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Honorary Patrons – Lord Cotter, John Penrose MP, Paul Chivers, Sara Westle and Ann Goodchild

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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Consultation: Support for victims of domestic abuse in safe accommodation</b></p>
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**(A) About the ManKind Initiative**

- 1 The ManKind Initiative is a national charity (based in Taunton), established by both men and women and was the first charity (established in 2001) in Great Britain to support male victims of domestic abuse and their children. We are gender inclusive in our approach so whilst we are a service provider for men, we want all female victims (and their children) to escape too so do not want services or funding switched from male to female victims.
- 2 We provide a range of services directly to men such as a national helpline and support other organisations through our accredited training and national conference. We also hold the only national directory of services for male victims. We have received funding through HM Treasury to train all Armed Forces welfare staff and through the Home Office to train police forces, create national service standards and an online service portal.
3. We produce a live list every Monday of all the available refuge/safe house places for male victims in the UK which we share with agencies across the UK.
4. The charity is a member of a number of national and regional stakeholder bodies and government departments. The charity was (alongside Survivors Manchester) the chief instigator of both the Crown Prosecution Service and Home Office Male Victims Standards.

**(B) Statistics**

5. The core statistics relevant to this consultation with regard to male victims of domestic abuse and accommodation-based services are:

- In 2017/18, there were 695,000 male victims and 1.32 million female victims (a ratio of 1:2)<sup>1</sup>
- In 2017, 159,000 men reported to English and Welsh police forces stating they were a victim of domestic abuse as did 480,000 women. 24% of all victims who report to the police are male<sup>2</sup>
- Only 5% of cases (4,336) discussed at MARACs were based on a male victim<sup>3</sup>
- There are 145 spaces in refuges or safe houses for male victims of domestic abuse in the UK run by 29 organisations. Of these spaces, only 34 are dedicated to male victims<sup>4</sup>
- A snap shot review in 26 March 2018 for the Office of National Statistics showed that of the 102 places available for male victims at that time, there were only 10 spaces anywhere in the UK. Further research of four refuge providers in January 2018 showed men were travelling an average of 160 miles to access safe accommodation<sup>5</sup>
- According to Crisis' 2014 Nations Apart research they found that 61% of homeless females and 16% of homeless males had experienced violence and/or abuse from a partner. Given that 87% of people who are homeless are male this means that for every 1,000 homeless people, 132 men and 104 women have been made homeless after experiencing domestic abuse from a partner<sup>6</sup>
- St Mungo's charity has stated that a number of their homeless male clients in London are victims of domestic abuse.
- There are further reports and studies on male victims and the support they receive. I would recommend engaging with Dr Elizabeth Bates, Dr Ben Hine and Dr Sarah Wallace who are the UK's leading academics in the field.

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<sup>1</sup> ONS domestic abuse: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales: year ending March 2018  
<https://bit.ly/2FY8UYc> Table 1)

<sup>2</sup> FOI requests to 43 police forces (The ManKind Initiative)

<sup>3</sup> SafeLives Insights data published Domestic abuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2018 - <https://bit.ly/2Rbq1Mk>  
(Appendix Tables - <https://bit.ly/2HEEKxW> – Table 69)

<sup>4</sup> The ManKind Initiative

<sup>5</sup> The ManKind Initiative

<sup>6</sup> A Safe Home: Breaking the link between domestic abuse and homelessness: <https://bit.ly/30TyhWz>

## **(B) Summary Position**

The points below are overarching, whilst the section after is more direct regarding the questions in Annex A.

6. The charity is very supportive of the consultation and the thrust of the Government's proposals especially in placing a Statutory Duty on ensuring there is suitable accommodation-based support for all victims. The charity has also submitted information via the online questionnaire.
7. Due to the insufficiency of refuges/safe houses in the UK for men, including in many areas where there is none available (especially London, the South East and East of England). This leaves these victims and their children at risk as well as leading to likely breaches in legislation (Care Act 2014, Equalities Act 2010 and Housing Act 1996). We believe that:

- There must be a requirement on local authorities and Police and Crime Commissioners, applied by the Government, to ensure there is a network of refuges/safe houses available for male victims and their children in each region.

Alongside the availability, there must be arrangements for these properties to take victims from out of area and reciprocal arrangements with bordering counties. Commissioners should work with charities, commissioned services and housing associations/bodies within each region to create this network and ascertain demand.

Where those spaces are safe houses accessible to either men or women the prioritisation method must be risk led and equitable. Male victims and their children must also be able to access equivalent support to female victims while in refuge / safe house accommodation. This includes access to group work and other therapies that are currently provided for female victims while they are in refuge / safe house.

- Research needs to be undertaken on the experiences and need for refuge/safe houses for male victims and their children including research with those who already provide them alongside current and previous clients input. The charity has a list of academics who are qualified to carry out this research.
- Particular consideration needs to be given to those victims, both male and female, who are on spousal visas with no recourse to public funding.

8. The changes that the charity requests are made include:

- That male victims are clearly listed on all occasions on the list of marginalised, complex needs and under-represented groups with Protected Characteristics alongside LGBT+, Disabled and BAME victims, and, their children. This will give a clear signal that services including accommodation-based services have to be available for male victims. This is in line with an inclusive, modern and gender-informed approach to domestic abuse, in line with the Domestic Abuse Bill and the Home Office statement on Male Victims.
- The MHCLG published its Priorities for Domestic Abuse Services in 2016 and updated these in July 2018. The consultation states “*The Priorities are clear that local areas should respond to the needs of all domestic abuse victims, including those from isolated and/or marginalised communities, those with complex needs, BAME, LGBT, disabled and **male victims** and older people.*”

However, the 2018 priorities as set out in Annex B of the consultation, **does not mention male victims** at all in the list of diverse groups that local authorities should be ensuring they respond to. It is vital that male victims are specifically included in any revised Priorities for Domestic Abuse Services list. There are a number of reasons but the key is that there is a cognitive/unconscious/societal bias in recognising male victims and therefore their inclusion will significantly help in overcoming this.

9. It is a national scandal that there are so few safe house/refuges places for male victims (see statistics section) leaving them and their children vulnerable. Due to the inter-sectional nature of domestic abuse, this includes LGBT+, disabled and BAME men (the latter includes those fleeing from forced marriage and ‘so-called’ Honour Based Violence). There are no places in large parts of the UK (including London) and many men have to travel hundreds of miles to find a place, sleep on the streets (see Crisis figures in statistics section) or stay in abusive relationships because of it. Local authorities are not taking the particular issue seriously and those who are unable or unwilling to provide support (they can of course, in partnership with other authorities) are likely to be in breach of the Care Act 2014, Equality Act 2010 and Housing Act 1996.
10. There continues to be a structural problem in the signposting, referral and assessment of male victims given that only 5% of those referred to MARACs and supported by local commissioned services are male (often this 5% figure is wrongly used as a proxy for the number of male victims or high risk victims). This is against a backdrop of statistics from the ONS and police force showing the actual victim population is far higher (34% and 24% respectively). The inclusion of male victims throughout the Priorities for Domestic Abuse and the outcome of this consultation will play a strong and vital role in ensuring more male victims and their children are adequately supported.

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**(C) Annex A: Good practice of locally delivered support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation-based services: A call for evidence.**

Qi. What does good partnership working in the delivery of support in accommodation-based domestic abuse services look like? Please provide examples from your local area.

11. Good partnership working includes those from the voluntary sector as well as statutory sector commissioners and commissioned services. It must also include independent partners from the voluntary sector who are not commissioned to provide a service and therefore are able to give an independent voice. Where requested, appropriate individuals (for instance, survivors) should be able to sit on the panel. This should be seriously considered. In addition, this must include a partner who provides support to male victims (either as their main activity or as part of their activity) to ensure the male victim voice is heard.
12. This approach has worked in a number of areas. So far, The Mankind Initiative sits on a number of regional boards included in Avon & Somerset, the CPS South West and Metropolitan Police. This has improved their service and response to male victims.

Qii what does a good needs assessment for support for victims of domestic abuse and their children look like? Please provide examples from your local area.

13. A good needs assessment will not rely solely on MARAC data to determine level of need. This is especially the case for male victims where it is arbitrarily used as a proxy of the number of male victims within a population. The numbers referred to MARAC are subject to a number of societal and structural filters including:
  - male victims not reporting – nearly 50% do not so are not in the ‘system’
  - men not knowing there are services for them
  - services not referring/assessing them –including the police and GPs to services
  - services (especially the police) under recording the level of harm/risk of domestic abuse to a man)
  - MARACs being reluctant to look at cases involving male victims and them not being referred to them (one police officer we spoke to in July said she had to argue for weeks for a male to be considered at a

MARAC whilst a couple of females who were less at risk she had no problem in them being referred).

14. However, there are additional sources including ONS data which will reveal the victim population (visible and hidden) and the local police force figures. In addition, there are quantitative sources such as local solicitors, homeless and mental health charities who should be asked for information.

An example of this is when we have given training to some local authorities and explained that on average one in every four victims who have reported to their local police force are male, they are very surprised and unaware – even though they should know this figure when commissioning and assessing services!

15. In addition, if there is an existing service to draw from, needs assessments should be based not only on those who were processed/supported through the service, but also on those who were turned away and why this was (that is, not enough capacity, not high enough “need” etc).

Qiii. What does a good local Domestic Abuse Strategy look like? Please provide examples from your local area.

16. A good strategy reflects the needs of all victims and is fundamentally based on individual need and risk. That has to be the primary basis for any strategy.
17. Whilst the Government continues to include male victims under the policy and strategic umbrella of “VAWG” (we support, as do many other charities, a parallel “VAWG” strategy for men and boys) - any strategy must explicitly state that it covers male victims, that their needs (and of their children) must be supported and that there must be commissioned services for male victims.

This also includes access to accommodation-based support whether locally or in neighbouring communities and authorities.

This is not just to comply with the statutory framework set out in the consultation and also the Priorities for Domestic Abuse Services and to ensure compliance with legislation especially the Care Act 2014, Equality Act 2010, Housing Act 1996 and the coming Domestic Abuse Act.

Qiv In a wider financial context, how are you maximising your funding? Please provide examples from your local area.

18. Pooling of resources is vital to enhance services and the role of the Police and Crime Commissioner and local Clinical Commissioning Groups are vital to help fund better and more varied support.
19. The concern on accommodation-based support is that the local authorities (especially Tier 1 ) will only focus on their geographical area when they should be more active in seeking partnerships with other neighbouring Tier 1 authorities to create a regional network of accommodation-based services. This would:
- protect against funding pressures
  - avoid voids in one area and oversubscription in another (and then the situation switching a few weeks later)
  - avoid a postcode lottery
  - increase the availability to support the needs for some victims to be housed away from their local area for safety reason
  - create an increase in accommodation-based support for male victims.

In London for example, there are no places for male victims and their children, This may be because each Tier 2 authority only looks at demand in their particular area and not across neighbouring authorities so they believe there is only very intermittent demand rather than a constant demand so they do not provide for it at all. However, across four local authorities (for example, Greenwich, Lewisham, Bexley and Bromley) there may be a constant demand for one safe house covering male victims (and their children) from all four boroughs. However the local authorities do not talk to each other or are too focussed on what happened within their own boundaries to think more broadly and collegiately.

Qv What does good monitoring and evaluation of support for victims of domestic abuse in accommodation-based services look like? Please provide examples from your local area.

20. Good monitoring should track not just those who have made contact and those who have engaged with the service but also those who have not (included being turned away) and why that was.

It should also include the services delivered, those who entered, completed, attrition rates, and customer satisfaction rates. Satisfaction rates could be garnered through exit interview style or online anonymous form.

What would be really helpful is for local services to access the information as currently it is usually held at commissioner level and not released citing commercial confidentiality.

Qvi. What should a robust report on the delivery of support in accommodation-based services include? Please provide examples from your local area.

21. A robust report must include a number of factors for those who are supported:

- general demographic data (age, gender, children, housing type they left, job status)
- types of domestic abuse (what they have suffered from, for how long and who from)
- referral pathways (how they were referred and who by) and support offered
- geographic location (where they have come from) – this is vital for analysis
- what the eventual outcome is of the support provided

22. A robust report must also include those **who are not** supported:

- general demographic data (age, gender, children, housing type they left, job status)
- types of domestic abuse (what they have suffered from, for how long and who from)
- referral pathways (how they were referred and who by) and support offered
- geographic location (where they have come from) – this is vital for analysis
- why was support not provided

Qvii. What do we need to know to help local areas ensure that all victims and their children receive the support they need when they need it?

23. Generally, the government needs to know that whilst services in general for male victims are becoming more available they are still patchy both in the geographical areas but also the type of service and resources available.

This is why ensuring that men (and their children) are explicitly included in any guidance and refreshed Priorities for Domestic Abuse Services list of under-represented, complex needs and marginalised groups. Local authorities and others have to be explicitly 'guided' and reminded that they have a statutory duty to support male victims, else there is a risk they continue to be overlooked.

24. In terms of examples of good provision:

- Cornwall Women's Refuge Trust. They run excellent services for women and children and in addition have a refuge for men and their children with an



annexe that can be used for people fleeing honour based violence or transgender victims.

- Karma Nirvana who has been providing honour based violence services for females and males for many years now. They are the leaders in their fields.
  - Safe Net who provides services (included accommodation-based services) for men and women in Lancashire play an important regional role in not only providing inclusive services but also in their inclusive partnership work with other service providers and commissioners. .
25. In terms of the type of service provision, some areas have refuges (1 property, multiple rooms with shared kitchen and living spaces) while others have gone to a safe house model (anonymous property in the community) as this gives them more flexibility. These safe houses can be for men or women, whoever is in need at the time the property is available.

While some argue that refuges are better because of the higher level of support and the camaraderie, others find the safe houses are more reflective of real life and help people to acclimatise better to allow them to move on.

Safe houses have support that is either available by telephone or possibly a support worker meeting once per week. Safe houses can also allow a woman fleeing with a teenage son to access safe accommodation (we have heard that some female refuges are women who have male children as young as 11 so where do these women go?).

Mark Brooks OBE  
Chair  
The ManKind Initiative charity