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The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP
Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
Westminster
London
SW1P 4DF

12 March 2021

Dear The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP

Re: Budget 2021 (Respite Rooms for victims of Domestic Abuse)

I am writing on behalf of the ManKind Initiative, the leading UK charity specialising in supporting male victims of domestic abuse, which includes 750,000 men who are victims annually. We are writing about the above and the inclusion of male victims.

We greatly welcome the announcement of £4 million to trial a network of 'Respite Rooms' across England in the 2021 Budget. We noted that the announcement in both the Chancellor's statement and also in the "Red Book", suggested that these respite rooms and the trial would be for female victims only. We of course recognise the need to run these trials and provide such rooms for female victims.

We are therefore seeking assurances that a number of these rooms will be allocated to male victims and that the trial will include the impact on men too. This is based on:

- Increasing numbers of calls from men to our domestic abuse helpline and other national helplines requesting emergency housing accommodation to escape domestic abuse and other related crimes such as forced marriage and so-called 'Honour-Based' violence. This includes from men sleeping rough, in cars, garages, tents and friend's floors. We also know from community-based services supporting male victims, how important emergency housing is for their clients.
- The limited number of refuge/safe house places available for male victims of domestic abuse and their children continues to be very limited and these places are nearly always full. Currently there are only 236 places for men in the UK (only 56 are solely for the use of men). In London, an emergency respite room was provided (there are no refuge or safe houses places in London) throughout the pandemic and it has been full throughout.

- The latest statistics on rough sleeping showed that 3,937¹ men slept rough (85% of total) and according to Crisis², 13% of men who do so are victims of partner abuse. This means c300 men are sleeping rough due to partner abuse every night.

I am also aware of the importance that the Government places on:

- Compliance with its duties under the Equality Act 2010;
- Adherence to the principles of the Male Victims Statement (issued by the Home Office in 2019) and to commitments made that the refreshed VAWG strategy will be inclusive of male victims;
- Welcome commitments to male victims throughout the discussions and meetings with respect to the passage of the Domestic Abuse Bill; and,
- Wider consideration around homelessness, rough sleeping and inclusion.

In that respect, I would be grateful if you could confirm that this funding from the Budget will include respite rooms for male victims, and that the trial will also include the evaluating the impact of these respite rooms for male victims.

If this means additional funds now need to be found for male victims and the trial, we would understand that.

It would be very disappointing if male victims were excluded, including those escaping forced marriage and so-called 'honour-based' crimes, as it would reinforce the societal gender stereotypes that male victims are invisible and why so many feel that they do not matter or count. It would also undermine the Government's commitments to male victims of VAWG crimes, more widely.

Thank you for your time and consideration and I look forward to your reply

Yours sincerely,

Mark Brooks

Mark Brooks OBE
Chair of Trustees
The ManKind Initiative

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2020>

² Crisis: A nation Apart? <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/types-of-homelessness/nations-apart-experiences-of-single-homeless-people-across-great-britain-2014/>