



Flook House, Belvedere Road, Taunton, TA1 1BT  
[admin@mankind.org.uk](mailto:admin@mankind.org.uk) : [www.mankind.org.uk](http://www.mankind.org.uk) 01823 334244

Registered Charity No. 1089547 – Company Registration No. 3869893  
Honorary Patrons – Lord Cotter, Liz Lynne MEP, Ian McNicholl, John Penrose MP and Erin Pizzey

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Response to: Domestic violence disclosure scheme (“Clare’s Law”)
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## **(1) About the ManKind Initiative**

- 1.1 The ManKind Initiative has been a charity for over ten years and supports male victims of domestic abuse. This is through a national helpline, training and information for organisations wishing to support male victims and campaigning to ensure that there are adequate support services and recognition for male victims. The charity is based in Taunton.
- 1.2 The charity works with local authorities, police forces, housing associations, charities and other groups. It recently had a training seminar in Taunton and a number of people from Bristol based organisations attended.
- 1.3 The charity does not believe or support the notion that domestic abuse is a gendered crime, especially as national figures show that one in three victims of domestic abuse are male. The charity believes domestic abuse is a crime against an individual and while their gender, race or sexuality are important issues, they are secondary to the fact that legally, constitutionally and morally, domestic abuse has to be primarily viewed and treated as a crime against an individual.

## **(2) Response**

- 2.1 The ManKind Initiative’s response to the consultation is based on the public positioning of this scheme.
- 2.2 It is vital that whatever scheme is put in place, it is made completely clear that the scheme applies to both women and men. That is:
  - Men can check whether a (potential) female or male partner is on the scheme’s register
  - Women can check whether a (potential) female or male partner is on the scheme’s register
- 2.3 This means all guidance, all publicity and even its name must ensure it states the disclosure scheme is for women and men. The charity raises this because on many

(but not all) occasions documents and publicity are not gender neutral because they only mention women. Examples include

- Press release <http://tinyurl.com/8752exs> quote - Home Secretary Theresa May said: 'I have been clear that ending violence against women and girls is a personal priority for me and this government. Domestic violence is a particularly dreadful form of abuse and I want us to constantly look at new ways of protecting victims and preventing tragic incidents from happening.'
- Consultation document <http://tinyurl.com/897rxuf> - Foreword as above
- Consultation name (<http://tinyurl.com/3rqs6fg>) – The scheme is 'given' the official name of "Clare's law"
- Consultation impact assessment (<http://tinyurl.com/3d4vpap>) - The opening section entitled **What is the problem under consideration? Why is government intervention necessary?** states...

"The consultation will focus on whether a national scheme should be introduced to protect women from serial domestic abuse perpetrators by establishing a recognised and consistent process for the police to disclose information to potential victims about previous violent offences committed by a partner."

2.4 The problem with the examples highlighted in 2.3 is that they give the incorrect impression that the disclosure scheme is just available to females when it is available to both females and males.

2.5 The outcome of this wrong impression is that few men, if any, will use it and the media reporting is not correct as the portrayal is that it is just for women. Clear examples of the latter include:

- Press Association (<http://tinyurl.com/6p5e8pd>) - Women may get abuse 'right to know'
- Daily Mail (<http://tinyurl.com/5vtphhj>) - Women could win right to know if their partners have a history of violence
- Metro (<http://tinyurl.com/6wccrpe>) - Women to be informed if partner has history of violence under new plans

2.6 The charity's other concern about the incorrect impression being given is the impact it will have on the professionals working in the sector including all those listed in section A2 of the impact assessment document:

- Police Forces;
- Agencies that attend MARAC;

- Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs), and,
- Specialist Domestic Violence organisations

2.7 The impact of the incorrect impression will mean there is a risk that professionals will have the view that it will only be available to females, not females and males. It could mean men are not encouraged to use the disclosure scheme in the same way that women will rightly be so and that some men are 'turned away' when making a request. This will be in the breach of the Public Sector Equality Duty at the very least.

2.8 In addition, one of the barriers that is gradually be broken down in the UK is the view that domestic violence only affects females, when men are victims too. By casting the scheme in the current way sets this back and means those recognition barriers that male victims face will continue.

### **3. Conclusion**

3.1 The charity view is that if the scheme is to be enacted it should be:

- Made clear on all communications, publicity and guidance that it equally applies to female and males. The text should state this clearly.
- If the government or other statutory agencies are to give an unofficial name to such as Clare's Law, consideration is given to the use of 'Clare and [insert male name]' Law. The charity in no shape or form wishes to diminish what happened to Clare Wood and the great campaign her father has undertaken to try and make sure this never happens again, but the adoption of a gender-based name may reinforce the wrong view that the scheme will only apply to females.