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Registered Charity No. 1089547 – Company Registration No. 3869893

Honorary Patrons – Lord Cotter, Ann and Peter Goodchild, Ian McNicholl, John Penrose MP and Sara Westle

Response: Consultation on housing costs for sheltered and extra care accommodation - **Short-term and transitional support for domestic abuse victims**

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## (A) Executive Summary

1. The ManKind Initiative does not agree with the Government's proposals to hand over control of the funding, commissioning and planning of **short-term and transitional support for domestic abuse victims** to local authorities for and to rely on them to arrange reciprocal agreements with neighbouring local authorities for 'out of area' vulnerable adults (victims of domestic abuse).
2. Our view is that this will lead to the closure of the already scant supported emergency housing (refuge and safe house) provision for male victims (and their children) of domestic abuse and will leave these vulnerable men (and their children) at a higher risk - making their lives further unsafe. Alternatively 'no local connection' male victims and their children will be turned away even if there are spaces available. There are currently only 24 organisations providing 99 spaces (28 dedicated and 71 non-dedicated) for male victims across the UK (only 74 spaces in England).
3. The Government's Violence against Women and Girls Strategy (which include male victims of domestic abuse) sets out that no victim of abuse is turned away from the support they need. This policy will not be adhered to if these proposals are agreed to.

We support charities that advocate and provide services to female victims (and their children) of domestic abuse in their opposition to this change

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## (B) Background

### About the ManKind Initiative

- 4 This response is from the ManKind Initiative, the first national charity (based in Taunton) in Britain (established in 2001) to support male victims of domestic abuse. It has been at the forefront of providing services, support and campaigning for male victims ensuring that they (and their children) receive the support and recognition they need. The charity receives no state funding for its helpline or other services.
5. The charity provides a national helpline, website and IDVA drop-in service. It also supports the male victim domestic abuse sector through its CPD accredited training, membership of a number of Government/stakeholder committees and its annual national conference. Alongside Survivors Manchester, it worked with the Crown Prosecution Service on the first-ever statement in the world by a prosecuting authority that sets out how it will support male victims of VAWG crimes.
6. As part of its work, it refers male victims (or agencies supporting them) to the supported housing (refuges and safe houses) available across the whole of the UK. It also contacts every provider on a Monday morning to find out what spaces are available to men and then circulates, free of charge, a list to a wide range of organisations who wish to receive this list. **No other organisation in the UK provides this service and it is funded by public donations.**

### Supported Housing in the UK for male victims and their children

7. Office for National Statistics figures<sup>1</sup> for 2015/16 show that 700,000 men (1.3 million women) were victims of domestic abuse and 450,000 (891,000 women) are victims of partner abuse. 36% of male victims<sup>2</sup> are living in a household with children and another adult.

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<sup>1</sup> ONS BCS Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences 2015/16 <http://bit.ly/2kgolyb>: Table 4.01

<sup>2</sup> ONS BCS Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences 2014/15 <http://bit.ly/1p8CGl0> (table 4.11)

8. The refuge and safe house provision<sup>3</sup> for male victims across the UK (including England) and England separately is:

	Refuge/Safe House Providers	Dedicated spaces for men	Non-dedicated spaces for men	Total
<b>UK including England</b>	24	28	71	99
<b>England only</b>	17	11	63	74

9. Research (see figure 1 below) from four providers<sup>4</sup> of refuge and safe house support (two from England, one in Scotland and one in Wales) show that in 2017, they supported 8 men from their local authority area and 32 from outside ('out of area'). The average distance 'out of area' men had to travel (some had children with them) was 168 miles (by road) for the 24 whose original location was recorded by the provider.
10. Of the two providers from England, the average mileage male victims had to travel to their spaces was 294 miles (to Cornwall) and 117 miles (East Lancashire).
11. 19 men from England who had to travel outside of their local authority area to receive supported housing support included one man and his children having to travel to Scotland from the East Midlands and six men having to travel from England to refuges/safe houses in Wales.

**Figure 1: Refuge/Safe House occupants (2017)**

Location of Refuge/Safe House***	Local Authority	Outside of Local Authority - no local connection	Home region – no local connection (number of men)	Average miles* between town and refuge/safe house – no local connection
South West	3	12	East Midlands (4) Eastern (1) South East (2) Non-recorded (5)	294
North West	1	7	North West (2) Y&H (1) West Midlands (1) Wales (2) South East (1)	117
Wales	4	11	East Midlands (1) North West (1) South East (1) South West (1)	110

<sup>3</sup> ManKind Initiative data

<sup>4</sup> Information provided to ManKind Initiative by four providers

			West Midlands (2) Wales (2) International (1)** Non-recorded (2)	
Scotland	0	2	Scotland non-central (1) East Midlands (1)	161
<b>Total</b>	8	32		168 miles average

\*By road and figures not include those who are unknown

\*\* Classed as a non-recorded but this is a British territory

\*\*\* Locations are within this region and distances are based on the town/city of the organisation

- 12 What these figures show is that there is an abject lack of support by local authorities to support men in their communities either by provision locally or importantly by ensuring they have reciprocal agreements with neighbouring or near authorities. The fact that no support is available for these men (including those with children) in this way shows the majority of local authorities are disregarding their duties under the Care Act (2014), Housing Act (1996) and Equality Act (2010) because the victims of the domestic abuse are male not because of risk or need.
13. There are parts of England where there is no supported housing (refuge or safe house) available including London, the South East, East Anglia, the North East and parts of the East Midlands. In London, the Mayor of London, London Boroughs and the supported housing sector (g15 group) have shown no interest in providing supported housing (refuge or safe house) for male victims.
14. Anecdotally, in the autumn the charity received a call from the social services department in a North East London borough trying to help a blind male victim wanting to find out what supported/emergency support was available anywhere in London. When the charity stated what support was being made available by the local authority the response was that the housing department could not provide any support even though it was their statutory duty to do so. So the social services department were ringing every other London borough themselves.
15. Lastly with regard to statistics, in a Salvation Army report<sup>5</sup> conducted in 2014, 498 people were accommodated in their hostels due to domestic violence, 205 of those were men and 293 were women. Crisis report<sup>6</sup> that 13% of men sleeping rough are doing so because of partner abuse. Whilst it is not a competition between male and female victims and the support services, it should be noted that there are 269 refuge service providers in England, providing 3,649 bed spaces across the country and

<sup>5</sup> Reasons people left their last settled home 2014 data; The Salvation Army

<sup>6</sup> Crisis: A Nation Apart (2014)

sanctuary for many of the 12,000 women and 12,000 children who are forced to flee their homes each year due to domestic violence.<sup>7</sup>

16. There is a common myth that male victims do not need emergency/support housing, however, the supported housing provision available for men in the UK is normally full all of the time (based on the weekly calls to all providers that the charity undertakes and that referrals are constantly turned down. There is also an erroneous assumption that **all** men have the financial means to provide themselves with alternative accommodation (including with their children) – there is no evidence to prove this.
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### **(C) Response (Short-term and transitional support)**

17. Our response focusses on the issue of short-term and transitional support and we do not agree with the proposal for this support to be funded, commissioned and planned for in the future by local authorities.
18. We believe the proposals are unsafe for male victims and their children, thereby placing them under even greater risk. We believe that the current system whereby the housing benefit is paid directly via the individual to the supported housing provider must remain in place.
19. As shown by the statistics in paragraphs 7-15 there is such a lack of supported housing available for male victims of domestic abuse and their children and an embedded unwillingness of the large majority of local authorities to provide support for men in this situation. This means men are having to travel very long distances to find emergency accommodation and are classed as ‘no local connection’. Whilst it is important that men like women can leave their area – the distances travelled are extreme for many.
20. We have no confidence therefore that the large majority of local authorities will seek to ensure they will recognise let alone plan or commission short-term and transitional support for ‘no local connection’ male victims of domestic abuse in need of this type of housing. This also means therefore they will not plan to have reciprocal agreements with neighbouring authorities to support these male victims.
21. The result will be those few supported housing places are currently available for men will likely close or they will have to turn ‘no local connection’ men away even if they

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmcomloc/867/86707.htm#\\_idTextAnchor023](https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmcomloc/867/86707.htm#_idTextAnchor023)

have spaces – leaving these vulnerable men and their children at greater risk. They will rely on the goodwill of those local authorities who provide support with local social landlords and charities to provide support for ‘no local connection’ male victims – who make up the vast majority of people these refuges/safe houses support. There will no longer be funding for them.

22. It is difficult to see on a practical basis how for example the local authority in Cornwall (covering the refuge/safe house for male victims) will arrange a long-term reciprocal arrangement with a local authority in the East Midlands (especially when the latter local authority is unwilling to recognise to the need to support male victims and their children with this housing support in the first place). The same can be said in Wales (covered by different housing funding arrangements through devolution) could continue to support a male victim from the South East of England which is the situation they do now.
23. In addition to the practical issues and the embedded negative attitudes attributed by the majority of local authorities towards the need for emergency housing support for male victims, these new rules do not understand the nature of domestic abuse. Risk and safety of individuals should not be reliant on the arbitrary geography of local authority boundaries and the willingness of local authorities to make reciprocal arrangements.
24. When a victim (female or male) needs to escape, they often have to leave the area they live in for their own (and their children’s) safety. Housing benefit being assigned to the individual and then paid to the social landlord and/or charity providing the emergency housing support means they are able to escape to an area of safety without the reliance of reciprocal agreements between local authorities. At the time of flight they are in crisis, there is no time for them to have to rely on the machinations of these types of agreements and whether they are in place. If an agreement is not in place, where are victims supposed to flee to? **If they have to stay in their local area or not be able to flee at all, this places them at increased risk and vulnerability – it is unsafe.**

**23 January 2018**