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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 (8): 8 June 2020 to 21 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

There were no more known homicides last week so the total remains at three..

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 115% higher in the first week of June than in the pre-Covid-19 period.

Excluding the home page, the top five website pages were (last positions in brackets):

- (1) Types of domestic abuse (1)
- (2) Survivors' Stories (2)
- (3) Is a man you know a victim? Spotting the Signs (4)
- (4) Statistics and Research (3)
- (5) Research on Male Victims of Domestic Abuse (7)

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### (3) Refuge/Safe Houses

- a) Of 34 organisations that have refuges/safe houses who were contacted on 15 June, only five has spaces. This was slightly up from previous weeks
- b) The new refuge set up at the end of April by Phoenix Women's Aid is now nearly full already and they are opening another.
- c) A FOI will go the MHCLG to see how many of the new 1,500 bed spaces funded by the Government will be available to men and their children. [This was announced this week.](#)

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### (4) Changing issues

#### a) Domestic Abuse Bill

The Domestic Abuse Bill has now passed through the Public Bill Committee stage and now is onto the Report Stage. No dates yet.

Seven organisations representing female victims were called to give evidence at the first session but none representing the voice of male victims.

Analysis of the Public Bill Committee Stage showed that female victims were mentioned 741 and male victims 52 times, however, 28 of these were in a negative context (no negative contexts for women). In effect, therefore men were only referenced 24 times in a neutral or positive context (3.1% of the total of neutral/positive references relating to gender).

A classic example of male victim minimisation happened at the [11<sup>th</sup> sitting](#):

Peter Kyle MP:

"The rate of domestic abuse against disabled men is also higher than against non-disabled men, but disabled women are more likely to experience repeated, sustained and more violent abuse than disabled men

There were no other mentions of disabled male victims but what is the motivation for mentioning disabled women in this context unless it is to minimise male victims.

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### (5) Similar issues:

The 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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