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

### Briefing (7): 1 June 2020 to 7 June 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

An additional domestic abuse-related homicide was recorded last week.

2 June 2020: [Kieran Brown](#) ([Ellie Wain](#) charged with murder)

There have now been at least three 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 and June is now seeing this accelerate sharply. Visitors are now 110% higher in the first week of June 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

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### **(3) Refuge/Safe Houses**

- a) Of 34 organisations that have refuges/safe houses who were contacted on 1 June, only two has spaces and they were in-borough only. This is less than previous weeks and is getting worse.
- b) The new refuge set up at the end of April by Phoenix Women's Aid is now nearly full already.
- c) It will be interesting to see how many of the new 1,500 bed spaces funded by the Government will be available to men. [This was announced this week.](#)

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### **(4) Changing issues**

#### a) Domestic Abuse Bill

The Domestic Abuse Bill has reached the Public Bill Committee stage and the first session were on 4<sup>th</sup> June with oral evidence sessions.

Seven organisations representing female victims were called but none representing the voice of male victims.

#### b) Home Office Ad

It was good to see that the Home Office ran a #YourAreNotAlone ad featuring a male victim.

#### c) Caroline Flack

The Chief Prosecutor in the [Caroline Flack case](#) has moved to Wales and stated that he was right to charge her. A position we wholeheartedly agree with.

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### **(5) 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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