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Registered Charity: 1183014

Mr Paul Maynard MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Justice
Ministry of Justice
102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9AJ

9 July 2019

Dear Minister,

Re: Spotlight on Child Protection in Family Courts – Expert Review Panel

I am writing on behalf of the Men and Boys Coalition, the national umbrella charity for over 80 organisations, academics and charities dealing with male-specific gender issues in the UK.

We welcome the Government's Review and the need for an Expert Panel. We also welcome the inclusion of Women's Aid on the Expert Review Panel as it is vital that the voices of mothers and their children are represented.

In terms of the basic principles of inclusion, diversity and ensuring that a gender-informed approach is taken on this important issue, it is vital therefore that the voice of fathers and their children are also included on the Expert Panel. This is what would be expected if this approach was to be taken and what the public in general would expect on a similar basis.

However, we are aware that the charity Families Need Fathers had written to the Department as soon as it was announced that there was to be an Expert Panel. Following the recent announcement of the panel and their exclusion, it is clear that a decision was made not to include the voice of fathers and their children.

The charity would therefore respectfully request:

- That Families Need Fathers are included on the Expert Panel
- An explanation on why the Ministry of Justice chose not to include the voice of fathers and their children on the Expert Panel

The issue of how the family courts protect children and parents in cases of domestic abuse and other serious offences, is one that we all recognise as an issue that requires urgent attention. It is vital therefore that the fathers, as well as mothers, and their children have full confidence that the Government is taking a fair, inclusive and gender-informed view.

An example of the importance of involving the voice of fathers can be seen by recent tragedy involving Cheryl Tompsett in Kent who took her own life after murdering her son. The Kent Safety Safeguarding Children Board stated that “*a potential explanation for the homicide-suicide, was spousal revenge intended to hurt her ex-partner; a theory that could be supported by the death having occurred on Father’s Day.*” Her ex-partner had been granted custody of her son through the family courts and she had been granted access even though she had committed domestic abuse against her ex-partner.

If the Government chooses not to include the voices of fathers, there will rightly be questions raised on the whether the Government is taking an even handed approach and has a pre-determined narrative – one that is designed not to take into account fathers and their children.

We look forward to receiving your views on this urgent matter and the letter is written in the spirit of inclusion, diversity and fairness for all.

Yours sincerely

Dan Bell

Chief Executive
Men and Boys Coalition