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Registered Charity No. 1089547 – Company Registration No. 3869893

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

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## Press Release

6 July 2020

### **Over 50 women close to male victims and survivors of domestic abuse call on MP's to make sure their voices are not ignored and marginalised**

A letter (see Annex 1) from over 50 women who have been personally affected by the experience of an individual male victim of domestic abuse they know has been sent to MP's in advance of the Monday's House of Commons debate on the Domestic Abuse Bill. The letter calls for the voices of male victims and survivors are fully heard both in the Bill and importantly in the Statutory Guidance that will support the application of the law.

The letter is signed by mothers, sisters, daughters, friends, colleagues or new partners of a man who have been victims and survivors – a number have seen the men they love and care for killed because of domestic abuse or have taken their lives. A campaign called Stand With Him will be launched by the charity later this month which features women who support male victims and is supported by those signing the letter

The letter states that it is vital male victims “have equal recognition with female victims, their barriers to seek help are fully understood and that they are fully supported. They should no longer be marginalised and ignored and any attempt to do so places them and their children at higher risk.” The signatories also state that they “believe all individual victims, whether female or male, deserve the same levels of support and that the law should not only apply to all equally, it must be applied equally to all.”

Male victims of domestic abuse make up one in three victims of domestic abuse, with nearly 800,000 suffering every year. Half of male victims (49%) fail to tell anyone they are a victim of domestic abuse and are nearly three times less likely to tell anyone than female victims and 11% of male victims (7.2% women) have considered taking their life due to partner abuse. Three men have allegedly been killed because of domestic abuse since the start of Covid-19 lockdown.

Despite the number of male victims, in the recent Parliamentary evidence sessions no charity representing male victims were called to give evidence (seven charities representing female victims were) nor were any male survivors asked. The voices of male victims were silenced and deliberately so.

**Mark Brooks, Chair of the ManKind Initiative**, said: “It is vital that the voices of male victims are heard in the new laws and guidance, given that so many suffer in silence. They fear they won’t be believed, do not know who to turn to and not enough people talk about it affecting men to make them aware there is help out there. This letter is asking that Parliament and society takes male victims more seriously and there is no stronger voice than those women who love, care and share their lives with them.”

**Katie Brown, sister of Gary Cunningham who was killed by his partner, said**

“Gary was a wonderful brother who had his life taken because of domestic abuse. All the signs were there, but because he was a man it was overlooked. This cannot continue and we all have a duty as family, friends and society to wake up to the fact that men are victims of domestic abuse. We need MP’s to wake up too and this must start with the new domestic abuse law and its guidance. It will be a travesty if it makes it harder for them to be recognised – we cannot afford to let my brother’s life be in vain.”

**Barbara Lavelle, mother of Paul who was killed by his partner, said:**

“My wonderful son Paul didn’t speak to us about what was happening. If he had then maybe we could have helped. Domestic violence happens both ways. It’s not just men hurting women. But for men it’s a difficult subject. They don’t want to admit they are being abused by a woman. And in many cases they don’t know where to go to for help. This is why this new law has to support men, has to fully recognise them and has to make sure that nothing is done to make it harder for them to get help.

**Debra Livesley, whose former partner David Edwards was murdered by his wife, said**

“David hid the abuse he suffered because he was embarrassed. The signs were there for so many to see including the police and the health service but because he was a man it didn’t register that he was a victim of domestic abuse. This cannot continue. We need the new law and any guidance to make sure they are no longer ignored, not recognised and not taken seriously. David was a wonderful man, he must not be forgotten”

**Sara Westle, mother of Eddie who was murdered by his partner, said:**

“I miss my son terribly. I feel robbed and stripped. When he was murdered it was the most awful that could have happened. We need everyone to wake up and recognise that men are victims of domestic abuse too and this includes the Government and MPs. The new law has to be applied to men as well as women, else what happened to my son will not have been taken seriously.”

**Olivia White, friend of Pete Davegun, who was murdered by his partner, said:**

“As a society we do not recognise that men can be and are victims of domestic abuse. We never hear enough people talking about it in the media, in Parliament or in Government. There is just silence. It is as if men like Pete do not matter. No wonder so few come forward to get help or recognise the signs. MP’s debating the domestic abuse bill need to wake up. It is vital that the new law and how it is put into practice treats and recognises all victims as equals.”

**Ann Goodchild, a domestic abuse campaigner who was close to a male victim who lost his life due to domestic abuse, said**

“From my experience, far too many people, including some in official positions, turn a blind eye to male victims of domestic abuse. It is as if they do not believe they can be victims or perhaps they don’t want to believe it. This has to change. The new domestic abuse law has to not just apply to men and their children, those in charge need to make sure it is actually applied to them. If they don’t, then more male victims will suffer in silence or not be listened to and there is the continuing risk that more will lose their lives.”

ENDS

**Notes to Editors:**

(1) The ManKind Initiative ([www.mankind.org.uk](http://www.mankind.org.uk)) is the leading national charity which runs a help-line providing, practical information and emotional support for male victims of domestic abuse and domestic violence. The help-line number is 01823 334244 (weekdays 10am-4pm) which relies on public donations. It also runs an accredited training course, a national conference and a national services directory.

(2) Key facts about male victims of domestic abuse can be found at:

<https://www.mankind.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/50-Key-Facts-about-Male-Victims-of-Domestic-Abuse-and-Partner-Abuse-March-2020-final.pdf>

(3) Media Enquiries

Journalists requiring further information please contact Mark Brooks on 07834 452357  
[chairman@mankind.org.uk](mailto:chairman@mankind.org.uk).

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**Annex 1: Letter Text:**

Member of Parliament  
House of Commons  
Westminster  
SW1A 0AA

Dear Member of Parliament

**Re: Women supporting male victims of domestic abuse (Domestic Abuse Bill)**

We are writing to you regarding male victims of domestic abuse to ensure that their voices are heard in the Domestic Abuse Bill and its Statutory Guidance. This is also part of a new campaign run by the charity called Stand With Him.

We are a group of women who have been personally affected by the experience of an individual male victim of domestic abuse we know. Whether that be as mothers, sisters, daughters, friends, colleagues or new partners of a man who has been in this situation.

We are writing on behalf of all male victims of domestic abuse to ensure their voices are heard alongside the voices of their daughters and sons. As the Government recognises, they make up one in three of all victims of domestic abuse (1.6 million women and 786,000 men were victims of domestic abuse in 2018/19)

In both the Domestic Abuse Bill and the Statutory Guidance, it is vital they have equal recognition with female victims, their barriers to seek help are fully understood and that they are fully supported. They should no longer be marginalised and ignored and any attempt to do so places them and their children at higher risk.

We believe all individual victims, whether female or male, deserve the same levels of support and that the law should not only apply to all equally, it must be applied equally to all.

Male victims of domestic abuse often fear they are not believed and will not be supported or understood if and when they do come forward. There are not enough awareness campaigns to encourage them to do so, not enough funding to support them and not enough recognition within many statutory agencies. We also need society to change its attitude towards them. It is vital this Bill and Guidance addresses this and does not make their situation even worse by marginalising them further.

Please ensure the voices of those who we love, care for and share friendships with are not silenced, marginalised or forgotten. We urge you to ensure the Bill and Guidance fully supports and equally recognises male victims of domestic abuse and their children. We all Stand With Him – the male victim we know.

Thank you for your consideration and please do not hesitate to contact us through the ManKind Initiative charity as above.

### ***Yours sincerely***

1. AH, Carmarthenshire, brother (*he was a victim for 17 years, which ultimately resulted in him taking his own life*)
2. Alexandra, Birmingham, step sister (*my step brother was murdered*)
3. Alison, Edinburgh, friend (*he was a victim for over 30 years*)
4. Ann G, Southampton, mother (*my son took his own life*)
5. Anna, Southampton, sister (*my brother took his own life*)
6. Anne, Somerset, sister (*my brother was a victim for 18 years*)
7. Anne-Marie H, Lincolnshire, friend (*my friend had nowhere to go for help*)
8. Barbara Lavelle, Wirral, mother (*my son was murdered by his partner*)
9. Becky, Bristol, daughter (*my father was a victim for 18 years*)
10. Brenda, Hertfordshire, mother (*my son has been scarred for life because of his ex*)
11. Caroline, Birmingham, ex-partner (*my ex-partner was murdered*)
12. Cath, Bolton, mother (*my son was subjected to violence*)
13. Diana, Edinburgh, mother (*my son has been a victim*)
14. Diana, Cheshire, ex-wife (*my ex-husband suffered domestic abuse that he hid from his daughters*)
15. Debbie Livesley, Chorley, ex-partner (*my ex-partner was murdered by his wife*)
16. Eileen, York, mother (*my son suffered mental trauma even after the relationship ended*)
17. Elizabeth, Norwich (*I have friends and a colleague who were victims*)
18. Fiona, Worcestershire, friend (*my friend's brother was murdered by his partner 2019*)
19. Hannah, London, daughter (*my father was a victim for 18 years*)
20. Hannah, Birmingham, friend (*my friend's brother was murdered by his partner 2019*)
21. Jackie, Carmarthenshire, mother (*my son was a victim*)
22. Janet, Sussex, mother
23. JW, Cheshire, mother (*my son has full parental responsibility but his ex is still causing trouble for the family*)

24. Jo, South Wales, daughter (*my elderly father's new wife physically and financially abused him*)
25. J, North West, fiancée (*my partner suffered at the hands of his ex-wife*)
26. JLW, Cheshire, sister (*my brother suffered for five years*)
27. Kate, Herefordshire, partner (*my current suffered coercion, control and physical violence from his ex*)
28. Kathleen, Greater London (*close relative of male victim*)
29. Kathryn, Hertfordshire, partner (*my partner suffered for 15 years due to his ex*)
30. Katie Brown, Birmingham, brother (*he was killed by his partner*)
31. Kelly, sister (*my brother and a friend suffered, the latter committed suicide*)
32. KR, friend & now partner of one survivor,
33. Jenny, Birmingham, friend (*my friend's brother was murdered by his partner 2019*)
34. Laraine, Birmingham, mother (*my daughter lost her ex partner to domestic abuse*)
35. Louise, Glasgow, sister (*people laughed at my brother*)
36. Louise Cunningham, Birmingham, mother (*son was murdered by his partner 2019*) –
37. Margaret, Birmingham, ex-husband (*my ex husband abused by his partner*)
38. Natalia, wife (*my husband was subjected to awful abuse by previous partner*)
39. Olivia, London, friend (*my friend was murdered by his girlfriend*)
40. Rosie, Worcestershire, sister
41. Ruth, Birmingham, friend (*my friend's brother was murdered by his partner 2019*)
42. Sara Westle, Leicestershire, mother (*my son was murdered by his girlfriend*)
43. Sharon, Bromley, girlfriend (*my boyfriend was in an abusive relationship for several years*)
44. SW, Essex, sister (*brother was murdered by partner*)
45. Tamsin Hutchinson, Chorley, friend (*my friend was murdered by his wife*)
46. Tracey, mother (*my son is going through mental abuse*)
47. Vicki, Leicester, mother
48. V. M. A, mother
49. Zoe, Birmingham, cousin (*cousin was murdered by his partner*)
50. Anonymous mother, Wales, mother (*my son took his own life*)
51. Anonymous mother, YM, Armagh, mother
52. Anonymous, Manchester, mother
53. Anonymous, London, mother (*my son considered suicide*)
54. Anonymous, Gloucestershire, mother
55. Anonymous, Midlands, sister (*my brother was a victim and took his own life*)
56. Anonymous, Warwickshire, sister (*my brother was a victim and took his own life*)

\* Note: These testimonies have been sent freely to the charity over the past month and have been anonymised where necessary and where requested. All signatories have a direct connection to a male victim as described. Some signatories do not wish to be contacted by anyone bar the charity.