

## Public statement on male victims for crimes covered by the CPS Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy



This statement outlines the CPS support for male victims of domestic abuse, rape, sexual offences, stalking, forced marriage, honour-based violence, child abuse, prostitution, human trafficking focusing on sexual exploitation, pornography and obscenity.<sup>1</sup>

Building on previous work, the CPS has incorporated new and emerging patterns of abuse within its VAWG Strategy such as: broadening the scope to include girls as well as women, and recognising the different dynamics around teenage relationship abuse, same sex abuse and older victim abuse. The CPS is looking to ensure its response is effective to the specific needs of male victims of these crimes, recognising the significant numbers of men and boys affected by these crimes and the increasing number of reports being made. The CPS has met with national men's groups, national women's groups and a range of academics to develop this statement.

The CPS applies policies fairly and equally to all victims, both male and female, and we are committed to securing justice for **all victims**. Prevalence studies of these crimes evidence the disproportionate experience of females however the CPS recognises the experience of male victims and its distressing impact on them.

This paper reaffirms our commitment to male victims of these crimes. It outlines the barriers to reporting, explores gender myths and stereotypes, challenges perceptions of abuse and explains the differences in types or patterns of abuse experienced by men and boys.

### CPS commitments to male victims

#### The CPS will:

- Provide information for our prosecutors to help challenge myths and stereotypes; understand the experience of male victims within the criminal justice system and provide details of support services for male victims;
- Explore issues that may arise because of multiple forms of discrimination such as that faced by BAME or LGBT victims;
- Ensure all relevant policies, guidance, training and case studies for prosecutors contain details on the experience of male victims and outline any unique barriers to reporting;
- Work with NGOs and Communications to consider ways to dispel societal myths, especially around masculinity, as well as respond to media issues;
- Involve more national men's groups in the scrutiny of CPS policies, guidance and training and within the VAWG External Consultation Group;
- Establish a stakeholder forum on child sexual abuse to specifically ensure that work expressly includes boys as well as girls;
- Reflect the male experience of these crimes, in relevant media communications, by working closely with men's groups, to increase confidence in reporting; and
- Provide data on male victims where possible and, with our partners, strive to improve the gender and relationship breakdown of CPS relevant data.

**The CPS recognises: *There are barriers to male victims reporting such crimes. This list is not intended to be exhaustive but provides examples of where barriers may exist. They may not apply to all male victims and likewise we acknowledge there may be other barriers experienced by individual victims.***

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<sup>1</sup>Male victims include heterosexual, gay and transgender men and boys.

First, there are some barriers to reporting crimes that are experienced by all victims, irrespective of gender. These are:

Fear of not being believed; feelings of shame or guilt; the societal trivialisation of some abuse; hesitancy to report because of perpetrator's mental health issues or their childhood abuse; immigration status; not recognising the situation as abusive; belief that such abuse is acceptable in some cultures; fear of losing contact with their children; threats by the perpetrator to harm family, pets or friends; not knowing who to report crimes to; fear of children being taken into care; recriminations from the wider community; and, pressure from family and friends to stay in their relationship.

Second, there are specific barriers for male victims, which have an impact on reporting these crimes. The way society dictates how individuals should behave, according to their gender, can result in abuse being trivialised, normalised and misunderstood. Many of the barriers are based on gender stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, sexist or homophobic assumptions, for example:

Male victims may feel their masculinity will be diminished if they report domestic abuse by a woman; or their sexuality will be questioned if they report rape by a man; or if they are young they will be perceived as being initiated into sexual activity by a woman, rather than being recognised as a victim of child sexual abuse because societal norms suggest all males wish to be sexually active from a young age.

**Types, patterns and context of male abuse:** There are also specific types, patterns or context of abuse for male victims that differ from female victims, such as:

- In cases of child sexual abuse, boys are more likely to be abused by authority figures or people outside the family; whereas girls are more likely to face familial sexual abuse or by someone more closely known to them;<sup>2</sup>
- The disclosure rates of abuse for boys of child sexual abuse peaks at age 13; whereas for girls is at age 16;<sup>3</sup>
- Ridiculing of men's masculinity plays a large role in many men fearing reporting abuse;
- Domestic abuse is under-reported by all victims, but with a lower proportion of men reporting it to the police than women;
- Although most domestic abuse is perpetrated by men, it is recognised that men are also victims of domestic abuse both as victims of female perpetrators and in same sex relationships – assumptions should not be made;
- Larger numbers of men report sexual abuse after attending chemsex parties; and
- In forced marriage and honour-based violence cases, male victims are often targeted when they are blamed for the behaviour of women, who are perceived as bringing shame to their family, culture or community; they individually are not complying with expected 'masculinity' behaviours; they are, or are thought to be, gay or are males with disabilities.

**Summary:** Progress against the commitments outlined above will be carefully reviewed in the Annual VAWG Crime Reports and bi-annual VAWG Assurance exercises. The CPS will continue to ensure it delivers an appropriate level of support to male victims and adheres to its values to:

- Treat everyone with respect;
- Be independent and fair;
- Be honest and open; and
- Behave professionally and strive for excellence.

The VAWG strategy includes the most up-to-date and relevant gender data from England and Wales. This position paper is part of the overall VAWG strategy.

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<sup>2</sup>Andrea Kohn Maikovich-Fong and Sara R. Jaffee, 2010, 'Sex Differences in Childhood Sexual Abuse Characteristics and Victims' Emotional and Behavioural Problems: Findings from a national Sample of Youth', *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 34.6 (June 2010)

<sup>3</sup>Police data on the age at report/discovery in Children's Commissioner for England, *Protecting Children From Harm: A Critical Assessment of Child Abuse in the Family Network in England and Priorities for Action* (London: Children's Commissioner for England, 2015)