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

### Briefing (6): 18th May to May 31st 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) Homicides

There have now been at least two homicides with male victims of domestic abuse:

3<sup>rd</sup> April 2020: [Craig Morse](#) ([Tonya Crabtree](#) charged with murder)

25<sup>th</sup> May 2020: [Joshua Kerr](#) (Grace Ross charged with murder)

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#### (2) Direct Support from ManKind Initiative:

- a) Calls to the ManKind Initiative helpline since 30<sup>th</sup> 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 150% 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
  - Statistics and Research
  - Survivors' Stories
  - Is a man you know a victim? Spotting the Signs
  - Statistics on Male Victims of Domestic Abuse
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#### (3) Refuge/Safe Houses

- a) Of 34 organisations that have refuges/safe houses who were contacted on 26 May, only four had spaces. This is less than previous weeks.
  - b) The new refuge set up at the end of April by Phoenix Women's Aid is now nearly full already.
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#### **(4) Changing issues**

The Domestic Abuse Bill will reach the Public Bill Committee stage. No witnesses for the first committee hearing on 4 June 2020 have been named. It will be vital that the voices of male victims and relevant charities are heard.

##### Hidden Harms Summit

Little confidence came out of this conference around male victims. **The charity was not allowed to take part in the consultation meeting** after the Prime Minister's statement. He erroneously emphasised twice that the majority of victims are female that of course marginalises male victims even further. Complaints from a number of organisations and individuals have been sent.

##### 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.

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#### **(5) Similar issues:**

The past two weeks 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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