

PRESS RELEASE

THE MANKIND INITIATIVE

www.mankind.org.uk

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Immediate Release

SUPERDRUG : CHARITY COMPLAINS ABOUT PUNCH-BAG THAT ENDORSES DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST MEN - ON SALE IN SUPERDRUG STORES

The ManKind Initiative, a national charity that supports male domestic violence victims, has written (see appendix 1) to the Managing Director of Superdrug demanding that an inflatable punch-bag encouraging women to hit men be removed from all of their stores and on-line site (See <http://www.superdrug.com/inv/414964>).

The punch-bag called HERS – Boxing Set is on sale in Superdrug stores nationwide (original retail £9.99, now £4.99) and consists of an inflatable punch bag in the shape of a man with accompanying boxing gloves. It is on sale in the 'Christmas gift sections' of the stores.

The box and the punch bag encourage the owner to insert a photograph of a man where the face is. In addition, the box and punch bag has an arrow pointing to the head stating 'hit him here' and an arrow pointing to the groin stating 'kick him here'.

Mark Brooks, Chairman of The ManKind Initiative, said: "As a charity that receives hundreds of calls a year from distressed men suffering from domestic

violence, it is disgraceful that a national retailer like Superdrug should be openly selling products encouraging such acts. We are demanding that they remove these offensive 'Christmas gifts' immediately.

"The fact that Superdrug rightly does not sell a similar product encouraging domestic violence against women or violence against animals suggests violence against a man is more acceptable. This is characteristic of the brick wall that male victims face in terms of lack of support, understanding and acceptance."

Domestic Violence Statistics

It is recognised that one in every six men will be a victim of domestic violence in his lifetime¹ and that at least one in every three acts of domestic violence² are committed against a man. Any man finding himself in this situation would become distressed at seeing such a product on sale in Superdrug stores.

The ManKind Initiative

The ManKind Initiative is a national charity based in Taunton that runs a help-line (weekday 10am-4.15pm and 7pm-9pm) which offers help and support to male domestic violence victims. The funding for its help-line runs out in January 2008.

Other similar products on sale/issues

I Want One of Those - All Men Are Bastards Knifeblock

<http://www.iwantoneofthose.com/knife-block/index.html>

After complaints to the Advertising Standards Authority, MFI were prevented from continuing to show a TV advertisement of a man being hit by a woman in a household scene. The judgement can be found at

http://www.asa.org.uk/asa/adjudications/Public/TF_ADJ_43245.htm and the advertisement

can be seen at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o2MpgBErfNI>

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Journalist requiring further information/pictures please contact Mark Brooks on 07985 566827 – mark.brooks70@talktalk.net

1. See <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime-victims/reducing-crime/domestic-violence/> - 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men will suffer domestic violence in their lifetime.
2. In 2005/06 ('Homicides, Firearms Offences and Intimate Violence 05/06 : Supplementary Volume 1 to Crime in England and Wales 2005/06 – Home Office Statistical Bulletin 02/07), 5.7% of women and 4.0% of men reported suffering non-sexual partner abuse, a proportion of 41% for men. Of these 3.0% of women and 1.8% of men reported suffering 'actual force', a proportion of 37.5%.
3. The ManKind Initiative (www.mankind.org.uk) is based at 57 East Reach, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 3EZ: Office number 01823 334244 (10am to 4.15pm) admin@mankind.org.uk. Registered charity No.1089547.

APPENDIX 1 : LETTER TO SUPERDRUG

Mr Euan Sutherland,
Managing Director,
Superdrug,
118 Beddington Lane,
Croydon,
Surrey,
CR0 4TB.

6th December 2007

Dear Mr Sutherland

HERS – BOXING SET

I am writing as Chairman of The ManKind Initiative, a charity that offers help and information for male victims of domestic abuse and violence, concerning a product available in Superdrug stores that encourages domestic violence against men.

The charity recently received an e-mail from a distressed woman about the Christmas 'gift' that is on sale in Superdrug stores nationwide. It is called HERS – Boxing Set (original retail £9.99, now

£4.99) and consists of an inflatable punch bag in the shape of a man and comes with boxing gloves.

The box and the punch bag encourage the owner to insert a photograph of a man where the face is. In addition, the box and punch bag have an arrow pointing to the head stating 'hit him here' and an arrow pointing to the groin stating 'kick him here'.

As Chairman of the charity, I am requesting that this product is immediately withdrawn from all Superdrug stores nationwide.

It is completely unacceptable for a national retailer to sell a product that encourages domestic violence against anyone. The fact that Superdrug rightly does not sell a similar product that encourages domestic violence against women or one that encourages someone to commit violence against an animal suggests that such an act of violence against a man is more acceptable.

As a charity that specifically helps male domestic violence victims, we receive hundreds of calls per year from distressed men or their relatives (often women) from across the country. In addition, it is recognised that one in every six men will be a victim of domestic violence in his lifetime and that one in every three acts of domestic violence is committed against a man. Any man finding himself in this situation would become distressed at seeing such a product on sale in Superdrug stores.

As I consider this issue to be serious enough to warrant wider attention, I have copied this letter to the national media and have also issued a press release.

I look forward to hearing a favourable reply and acknowledgement that these products will be removed from sale forthwith.

Yours sincerely

Mark Brooks
Chairman
The ManKind Initiative