto:admin@mankind.org.uk)

**Our Ref: FOI255**

14th January 2010

**Subject: FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST**

Dear Mr Brooks,

Thank you for your recent letter dated 10th December 2009, in which you make a Freedom of Information request regarding investigations by the Equality & Human Rights Commission (EHRC) into the actions of local authorities, in respect of addressing the needs of male victims of domestic violence and domestic abuse within their communities.

### **Request**

In your letter you asked:

1. What investigations has the EHRC undertaken on whether local authorities are properly investigating, developing plans or delivering

services that address the needs of male victims of domestic violence and domestic abuse within their communities?

2a. If such investigations have taken place, what were the outcomes of those investigations and what action does the EHRC intend to take against those local authorities that fail to meet their statutory obligations under the Gender Equality Duty?

2b. If no such investigations have yet taken place, could you please set out the timetable the EHRC will be undertaking to carry out such investigations.

## **Answer**

The Commission has not undertaken any enforcement work on this issue. Violence against men has not been recognised as a key equality and human rights issue at national and international levels in the way that violence against women and girls has and this is reflected in our focus.

The EHRC recognises that men suffer violence at the hands of other men, and sometimes from women.

However, the prevalence, impact, and consequence of violence against men is very different than violence against women. Under some measures, men are more likely to be victims of violence but this is usually perpetrated by other men, and is not usually part of a recurrent pattern of behaviour which is both a cause and a consequence of inequality, as violence against women is. The violence that women experience is most commonly committed by known men – partners, family members, friends, work colleagues. In addition, sexual harassment in public is widespread and contributes to women's fear of crime and whether they feel safe in public spaces at night. Women are twice as likely as men to be worried about violent crime.

Furthermore, the violence that men suffer is often not connected to the deep rooted inequalities that women suffer.

While it is still an issue that the EHRC takes seriously, the severity and frequency of violence to men is less, and arguably requires a different response from public bodies. Scottish Crime Survey, British Crime Survey and Irish Crime Victimization Survey all find that men are less

likely to be repeat victims, seriously injured and less likely to report being fearful.

- Scottish Crime Survey 2000 found that men were less likely to have been repeat victims of domestic assault, less likely to be seriously injured and less likely to report feeling fearful in their own homes.
- The survey retraced men who were counted as victims in the Scottish Crime Survey and found that a majority of the men who said that they were victims of domestic violence, were also perpetrators of violence (13 of 22).
- A significant number of the men re-interviewed (13 out of 46) later said they had actually never experienced any form of domestic abuse (Scottish Executive Central Research Unit, 2002).
- 2001/02 British Crime Survey (BCS) found 19% of domestic violence incidents were reported to be male victims with just under half of these being committed by a female abuser. From <http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/hh/men.shtml>
- Among people subject to 4 or more incidents of domestic violence from the perpetrator of the worst incident (since age 16), 89% were women (Walby and Allen, Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey, 2004).

Although the Commission has no current plans to carry out investigations into this issue, the Commission is aware that there has been a petition lodged this week at the Scottish Parliament calling for an overhaul of all projects and programmes tackling domestic abuse to ensure that they address the needs of men as well as women. It is expected that the Commission will be called for evidence so we will over the coming months be giving detailed consideration to this issue.

We hope that this has fully answered your request.

If you are unhappy with our response and wish to request an internal review please write to the Corporate Communications Centre at the address below.

During the internal review the handling of your information request will be reassessed afresh.

If following the review you are still not content with our response you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) at:

The Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF.

Generally the ICO cannot provide a decision until you have exhausted the internal review process within the Equality and Human Rights Commission

If the Commission can be of any further assistance please contact us on the details below.

Yours sincerely,

**Philippa Bullen**  
**Corporate Communications Officer**

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recognises the issues of proportionality and relevance, local authorities still have a statutory requirement under the Gender Equality Duty to properly investigate, develop plans and deliver services that address the needs of both female and male victims of domestic violence within their communities. In addition,

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter and I look forward to receiving a favorable reply within the Freedom of Information Act timeframe (20 days from receipt).

Yours sincerely

Mark Brooks  
Chairman  
The ManKind Initiative