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Honorary Patrons – Lord Cotter, Stephen Fitzgerald, Ian McNicholl, John Penrose MP and Erin Pizzey

The ManKind Initiative Response: Consultation on the Gender-based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Bill

(A) Executive Summary

1. The charity is supportive of the Welsh Government’s Gender-based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Bill in principle and recognises that it is a step forward in ensuring the victims of these crimes receive the protection and support they need.
2. However, the charity believes there are a number of issues that will need to be addressed to ensure that in Wales, all victims of these crimes receive the protection and support they need. A law that supports victims of domestic abuse is supported, but often from the charity’s experience, the application of law in terms of the provision of services for male victims, is lacking.
3. These issues, include:
 - (i) recognising and accepting that domestic abuse is not a gender-based crime. It is therefore vital that the part of the bill’s title entitled “Gender-based Violence” is recognised and interpreted as being separate to “domestic abuse”. An answer could be to rename the Bill on an alphabetical basis: Domestic Abuse, Gender-based Violence and Sexual Violence (Wales) Bill.
 - (ii) if forced marriage and honour-based violence are viewed as being gender-based crimes, then how will male victims of these crimes be equally recognised and supported as female victims of these crimes.
 - (iii) ensuring national and local strategies fully recognise male victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence and that the strategies explicitly address the needs of male victims. This also includes service commissioning, staff training and awareness raising.

(B) About the ManKind Initiative

4. The ManKind Initiative, is a UK-wide charity based in Taunton in Somerset.
 5. The charity's vision is all for male victims of domestic abuse to feel able to seek help and to escape, if necessary, from the situation they are in. In addition, for statutory and voluntary agencies to respond adequately to male victims of domestic abuse, and, that domestic abuse is regarded as a gender neutral crime.
 6. The charity carries out this activity out by:
 - (i) providing direct help and support for male victims of domestic abuse and domestic violence, primarily through running a national helpline which receives 1,500 calls per year. This provides information, signposting and information support for male victims.
 - (ii) providing information to voluntary and statutory services, and also runs a national conference and directory of services.
 - (iii) campaigning to ensure there is political and societal recognition of male victims, and be seen as equally supported as are female victims. It recently produced a viral video that has received 7.5 million views worldwide, highlighting the issue.
 7. The charity firmly believes that domestic abuse should not be defined as a gendered crime – it is a crime against individuals of all genders. This includes vulnerable groups such as older people and disabled people. The gender of the victim, while important it, is secondary to the fact that legally, constitutionally and morally - domestic abuse has to be primarily viewed and treated as a crime against an individual. There should be a multi-gendered approach to providing domestic abuse solutions which is needs led and equality based. Services should be available to all victims whatever their gender or identification. This of course could be services for women and services for men or one service for all victims.
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(C) Male victims and services in Wales

8. In Wales, the latest statistics¹ from the British Crime Survey (2012/13) show that 5.4% of men (between the ages of 16-59) suffered domestic abuse as did 8.8% of women and that 4.2% of men and 4.5% of women suffered from partner abuse. With regard to partner abuse, the figure in Wales for men was the highest in any region of England and Wales. In general terms, the ManKind Initiative states that for every three female victims of domestic or partner abuse, there are also two male victims.
 9. Taking into account the numbers of Welshmen between 16 and 59 in the UK census, the charity estimates that c32,000 Welshmen suffer partner abuse every year.
 10. In 2011, of those victims who reported being a victim to the four Welsh police forces, 18.2% were male (2,554) and 81.9% were female (11,502). The figures for 2013/14 are currently being obtained through Freedom of Information requests. The difference between actual reports to the police and the higher ratios for male victims set out in paragraph 8 is due to the higher level of under-reporting by male victims. The 2012/13 British Crime Survey¹ highlights that men are nearly three times less likely to tell the police than a female victim.
 11. With regard to services for male victims of domestic abuse in Wales, the charity is aware of six organisations that explicitly support male victims as part of their domestic abuse services. These are:
 - Amman Valley Women's Aid
 - Cedar House*
 - Hafan Cymru
 - Montgomeryshire Family Crisis Centre*
 - North Denbighshire DA Service (formerly Rhyl and District Women's Aid)*
 - Safer Wales Dyn Project
 12. Three of the organisations (*starred) provide 11 safe house accommodation places for male victims in total. Wales is far more advanced proportionally than England with regard to the provision of safe house accommodation.
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(D) Inquiry section 1(i): The publication of national and local strategies

13. The ManKind Initiative welcomes the publication of national and local strategies as a means to ensuring there is a focus on these crimes.
14. The charity believes however that each strategy must expressly assess, recognise and address the needs of male victims of domestic abuse within their geographical and service remit. As well as setting out the overall strategy for victims of domestic abuse, an option that should be considered is to have a parallel sub strategy for female and male victims if it is considered there is a need. This is to ensure that the strategies both recognise the existence of male victims and their children and treat them as individuals in need in the same way female victims rightly are. It is important though to also provide solutions. Far too many domestic abuse strategies in the past have mentioned the existence of male victims, almost as a footnote to ensure a “box is ticked” but then they have not provided support services or awareness campaigns to actively support them.
15. National and local strategies should include a range of factors to support male victims and their children, and also to ensure there is compliance with the Equality Act 2010. These factors should include:
 - (i) **using national and localised statistics** and these they must include actual numbers of individuals. To do so brings the subject and existence of male victims alive rather than using percentage figures.
 - (ii) ensuring that the commissioning of domestic abuse services includes **the provision of services for male victims**. These can either be a parallel service to female victims or one service covering both genders. If the latter is chosen then the service must be make it clear it is available for male victims.
 - (iii) ensuring all staff from the statutory sector that come into contact and/or work with victims of domestic abuse **fully recognise the existence and needs of male victims** – this must form part of their training. This includes local authority and health service staff as set out in the National Institute of Clinical Excellence’s guidance issued earlier this year². This is important with regard to community safety, emergency housing and also with in the health service at a GP and hospital level. Staff at A&E services are rightly trained in identifying females suffering from injuries which could be attributed to domestic abuse, the charity is not convinced they are as attuned in the same way for male victims of domestic abuse.

- (iv) ensuring strategies set out what **awareness campaigns** will be produced to encourage male victims and their children to come forward and seek help. As set out in 15(ii), this could be one domestic abuse campaign explicitly aimed at women and men (that is, the campaign mentions men) or a separate campaign for women and men.
 - (v) ensuring strategies must not just seek to identify services for male victims; where there are gaps, **the strategies must proactively seek to fill and address those gaps**. That is, the strategies must be active towards supporting the needs of male victims and not be passive. This should include providing seed funding for support services in local communities if no such services exist. This could be providing support to organisations that currently only support female victims to take on this role. However, this does not include refuges as it is not appropriate to mix refuge provision, but there should be more of this provision for men. The Welsh Government should place more public and funding pressure on housing associations and bodies to provide more places for men and their children – but not at the cost of reducing provision for female victims.
16. The narrative for national and local domestic abuse strategies must treat and recognise male and female victims as equals.
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(E) Inquiry section 1(ii): The appointment of a Ministerial Adviser on Gender-based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence

17. The charity welcomes the appointment of a Ministerial Adviser in principle. However, the adviser must fully recognise the existence and needs of male victims as equals to female victims and therefore ensures that all strategies and their delivery at a national and local level supports male victims.
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(F) Inquiry section 2(i): any potential barriers to the implementation of these provisions and whether the Bill takes account of them

18. A significant potential barrier is the interpretation of the Bill due to its name. This is because the issue regarding gender-based violence such as FGM should be clearly seen as a separate issue to domestic abuse which is not gender-based. This may mean that national and local strategies do not recognise or treat male victims as equals to female victims. It is therefore recommended that the name is changed by

switching the phrases around alphabetically to be called Domestic Abuse, Gender-based Violence and Sexual Violence (Wales) Bill. This would clearly show they are different.

19. An additional potential barrier to ensuring male victims are seen as equals to female victims and that the first consideration of support should be based on need rather than gender, is resistance from some stakeholders in the sector. These are those who believe domestic abuse should be defined as a gendered crime. However, the charity is confident that by sending out a clear message that the Bill and the strategies are for all victims, female and male, that view is no longer relevant.
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(G) Inquiry section 3(i): whether there are any unintended consequences arising from the Bill

20. The main unintended consequence is with regard to defining forced marriage and honour-based violence as being a gendered crime. Home Office statistics shows that 18% of people in forced marriages are male³. Therefore by placing these crimes under a gender-based umbrella risks the counting lack of support and recognition for this group of people.
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(H) Inquiry section 4(i): the financial implications of the Bill (as set out in Part 2 of the Explanatory Memorandum,

21. The charity cannot be precise on the actual financial figures but it does recognise that to ensure to support male victims in Wales at the same proportionate level (based on need) that female victims rightly are will mean an uplift in domestic abuse spending. This ranges from training and awareness campaigns to seed funding and the provision of more housing support. This funding must be found and should not be used as an excuse not to ensure the support male victims and their children is not available. This would be in breach of the Equality Act 2010.
22. The charity is clear however, that is not acceptable both on moral and also on practical grounds that any money is switched from the provision of services for female victims (there is not enough funding for female victims) and given to male victims.

ENDS

The ManKind Initiative 30 August 2014

- 1 ONS BCS Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences 2012/13 <http://tinyurl.com/nb4xga>
- 2 NICE Guidance on Domestic Violence and Abuse (NICE guidelines [PH50]): Published February 2014 - <http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph50>
- 3 Home Office/Forced Marriage Unit:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/141823/Stats_2012.pdf