

Press release

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Under embargo until 07 January 2011

Welsh Equalities Commission's domestic abuse campaign shows it is sitting on its hands when it comes to male victims

The Mankind Initiative charity, which supports male victims of domestic abuse, believes the response¹ to its complaint to the Welsh Equalities and Human Rights Commission about its recent employer domestic abuse campaign shows it is deliberately sitting on its hands when it comes to supporting Welsh men suffering in this way. This is despite the fact that the Commission is legally meant to ensure there is adequate support for domestic abuse victims of both genders.

The charity complained in November 2010 about the Commission's "Domestic abuse is your business"² aimed at helping employers identify and support employees who are domestic abuse victims. The campaign includes posters, leaflets, briefing papers and guidance of employers as well as a range of statistics.

The complaint is based on the fact that all the materials, including quoted statistics, were solely aimed at, or about, female victims. This is despite the fact that latest Home Office statistics³ show that for every three victims of partner abuse, two will be female and one will be male.

In addition, where statistics are used highlighting the numbers of female victims, the reciprocal statistics for male victims from the same Home Office source⁴ are not included. The only mention of a male support service (the Dyn Project) is near the back of the briefing paper.

Mark Brooks, Chairman of the ManKind Initiative, said: "All Welsh victims of domestic abuse, whether female or male, should get the support they need and all campaigns in Wales, especially those produced by the public sector, should be aimed at helping them all.

“The Commission’s recent campaign gives employers a distorted picture because it gives the wrong impression that there are no men in Welsh companies suffering from domestic abuse. The Commission’s response is full of excuses, many driven for ideological reasons, trying to justify why they are sitting on their hands.”

As the Commission is deliberately aiming the campaign at victims from only one gender, the ManKind Initiative contends that the Commission is not treating the plight of male victims working in Welsh businesses as seriously as they, rightly, treat the plight of female victims. The charity believes the campaign gives a one-sided view to employers about domestic abuse victims who may be working for them.

The Commission states in its response that they do condemn domestic violence against men, however they also state that their “work on domestic violence is set in the wider social context of violence against women. We recognise that violence against women is a cause and consequence of women’s inequality. Therefore, it happens because women have an unequal position in society and further reinforces that unequal position.”

The charity believes that this ideologically driven statement has no place or relevance in ensuring that all domestic abuse victims, whether female or male, receive the support and recognition they need. The charity does not support ideological views especially when they lead to ignoring one in three victims in Wales.

The ManKind Initiative charity supports, and helps others to support, male victims across the UK including running a helpline. It believes that all domestic abuse victims, whether male or female, should receive the support they need and that male victims should be treated as seriously as female victims including their full inclusion in public information campaigns, support services and in public policy. This is why the charity raised the issue with Equalities and Human Rights Commission in Wales.

Under the Equality Act 2006, the section defining what ‘equality’ means for the remit of the Commission clearly states it is about equality between individuals, not groups.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1. The complain and response can be found on the Mankind Initiative website at <http://www.mankind.org.uk/pdfs/Letter%20&%20reply.pdf>

1. The Equalities and Human Rights Commission for Wales' materials can be found at <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/wales/projects/your-business-workplace-policies-on-domestic-abuse-and-mental-health/domestic-abuse-is-your-business>

3. The latest British Crime Survey (England and Wales) statistics for 2009/10 show that 5.1% of women were victims of partner abuse in that year as were 2.9% of men. Using the weighted statistics, it means that for every three victims, two will be female and one will be male.

Source – Table 3.14 Crime in England and Wales 2009/10
<http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs10/hosb1210.pdf>

4. An example of the way that the statistics have been used to distort the picture given to employers can be seen throughout the campaign literature.

For example, the campaign states that 1 in 4 women in their lifetime will be a victim and two women per week are murdered by their former or current partner.

The reciprocal figures from the same Home Office research also show that 1 in 6 will be a victim in their lifetime one man per fortnight will be murdered, however, the ECHR Wales fails to include those figures in the literature.

Source: Home Office Research Study 276: 'Domestic Violence, sexual assault and stalking. findings from the British.' Survey" by Sylvia Walby and Jonathan Alien; Home office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, March 2004

About the ManKind Initiative

The ManKind Initiative (www.mankind.org.uk), based in Taunton, Somerset, is a national charity which runs a help-line, information and referral service for male victims of domestic abuse and domestic violence. The help-line number is 01823 334244 (weekdays 10am-4pm and 5pm-7pm)

Media

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