

Briefing: Westminster Hall debate (11 May 2016)

Government support for domestic violence refuges: Male Victims

(1) Executive Summary

- The charity recognises that there is not enough funding for female victims of domestic abuse, including those with children, and is dismayed at the cuts in the provision for female victims.
- There is a considerable shortage of emergency refuge/safe house provision for male victims of domestic abuse including those with children, in proportion to the numbers of male victims (with or without children).
- Government and local authority housing policy and funding is not sufficiently gender inclusive to ensure there is sufficient emergency housing provision for male victims. There is no mention in the new Ending Violence Against Women and Girls strategy regarding male victims and refuge provision – all references to refuges refer solely to female victims. The charity **does not** believe though that any funding should be switched from female victims to provide support for male victims.
- Despite 500,000 men suffering from partner abuse every year and 36% of male victims living in a household with children and another adult(s), there are only an estimated 60 refuge/safe houses places in the UK for male victims with only 13 dedicated places.

(2) About the ManKind Initiative

The ManKind Initiative is a national charity supporting men (and their children) escape from domestic abuse. The charity runs directs services for male victims such as a national helpline (1,400-1,500 calls per year) and website (80,000 views per year). It further supports other charities through training and a national conference, and also campaigns to ensure better service provision for male victims including those with children.

The charity has a qualified Independent Domestic Violence Adviser and bases its support on meeting the NICE Quality Standards on Domestic Abuse. The charity does not believe that services or funding should be taken from female victims of domestic abuse and given to male victims - there needs to be more funding for all victims.

(3) Male victim numbers (overall)

The latest figures (2014/15) produced by the Office for National Statistics¹ (England and Wales) state:

¹ ONS BCS Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences 2014/15 <http://bit.ly/1p8CGI0>

- 500,000 men and 1.1 million women experienced partner abuse in 2014/15.
- 36% of male victims and 50% of female victims of partner abuse live in a household with children and another adult(s). A male victim features in 21% of all households with children where there is a victim of partner abuse.
- 19 men died at the hands of their partner or ex-partner compared with 81 women.
- Male victims are over twice as likely as women not to tell anyone about the partner abuse they are suffering from and only 23% will tell a person in an official position (this is compared to 43% for women).
- 12% of men and 15% of women who were victims of partner abuse suffered three or more incidents. Additionally, 1% of men had suffered 50 or more incidents as had 2% of female victims.

Other general statistics

- In 2013, 89,000 men reported to English and Welsh police forces stating they were a victim of domestic abuse²
- 80% of the men who call the ManKind Initiative helpline have never spoken to anyone before about the abuse they are suffering³

(4) Partner Abuse Accommodation (ONS)

The latest figures (2014/15) produced by the Office for National Statistics⁴ (England and Wales) state:

- 19% of partner abuse victims lived/shared accommodation with their partner (66% said they did not and 15% did not answer). Of the 42% that left the accommodation they shared, 65% spent their first night with relatives, 18% neighbours/friends, 5% hotel and 12% elsewhere (e.g. streets, refuge). There is no gender split for these figures.
- Of those that did not leave their shared accommodation, amongst their reasons for not leaving 54% stated that it was because of the presence of children and 24% said because they had nowhere to go. There is no gender split for these figures.

(5) Refuge and Safehouse provision for men

There is a considerable shortage of emergency accommodation for male victims of domestic abuse, including those with children. This is despite the fact that local councils have the same legal

² FOI requests to 43 police forces (Ian McNicholl, The ManKind Initiative)

³ ManKind Initiative helpline 2015

⁴ ONS BCS Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences 2014/15 <http://bit.ly/1p8CGl0> (table 4.24)

responsibility under the Housing Act 1986 and the Equality Act 2010, and to adult/child safeguarding as they rightly do for female victims including those with children. The charity recognises there is not enough housing support for female victims either.

In the United Kingdom, the charity believes there are just 14 organisations offering refuge or safe house provision for male victims in the UK - a total of 60 spaces. Of these only 13 spaces are dedicated to male DV victims (the rest being for victims of either gender). One organisation in the East Midlands offers 20 spaces which inflates the figure for spaces, without which the figures would show that the median figure is three per organisation. Seven of these places cannot accommodate men with children. One additional organisation has provision for gay men but they have to have an additional identified need.

There are swathes of the United Kingdom without any refuge/safe house provision for men especially London, Lancashire, South East England, East Anglia, North Eastern England and Northern Ireland.

In terms of demand, while it is recognised that there is not a need for the same number of refuge/safe house provision for male victims (including those with children) – there is a proportionate need. The charity's helpline carried out a survey with callers to its helpline in 2010, and 120 men stated they would like to consider refuge/safe house provision if there was local provision.

The charity also conducts a ringround every Monday to every refuge/safe house provider and the majority of providers do not have spare capacity.

Given the number of male victims, it is evident there is a considerable shortage in services and provision. This is exacerbated by a lack of information provided by local councils about requests for emergency accommodation for male victims, a continued lack of awareness about these victims within the statutory sector (although there has been some improvement) and the lack of funded research in this sector due to the small number of people supporting male victims (charities cannot afford policy and research teams).

Despite this, reports show at a high level there is a need for male victims.

For example, the Office for National Statistics report⁵ shows that 36% of male victims of partner abuse and 50% of female victims of partner abuse live in a household with children and another adult(s). A male victim features in 21% of all households with children where there is a victim of partner abuse.

In a Salvation Army report⁶ conducted in 2014, 498 people were accommodated in their hostels due to domestic violence, 205 of those were men and 293 were women

(6) Male Homelessness/Rough Sleeping due to domestic abuse

Some men who flee domestic abuse become homeless or sleep rough. Much of the homelessness is what is termed 'hidden homeless' such as sleeping on friends' or relatives' couches because they have nowhere else to go. Some cannot afford alternative accommodation due to the fact they are often still paying/contributing to their former property's rent//mortgage, or are unemployed and are also not seen as a priority group.

⁵ ONS BCS Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences 2014/15 <http://bit.ly/1p8CGI0> (table 4.11)

⁶ Reasons people left their last settled home 2014 data; The Salvation Army

Men make up 85% of those sleeping rough and the most common reason is relationship breakdown⁷ (cited by 42% of men). In addition, 6% of those men sleeping rough state that this is due to domestic abuse. However, in meetings with St Mungo's in 2011, they could not be sure some of those categorised as sleeping rough due to relationship breakdown were not also in abusive relationships.

Clearly, this means there is a need for increased emergency housing for male victims of domestic abuse and given the scale of rough sleeping in our cities (especially London), this is more acute in those areas.

(7) Contact details

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⁷ Battered broken bereft St Mungo's rough sleeping report October 2011