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

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

Briefing (5): 11th May to May 17th 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.

(1) Direct Support from ManKind Initiative:

- a) Calls to the ManKind Initiative helpline since 30th March 2020 remain 35% higher than normal (pre-lockdown). The helpline is at capacity.
- b) Whilst visitors to the ManKind Initiative website through April were 76% higher than normal (pre-lockdown), May is now seeing this accelerate sharply. Visitors are now 160% higher (in laymen's terms: over two and a half times higher than normal) than in the pre-Covid-19 period.

The top five website pages (bar the home page) were:

- Types of domestic abuse
- Survivors' Stories
- Statistics and Research
- Is a man you know a victim? Spotting the Signs
- Statistics on Male Victims of Domestic Abuse

(2) Refuge/Safe Houses

- a) Of 34 organisations that have refuges/safe houses who were contacted on 11 May, only six still had spaces. This is a similar position to previous weeks.
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(3) Changing issues

Media/Political Narrative

The media narrative was disappointing this week especially on Thursday 14 May as [Channel 4](#) ran a general news story on domestic abuse and pointedly refused to mention male victims.

[Channel 5](#) ran a full 30 minute show on how you should escape safely and the only references to gender throughout were female victims. Again marginalising male and LGBT+ victims.

The [Home Secretary](#), in her media work about the Hidden Harms conference made clear that domestic abuse affected male victims. A very welcome statement and a clear change from the Government. Long may it continue.

Service Provision News

There has been more funding for refuges and support services, it was vital that organisations bid for funds to support men and their children in their communities including in refuges/safe houses.

(4) Similar issues:

The past week has seen a continuation of similar issues raised in lockdown:

- a) 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.
- b) 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).

- c) Counselling: We still 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.

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