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Press Release

Charity raises concern that Home Affairs Committee view on domestic abuse will marginalise male victims

Following the Home Affairs Committee report into Domestic Abuse (published today) whilst the ManKind Initiative (a national charity that supports male victims of domestic abuse) supports most of the recommendations, it does not support renaming the Bill and the title of the Commissioner to being the Violence against Women and Girls and Domestic Abuse Bill/Commissioner.

This is because it will continue to minimise the lived experience of male victims (both in heterosexual and in same-sex relations), minimise attention on the need for greater support and awareness for this group of victims, and, make it harder to change societal and statutory sector stereotypes that domestic abuse does not affect men.

The charity is clear that more support is needed for women, a policy and view it has always held. However naming the bill and the title of the Commissioner in this way is not inclusive as inevitably will lead the narrative on domestic abuse to focus primarily on the gender of victims not the individual needs of victims. Domestic abuse should not be seen as a competition between all genders and all victims should be viewed and treated equally.

The charity supports the Committee's view on national refuge funding (as long as that includes male victims) and a new stalkers register.

Dr Liz Bates, Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Cumbria and Trustee of the ManKind Initiative, said: "I am disappointed that the committee has recommended continuing to frame domestic abuse as a gendered crime as it has the effect of minimising the experiences of men and people in same-sex relationships. Whilst the definition is gender neutral, the language used around the wider policy and strategy needs to be much more inclusive.

"The proposed name of the bill and the belief that the underlying cause of domestic abuse is gender inequality, does not reflect the complexity of what leads people to be violent in relationships. Furthermore, it will impact on men and women in same-sex relationships recognising and identifying as abuse victims.

“My work with male victims of domestic abuse has highlighted that there are indeed many barriers that exist to help-seeking or reporting their experiences. One such barrier is feeling as though services and support organisations often are either not appropriate for men or commonly not available which is inevitable when the crime is framed as gendered. The domestic abuse bill must be a chance to address outdated stereotypes about the nature of this type of violence, and approach tackling the issue in a much more inclusive way”.

Neither the ManKind Initiative nor Dr Liz Bates were called as witnesses to the Home Affairs inquiry.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1. The following submissions to the inquiry were made:

The ManKind Initiative

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/domestic-abuse/written/86407.pdf>

Dr Liz Bates:

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/domestic-abuse/written/86401.pdf>

2. Contacts

Journalists requiring further information please Mark Brooks on 07834 452357 chairman@mankind.org.uk or Dr Liz Bates on 07921 525135 elizabeth.bates@cumbria.ac.uk or Ian McNicholl (domestic abuse survivor and charity ambassador) on 07599 829757 (

3. About the ManKind Initiative

The ManKind Initiative (www.mankind.org.uk), is a national charity which runs a help-line, providing a listening service, information and signposting service for male victims of domestic abuse and domestic violence. The help-line number is 01823 334244 (weekdays 10am-4pm). It received 1,800 calls from male victims (or from people on behalf of victims – often mothers and sisters) every year.

4. Statistics

Since the age of 16, an estimated 1.6 million men in this country have been victims of partner abuse in the country (450,000 per year). In 2016/17, 13 men died at the hands of their partner or ex-partner. 1 in 6 men will be a victim of domestic abuse in their lifetime.

A full range of statistics on male victims can be found on the ManKind Initiative website here:

<https://www.mankind.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/35-Key-Facts-Male-Victims-March-2018-1.pdf>

Men or their friends/families can call 01823 334244 or www.mankind.org.uk

Flook House, Belvedere Road, Taunton, TA1 1BT

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