



## **Home Office – Compensation and Support for Victims of Crime**

### **Introduction**

It's a bit like the buses! The Home Office Consultation Paper on Compensation and Support for Victims of Crime is the third consultation paper on the law to arrive at ManKind's national office in the last 6 months. The Home Office's paper on domestic violence: "Safety and Justice" was closely followed by the Law Commission's Consultation Paper 173, "Partial Defences to Murder" and it is all to do with the Government's review of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Bill.

The ManKind Initiative has responded in highly critical terms to these Consultation Papers because they promote an unbalanced approach to the treatment of men and women that further entrenches institutionalised sex discrimination against men within our legal system.

The current Consultation Paper and the previous Home Office Consultation Paper, "Safety and Justice", represent a continuation of this fundamentally unjust trend. The false assumptions, driven by radical feminist ideology, that permeate both "Safety and Justice" and the Law Commission's Consultation Paper 173, also appear to have influenced the current Consultation Paper. These false assumptions are highly prejudicial to men. In reviewing the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Bill to provide the most effective package of support for victims of crime the Government should reject this ideological agenda to ensure that it is reflecting the values of the wider public, rather than the pre-occupations of unrepresentative pressure groups, who are not concerned with the best interests of mainstream society.

### **ManKind's Response to the Consultation Paper**

ManKind is concerned that the neglect of male victims and the sentencing bias against men will become further established as a result of the proposals in the current Consultation paper.

In particular, the overemphasis on sexual and domestic violence (which also demonises men as sole perpetrators), gives special status and leads to privileged treatment for women. The outcome is the inequitable diversion of funding to women, which denies men a fair share of resources. This is a continuation of the feminist agenda that has already led to a denial of justice to men in respect of sexual and domestic violence crimes (eg in respect of the presumption of innocence), and a complete lack of public funds for male victims of domestic violence.

The Consultation Paper states (paragraph 3) that provision for those providing services to victims are not sufficient. As stated in ManKind's submission to "Safety and Justice, there is a "lack of support for male victims of domestic violence". If the overarching aim of the National Strategy for Victims and Witnesses is to improve service to victims and

witnesses, then immediate support for male victims is absolutely essential.

A key area of specialist support for victims not covered by the National Strategy (paragraph 119 and box on page 25 of the Consultation Paper) is support for male victims of domestic violence. The ManKind Initiative is a voluntary and innovative project with a developing infrastructure already available to provide this service, based on principles of inclusiveness and equality of access. It is one of the few projects that have any regard for male victims of domestic violence, yet we receive no support at all from any sources whatsoever. We are a small, voluntary charity, and in offering our currently limited services we rely entirely on the goodwill of our membership and care providers.

Given the emphasis placed on sexual violence by the Home Office, one would have anticipated some commentary on the growing phenomenon of false and malicious allegations made by women against men. As the law stands men have lost their livelihoods and had their reputations destroyed as a result of public accusations made by women who retain their anonymity. Current public concerns over prosecutions for sexual offences include:

- **the injustice of restricting anonymity to women;**
- **the low quality evidential threshold applied to prosecutions;**
- **the need to prosecute those who make false and malicious allegations; and**
- **compensating for those who are falsely accused of sexual offences.**

Curiously, none of these issues were addressed at all in the current Consultation Paper. This is a remarkable omission, given the Home Office's own preoccupation with sexual offences, and the real public concern over these issues.

Furthermore, the figures in the Sentencing Analysis Table in Annex "B" of the Consultation Paper show that 35,436 sentences were handed down for violence against the person, as compared to 3,815 sentences for sexual offences. It is obvious that the priority is violence against the person, not sexual offences, as implied by the Consultation Paper.

Section 10 of the Consultation Paper on Equity and Fairness fails completely, because it does not treat men with either equity or fairness. It demonstrates the Home Office's irrational approach to the interpretation and creative extension of crime statistics in pursuit of feminist outcomes. In paragraph 142 there is the assertion that whilst men "are also more likely to be victims of violent crime... However, women suffer from many of the crimes that are not reported."

Firstly, if a crime is "unreported" the Home Office is not in a position to say that it actually occurred, and of course there is even less certainty over projected levels (or percentages) of crimes that might have occurred.

Secondly, that "men are most likely to be victims of violent crime" is a recorded Home Office fact. That "women suffer from many of the crimes that are not reported", does not detract from or "trump" the larger scale of male victimisation, as implied. Men also suffer from many (and possibly most) of the crimes that are not reported. As stated with reference to Research Study 191 (January 1999), women are 5 times more likely to report domestic violence than men. So, adding unreported

to reported crime still makes men the largest single group of crime victims. It is just that the Home Office cannot bring itself to acknowledge the truth. This is the kind of diversionary statement made by the Home Office to draw attention from and to downplay male victimisation. It is further evidence of Home Office feminist advocacy on behalf of women.

It is a fundamental untruth that domestic violence is something that men do to women. Paragraph 143 of the Consultation Paper wilfully misrepresents the results of the Home Office's own studies on domestic violence. The Home Office Research Study 191 is generally recognised as the most reliable survey of domestic violence carried out in Britain. Study 191 shows that 50% of total domestic violence victims in the short-term (over 12 months) are men who suffer at the hands of women, and 40% of total domestic violence victims in the long-term (in a life-time) are men who suffer at the hands of women. In other words, domestic violence is not a gender issue.

The Home Office itself estimates that 1 in 6 men will suffer domestic violence at some point in their life, so it is scandalous that male victims of domestic violence are completely ignored by public funding for support services.

Local voluntary projects like the ManKind Initiative offer excellent value for money because our volunteers have a genuine commitment to victims of domestic violence. Our support for victims is not constrained by the artificial limits of public service office hours and unlike others we do not impose sexist gender barriers. We are primarily concerned with male victims of domestic violence (who currently receive no help at all) and their children, but we will also help women who seek our assistance. Furthermore, a significant proportion of our existing clients are derived from minority ethnic communities.

In view of these considerations (and with reference to paragraphs 13 and 14 of the Consultation Paper), the ManKind Initiative anticipates full involvement in local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, and financial support from the Victim's Fund

Because of the systematic bias against men in the criminal justice system, (as demonstrated by the Home Office's own studies) violent women are treated more leniently than violent men. As a result, the proposed scale of fixed penalty surcharges (paragraph 44) will bear more heavily and further entrench discrimination against men.

As stated in paragraph 114, voluntary sector groups themselves know best the sorts of support they need and where the gaps currently exist in service provision. The yawning gap is in the provision of support for male victims of domestic violence. According to the Home Office's own estimates, the potential client base is 1 in 6 of the adult male population and yet absolutely no resources are allocated to male victims! Under the Delivery Plans of the Local Criminal Justice Boards, local partnerships should channel funding to projects like the ManKind Initiative to provide specialist support for male victims of domestic violence.

## **Conclusions**

ManKind questions the gender neutrality of the Home Offices approach to the issues of compensation and support for victims of crime. The Consultation Paper does not justify the special status that is given to domestic and sexual violence that is used to place men at a disadvantage, particularly in policy implementation and the allocation of resources. The motivation appears not to be greater justice under the law for all, but to further entrench unfair privileges for women.

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The neglect of boys over 14 years of age who suffer as a direct result of domestic violence and the resulting break-up of families is a matter of particular concern.

Under the Delivery Plans of the Local Criminal Justice Boards, local partnerships should channel funding to projects like the ManKind Initiative to provide specialist support for male victims of domestic violence.

*The ManKind Initiative*

*29th March 2004*