

What a difference a year makes!

Shortly before International Men's Day, in November 2016, the founder members of the Men and Boys Coalition got together at the Houses of Parliament to announce our arrival to the world.

As media reported at the time, this was already a world first – a national coalition set up as an umbrella movement for the men's sector; bringing together charities, campaigners, writers and academics in a shared mission to champion the gender-based issues affecting men and boys, and represent their issues in the media and the corridors of power.

So, one year on, what difference has it made? It's time for a recap.

Getting up and running!

Let's get the boring bit out of the way first! As anyone who has set up a not-for-profit organisation will testify, getting up and running, legally constituting the body, securing funding and then employing staff is a long and tortuous process. Yes, we are now established as a company with charitable aims and objectives, with full charity status still pending. Our funding remains (literally) non-existent and everything done for the Coalition so far has been on an entirely voluntary basis. We are quietly optimistic we can bring good news on that score soon, but for now, please bear in mind that what follows has been achieved purely through the voluntary efforts of our steering committee, members and supporters. Think what we'll be able to do with a few resources behind us!

Our membership is growing!

We have been delighted to welcome a host of new recruits and members since the launch. Among the more prominent and distinguished organisations and individuals, we are thrilled to now be working alongside the [National Association of Round Tables](#). The Round Table is one of the country's best-known fundraising charities, bringing together and channelling the efforts of over 30,000 men across the country, while also operating as a valuable social support network in its own right. Already their support for the Coalition, and for International Men's Day, has been a huge boost to our profile and efforts.

We are also extremely excited to announce hot off the press that one of our latest members is now [UK Men's Sheds](#), the national body representing over 400 Men's Sheds across the country -- an amazing grassroots network that benefits around 10,000 men with new skills and lasting friendships.

Among the individual members, we're particularly honoured to have been joined by Mary Curnock-Cook, OBE. As former CEO of UCAS, the universities admissions body, Mary has long been one of Britain's most vocal and effective campaigners on the topic of boys' academic underachievement.

In too many ways to count, the Coalition has already inspired networking, mutual support, new friendships and collaborations. We'll also take this moment to mention the sterling efforts of Dr Ben Hine in developing the MBC's academic network, which aims to offer new realms for sharing research opportunities, learning opportunities and teaching practice in higher education.

If you know of another charity, campaigner or academic who might want to be part of the Men and Boys Coalition, do please point them our way.

Campaigning on Relationships and Sex Education for Boys

One of our first political priorities was to ensure that the needs, interests and circumstances of boys should be represented within debates and policy reform on the topic of RSE. With a new syllabus now in preparation, we were deeply concerned that the prevailing narrative included extensive discussion of the problems boys can sometimes cause to their female peers, but virtually no thought to the problems boys often have themselves, or male specific issues such as gendered sexual expectations, male consent or vulnerabilities to abuse.

Last winter, with expert input from the Sex Education Forum and BISH Training, we put together [a briefing document](#) for politicians and media covering all the major issues. As a direct consequence, we are thrilled to announce that MBC has now been invited to take a seat at the table with Department of Education, and other involved parties, in discussions to develop a new national RSE syllabus for schools. We will be ensuring the real needs of young men and boys are not forgotten.

Reform of CPS policies for male victims

[One of the first issues which brought together the founding](#) members, and which planted a few seeds that eventually grew into the Men and Boys Coalition, was the treatment of male victims of crimes of domestic, sexual and intimate violence. In 2015, the Crown Prosecution Service reported statistics for these offences under the title “Violence Against Women and Girls” while barely mentioning in the small print that around one sixth of all victims of these crimes were in fact men and boys. It was perhaps the most horrifying and insulting illustration of how male victims and survivors can be marginalised, ignored and rendered invisible by gender-exclusive approaches to intimate violence.

Over the past two years, protesting turned into campaigning and lobbying, and this year representatives of MBC have held a series of meetings with CPS. The consequence? Not only have CPS retracted and revised the documents which ignored male victims & made the statistics for men and boys explicit within their annual reports, but this summer the [CPS published their first ever policy announcement for supporting male victims](#), with no fewer than eight specific commitments to improve their practice and procedures in the future. Building on that, we have already provided them with specialist input from our members on male victims of so-called honour-based violence and forced marriage.

We are still far from satisfied with where we have got to – our long-term goal is to persuade all government bodies to cease including men and boys within their VAWG policies and instead develop a gender-inclusive, parallel strategy to support male survivors and prevent intimate violence against men and boys. However, we are now at least at the table to argue that case, which is a huge step forward.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank DPP Alison Saunders and her team for their willingness to listen, their attentiveness to the important issues we raised, and their sincere commitment to improve the service they deliver to male victims and survivors.

Fathers in the Workplace Inquiry

Earlier this year the Women and Equalities select committee held an inquiry into Fathers in the Workplace. The Coalition made [our own submission](#) to the inquiry, while also highlighting individual contributions from our members Working With Men; Families Need Fathers and John Adams of DadBlog.

Representing men in homelessness statistics

Back in January the Department of Communities and Local Government published their annual statistics on homelessness and for the first time included a gender breakdown of rough sleeping. This was welcomed by the Coalition. Less welcome was the manner of the breakdown, which highlighted concerns that 12 percent of rough sleepers were women. The remaining 88 percent were never identified by gender. This type of erasure of male gender issues is of serious concern to the Coalition, as it often underpins wider failures to address the issues as they affect men. The Coalition raised this with the UK Statistics Authority who agreed with us that the statistical reporting was unsatisfactory and recommended changes in approach for next year. We'll be watching that space carefully.

Facilitating Harry's Masculinity Report

This autumn, the Men and Boys Coalition played a central role in co-ordinating and facilitating the delivery of [Harry's Masculinity Report](#). This academic research project was delivered by our member Dr John Barry of the Male Psychology Network and co-written with our own Martin Daubney, with corporate funding from male grooming company Harry's. Credit goes to Dan Bell for bringing it all together.

The research provided important data about the values, psychological wellbeing and mental health of modern British men, finding that secure, stable employment and settled loving relationships are still the most important things in life! The findings received extensive media coverage and were discussed by an expert panel the Houses of Parliament, including Anne Coffey MP, professional footballer-turned-mental health campaigner Leon McKenzie and comedian Mo Gilligan.

Driving International Men's Day in the UK

The Men and Boys Coalition does not 'own' IMD in the UK or anywhere else, but it is no secret that our founding members and steering group overlaps heavily with the [UK Men's Day](#) organising committee.

When Glen and Mark took part in the "Improving Services for Men and Boys" conference on 19th November 2010, it was the start of IMD UK in its current format. When Ally first wrote about IMD in the Guardian in 2011, there were around a dozen small events listed around the country.

Last weekend, International Men's Day was the UK's top trend on Twitter for 48 hours straight. We found it impossible to keep up with the number of events put on by charities, health authorities, local councils, schools, universities, campaigners, corporations, bars, restaurants... the list goes on and on. For the third consecutive year, there was an IMD debate in the Houses of Parliament.

More importantly, whereas only a few years ago the overwhelming majority of online comments made about IMD were "I thought every day was International Men's Day hurr hurr," this year trolling was notable by its absence, with countless thousands of men and women engaged seriously in discussions about men's mental and physical health, suicide, male victims of abuse, older men's loneliness and all the myriad other topics IMD is meant to raise. Of 1.4m social media engagements on the #InternationalMensDay hashtag, almost a third came from the UK.

It's now acknowledged globally that Britain is leading the world in its approach to IMD, and it should be acknowledged that here in Britain, MBC is leading the charge. We don't take all the credit, but we are still more than proud of the part we continue to play.

Onwards!

It's been a heck of a year for MBC but we have so much on our radar, so many battles to fight, so far still to go. High on our list of priorities for action remain government action on boys' academic under-achievement and on men's health, including our ongoing campaign for men's health to be a topic for a future Chief Medical Officer's report. We continue to campaign too for boys to have access to the HPV vaccination, which could prevent thousands of early deaths from cancer every year. We hope to make further progress on developing cross party support for a national male suicide prevention strategy, and continue to represent the needs of men and boys at all levels of local and national government.

If you have any ideas for causes which we should be fighting, please don't hesitate to get in touch. Until then, thank you for your continuing support and for everything you do for men and boys.

The steering committee:

Ally, Ben, Dan, Glen, Mark and Martin.