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Press Release
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Charity for male victims heralds a new era as domestic abuse no longer “has to be seen to be believed”

The Mankind Initiative, a charity supporting male victims, has heralded the implementation of new laws¹ on 29 December 2015 on coercive and controlling behaviour as a new era in the fight against domestic abuse. Every year, 700,000 men² state they have suffered domestic abuse, one in six will do so in their lifetime and 23 men in 2013/14 (two per month) were killed by their partner or ex-partner.

The charity believes the change will close the “believability gap” for the victims making it easier for them to both seek help and get help when there are no physical signs of domestic abuse. It will also help to reduce the threatened denial of child contact fathers face, the threat of false allegations and also better recognise forced marriage/honour based abuse where the man is the victim.

While male victims of domestic abuse will be victims of both physical violence and coercive/controlling behaviour at the same time, many report to the charity’s helpline³ that the abuse only escalated to violence when they tried to escape from the coercion/control. In effect, there appears a pattern of one leading to the other. This is evidenced by the British Crime Survey which reports of those men suffering from partner abuse each year, 64% suffer from non-physical partner abuse compared to 43% suffering from force⁴.

Mark Brooks, chairman of the ManKind Initiative, said: “This new law heralds a new era for male victims of domestic abuse. They are more likely to be believed, more likely to get help and more likely to escape.

“For far too long, domestic abuse has literally been a case of needing ‘to be seen to be believed’. Thankfully now the damaging psychological, emotional and financial abuse victims suffer will be also be recognised and taken into account.”

The charity welcomes the new law specifically because:

- It closes the “believability gap” many male victims suffer from especially when there are no physical aspects of domestic abuse. Closing the gap makes it easier for men to be believed, and feel they are, when seeking help from organisations such as the police, councils and the health service, as well as from friends, family and employers.
- It recognises the threat many fathers who are victims face if they tell anyone or try to escape. The charity believes the continual and repeated use of withholding parental contact despite contact orders being issued and agreed in the Family Law Courts is a form of controlling behaviour.
- The use and threatened use of false allegations of domestic abuse.
- Improved recognition that means men as well as women, are victims of forced marriage and honor based abuse.
- Better training for police, councils and the health service on supporting male victims.

These views were set out in the charity’s submission⁵ to the Home Office consultation.

The charity remains disappointed that the Home Office guidance⁶ on implementing this law continues to recognise domestic abuse as a gendered crime “underpinned by wider societal gender inequality” as it diminishes the recognition and understanding of male victims of domestic abuse. This continues to relegate them to second class victims and means not all victims are recognised equally.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1 Serious Crime Act 2015 (Section 76 and 77):
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/9/section/76/enacted>

- 2 ONS BCS Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences 2013/14:

<http://bit.ly/1BNXig1>

Table 4.01 and 4.04 on Appendix Table: <http://bit.ly/1xBrIHG>

30 key facts on male victims of domestic abuse: <http://bit.ly/1R3abyG>

3. The helpline receives 1,400 telephone calls every year from male victims or concerned friends, family (often mothers and sisters) and work colleagues. We also receive 200 calls from the police, councils, support services and the legal profession.

- 4 ONS BCS Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences 2013/14:

<http://bit.ly/1BNXig1>; Table 4.01 <http://bit.ly/1xBrIHG>

2.8% of men suffered from partner abuse in 2013/14 with 1.8% suffering (65%) from non-physical abuse and 1.2% (43%) from force. The figures are more than 100% because many men will suffer from both.

- 5 ManKind Initiative submission: <http://bit.ly/1YMjV0Y>

- 6 Home Office Guidance: <http://bit.ly/1HPVrlh> (para 20-22)

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