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

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## Media and Policy Briefing: Male Victims of Domestic Abuse and Covid-19

### Briefing 1 (13 04 2020)

These short weekly briefings will set out a range of issues that we are finding through our direct support to male victims alongside those of organisations and practitioners that we speak to. This forms part of the wider role the charity has in giving male victims a voice and supporting those in the sector that support, or want to support, them.

#### Direct Support from ManKind Initiative:

- Calls to the ManKind Initiative helpline in the last two weeks (since 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020) are 35% higher than in normal periods. There was an initial fall in the week before and the week after lockdown (a lot of employers were sending people home on the week before the 23<sup>rd</sup>) but this has now increased to be higher than normal.
- Visitors to the ManKind Initiative website have increased by 8% in the last two weeks (since 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020) than normal.

#### Experiences from practitioners

- The charity regularly speaks to organisations and practitioners. Over the past week, they have reported a slowdown in the number of men coming forward or being referred to them.

#### Issues

- Male victims, like female victims, are at higher risk as many are now stuck indoors with their abuser. They are therefore more easily controlled through violence, psychological abuse and isolation. It is harder for those men to seek a safe space to reach out for help.
- The most significant change we have seen since the lockdown has been:
  - **Custody and Child Arrangement Orders:** A number of fathers are now contacting the charity stating that their exes (mothers) are using the Covid-19 lockdown as a reason to breach agreed Child Arrangement Orders awarded

as part of shared parenting. This is despite the fact that the Government has issued guidance to state that the lockdown should not be used as a reason to breach Child Arrangement Orders unless through mutual agreement. One practitioner also said that a number of his clients were complaining of this and there have been media reports (Guardian 7 April) of lawyers “inundated by divorced parents arguing over lockdown custody.”

The charity believes this is a form of domestic abuse as it is form of controlling behaviour, psychological/emotional abuse and also financial abuse (a parent may have to go back to the family courts to ensure the Child Arrangements Order is upheld).

- Counselling: We have had a number of men contacting the charity because their appointments with counsellors or other forms of support have been cancelled and they want someone to talk to.