



## **A More Inclusive Decade: Ten Policy Measures to Better Support the Wellbeing of Men and Boys in the UK**

The Men and Boys Coalition is a charity with a membership of over 80 other charities, organisations, professionals and academics all of whom wish to improve the wellbeing of men and boys in our country.

We are asking the new Conservative Government to commit to implementing a range of measures that will improve public services, public policy and make a positive difference to lives of men and boys. By doing so, this will also improve the lives of women and girls who all care, support and share society with men and boys.

We believe for this new decade to continue on the path of creating a more inclusive, equality-based and fair society; it now requires a greater focus on the wellbeing of men and boys, whilst continuing to also focus on wellbeing issues affecting women and girls. The past two decades of this century have largely ignored the wellbeing of men and boys creating a real public policy deficit. These ten simple policy requests, we believe, will start to make a difference.

1. **To commission an official inquiry into the Educational Underachievement of Boys.** Over the past 30 years, boys have been behind girls at every stage of education from Key Stage 2 to University but previous governments and the educational establishment in the UK have been indifferent at best. We believe an official inquiry into the causes alongside positive measures to be implemented is now required. This should include schools identifying boys with absent fathers as having an 'additional need'.
2. **To introduce a Men's Health Strategy similar to those introduced in Ireland and Australia – and advocated by the World Health Organisation Europe.** Health outcomes for men are generally poor in the UK as is the level of engagement (by men and by services). In addition there are a number of particular diseases (such as male cancers) and high rates of suicide. We believe a fresh approach is needed in the UK, and following the international successes in Australia and Ireland, that this country should also create a national men's health strategy. This is supported by a range of organisations (alongside the coalition) including the Men's Health Forum and the Women and Equalities Select Committee. The World Health Organisation Europe has also published an overarching men's health strategy.
3. **To introduce a Male Suicide Prevention Action Plan and to create and implement easy to access, male-friendly mental health services, with improved signposting.** The rate of suicide in the UK has reached a 16 year high with just under 5,000 males taking their own lives (three in every four suicides). As part of a national suicide prevention strategy, we believe there has to be a specific plan to tackle male suicide (and a parallel plan one for females too). We believe and support the wider recommendation by the Women and Equalities Select Committee on increasing male-friendly mental health services.
4. **Better support for those at risk or suffering from prostate and testicular cancer.** Prostate Cancer UK has proposed the following, which we fully support: "We want men with prostate cancer to get better diagnosis, better treatment and better support. This includes ensuring every man with prostate cancer – or at risk of it - to have access to the same high-quality diagnosis, treatment and care, no matter where in the UK they live."

5. **To introduce a parallel strategy to the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) entitled Ending Intimate Violence Against Men and Boys.** Currently male victims of a wide range of crimes including sexual abuse/violence, domestic abuse, stalking and forced marriage are classed by the Government (and other agencies) as being victims of crimes against women and girls. As well as being factually wrong, it places additional barriers to service support, societal attitudes and male help seeking. We believe the UK Government should take a more inclusive approach and introduce a parallel strategy to the welcome and successful VAWG strategy. This is a position endorsed by the former Victims Commissioner Baroness Newlove (Conservative Peer).
6. **To review and reform the legal definition of rape to include male victims who are raped by women.** In British law, the treatment of male victims of rape is different depending on the gender of the perpetrator with a harsher law being applied to male perpetrators than female perpetrators. We believe there should be equality in law so that section 1 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003, is to now include cases where women force men to engage in non-consensual intercourse (these cases are currently criminalised under section 4 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003, a less serious offence).
7. **To promote the importance of active fatherhood in a child's life.** This policy measure, taken straight from the 2017 "Manifesto to Strengthen Families" policy document (published by Fiona Bruce MP and Lord Farmer - supported by over 60 then Conservative MPs) will "ensure fathers are involved as much as possible from day one, maternity services should review and improve their support for fathers. Legal changes mandating fathers to be named on birth certificates should be brought into force (with appropriate exemptions)"
8. **To change the remit of the Government Equalities Office to include men and boys (currently the remit only covers women and girls).** The current remit does not include men and boys, who are not mentioned without any inclusive explanation or rationale for this omission. This is not in keeping with an inclusive, fair and equality-based government or society. At the heart of Government Policy, this has to lead to the continuing public policy deficit in tackling wellbeing issues affecting men and boys. This change, rightly, will not have a negative effect on any focus on issues affecting women and girls.
9. **Change the title of the Minister for Women and Equalities to the Minister for Equalities with a clear remit to also cover male inequality.** The current remit (and the remit for the past decade) is to only cover female inequality, not male equality too. In a similar point 8 above, this must change.
10. **To appoint a Special Adviser on Men and Boys Wellbeing within the Government Equalities Office.** This is to ensure that within the Department there is an appointed official or adviser with a clear remit to ensure that the Department takes into account inequalities and issues affecting the well-being of men and boys in its policy work and policy recommendations.

Statistics on the wellbeing of men and boys can be found at: <http://www.menandboyscoalition.org.uk/statistics/>

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