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Honorary Patrons – Lord Cotter, Ian McNicholl, John Penrose MP, Sara Westle and Erin Pizzey

Sir Andrew Dilnot
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority
1 Drummond Gate
London
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cc
John Pullinger, the National Statistician
Ed Humpherson, the Director General of Regulation

24 June 2015

Dear Sir Andrew Dilnot

Domestic Abuse Statistics and Male Victims

I am writing on behalf of the ManKind Initiative, a national charity that supports male victims of domestic abuse and one that believes all victims of this crime are supported based on their need and risk not their gender. This is in line with crime, domestic abuse and equalities legislation in the UK.

The charity noted with some concern recent reports¹ in the media that Professor Sylvia Walby, professor of sociology at Lancaster University, and, representatives from Women's Aid charity had met you in early June 2015. This was with regard to how the Office for National Statistics (ONS) measures domestic abuse incidents.

We would strongly urge that even in the event of the statistical measures in this area are reviewed, the primary statistical report and research for intimate partner violence remains the annual publication of the "Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences". For 2013/14, these figures were published in February 2015 and the specific section is Chapter 4².

Victim proportions: female and male

The charity believes that these figures provide enhanced transparency and more consistent picture of the pattern of domestic abuse (and in particular partner abuse) in the UK than figures reported by police forces.

In general and consistently over more time, this research shows that proportionally for every victims of partner abuse, two will be female and one will be male. This contrasts with the statistics from English and Welsh Police forces³ that show that only one in five victims who report to them are male. This disparity can be explained partly by the fact that only 10% of male victims of partner abuse, as opposed to 27% of female victims, inform the police they are victims.

This is reported in Chapter 4 of the Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2012/13⁴ and highlights the far higher level of under-reporting by male victims. This therefore translates into the gap between the anonymous ONS surveys^{2,4} and the police reported figures³. By deduction by just using police force figures alone, this would also further translate into fewer overall volumes of incidents being reported for male victims. As volumes of incidents are a fundamental premise of Professor Walby's research this may have the knock on affect of further under-reporting the true level of male victimhood. I have been unable to ascertain whether Professor's Walby's research takes into account male victim under-reporting.

Of further concern is that Chapter 4 of the Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2012/13⁴ (and previous years) does highlight the number of incidents that women and men suffer: 8% of men who had been victims of partner abuse in 2012/13 had endured six or more incidents that year, as did 13% of female victims. This means that the emotive point made by missing 'incidents' in the media coverage is indeed recognised by the ONS.

Numbers of people not numbers of incidents

The charity's view is that the numbers of victims of domestic/partner abuse and the statistics produced in Chapter 4 of the Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences^{2,4} must continue to be the primary statistical report and research for this area of crime. These figures have been consistent for over a decade and because of the anonymised nature of the survey, we feel they more accurately portray the level of partner abuse in the UK. It is the experience of the charity that many men do not report to the police because they fear (wrongly) they will not be believed and/or they feel a sense of shame in doing so. Being able to report anonymously means these barriers are removed to the same extent which is why maintaining this report is so vital.

I cannot understand the aims and objectives for the accusation that the statistics collected by the Office for National Statistics are 'fundamentally flawed' when in the view of the charity they give a clear picture of domestic/partner abuse in the UK over the long-term. Consequently, it is the view of the charity that this is not a fair accusation to make and one we do not support.

The article on this matter in the Telegraph¹ by the Chief Executive of Women's Aid would suggest this campaign and accusation could be politically and ideologically motivated and an attempt to marginalise the statistical recognition of male victims. This marginalisation would

cease with immediate effect the growing realisation in this country that both women and men are victims of domestic/partner abuse. Our ambassador and survivor of domestic abuse, Ian McNicholl, has set out his view in a subsequent Telegraph⁵ article which you may find of interest in setting out why numbers of people is more important than the numbers of incidents.

In conclusion, we do not believe that the Office for National Statistics' reporting of domestic/partner violence is inaccurate and that we would urge you to ensure the numbers of victims of intimate partner violence remains the key indicator of domestic/partner abuse in the UK.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely

Mark Brooks

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- 1: Domestic abuse could not be further from gender neutral. Wake up Britain (Polly Neate, CEO Women's Aid: Telegraph - 11 June 2015, <http://bit.ly/1e29eH3>)
- 2: Crime Statistics, Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2013/14: Published by the Office for National Statistics (12 February 2015)
- 3: ManKind Initiative: FOI statistics on the gender breakdown of victims reporting to English and Welsh Police forces (January 2012 to June 2014) - <https://mankindnews.wordpress.com/2015/01/26/male-victims-police/>
- 4: Crime Statistics, Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2012/13: Published by the Office for National Statistics (13 February 2014)
- 5: We need to help victims of domestic abuse, whatever their gender (Ian McNicholl, ambassador ManKind Initiative: Telegraph 22 June 2015,- <http://bit.ly/1THRHVh>)