



The case for an Intimate Violence against Men and Boys Strategy

Remit of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Issues Affecting Men and Boys

*'To raise awareness of disadvantages and poor outcomes faced by men and boys
in education, mental and physical health and law;
to influence attitudes, role models, policy and legislation
that will lead to positive differences to their well-being and lives.'*

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(A) Executive Summary

Due to the pace of policy announcements by the Government around victims of crimes such as sexual violence and domestic abuse, the APPG held a one-off session with UK experts on how these policy announcements were supporting male victims.

The evidence demonstrated that the current policy framework is not supporting them and in fact, was making matters worse by creating additional barriers and further marginalising this hard-to-reach group.

The APPG concluded that from the evidence a rethink from Government is urgently needed and that there were clear policy solutions that would address this, and, without hampering the vital support needed for women and girls.

This rethink included:

- An "Intimate Violence Against Men and Boys" strategy to be in place by the end of 2023;
- Cease classifying and defining male victims of these crimes as being victims of violence against women and girls.
- Create a national policing strategy and plan to coordinate the response to male victims of these crimes.

(B) Background

The APPG on Issues Affecting Men and Boys are holding full inquiries on a range of issues such as:

- A “Boy Today” – what is life like for a boy today, growing up in the UK?. This [report](#) was published in September 2021
- “The Case for a Men’s Health Strategy”. This was [published](#) in February 2022.
- Its current inquiry is on “[What are the causes and solutions for the high number of men taking their own lives?](#)”

The APPG decided that when there is a particular issue that requires an immediate discussion, rather than holding a full inquiry, a one-off meeting would be held on the subject.

A one-off meeting was called with UK experts on 7 June 2022. This followed the Government’s decision in its “Tackling violence against women and girls strategy”¹, to class all male victims of sexual abuse/violence, domestic abuse, stalking, forced marriage and so-called ‘honour’ based violence as victims of violence against women and girls and the inadequacy of the recent Home Office “Male Victims Position Statement”². It has subsequently been made aware that the National Police Chief Council (NPCC) did not explicitly include men and boys in its national strategy and plan (launched in December 2021) in tackling these crimes.³

The APPG has already raised these issues in writing with the Government Minister in the spring but decided to hold a short meeting to hear directly from a range of experts in the field. This will help its members to make the case throughout Parliament. In fact, Lord Ponsonby and Lord Farmer asked the Home Office Minister (Baroness Williams) in the House of Lords on 9 June 2022 about this matter⁴ – a summary of which is included in this report.

The APPG fully supports the need for a VAWG strategy and for support to women and girls who are victims of these crimes.

¹ Home Office: [Tackling violence against women and girls strategy](#) (July 2021)

² Home Office: Position statement on male victims of crimes considered in the cross-government Tackling Violence Against Women (March 2022)

³ NPCC: [National response to violence against women and girls](#) (December 2021)

⁴ House of Lords Hansard: [Male Victims of Crime](#) (9 June 2022)

(C) Statistics

There are a few key statistics in this area (any comparisons to female victims is for context not for competition).

- 1) 13.8% of men and 27.4% of women aged 16 to 74 have experienced some form of domestic abuse since the age of 16 (2019/20), equivalent to an estimated 2.9 million male victims and 5.9 million female victims. For every three victims of domestic abuse, two will be female, one will be male. One in four women and one in six to seven men suffer from domestic abuse in their lifetime.⁵
- 2) 3.6% of men (757,000) and 7.3% of women (1.561 million) were victims of domestic abuse in 2019/20 equating to a ratio of two female victims to every one male victim⁶.
- 3) Nearly half of male victims (49%) fail to tell anyone they are a victim of domestic abuse (19% of women fail to tell anyone). This has worsened since 2015/16 where the figures were 61% for men (88% women)⁷.
- 4) 155,000 men were estimated to have been victims of sexual assault in 2019/20 (618,000 women)⁸. 989,000 men in total have been a victim of sexual assault since they were 16.
- 5) 7,000 men were raped or victims of attempted rape (132,000 women) in 2019/20. 87,000 men in total have been raped or been victims of rapes since they were 16⁹.
- 6) Less than one in five male victims of sexual assault since the age of 16 reported it to the police¹⁰.
- 7) The Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse estimates that at least 5% of boys and young men experience sexual abuse before the age of 16¹¹.

⁵ ONS domestic abuse: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales: year ending March 2020 (<https://bit.ly/3sQLIJT>) - Table 1 and 2

⁶ ONS domestic abuse: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales: year ending March 2020 (<https://bit.ly/3sQLIJT>) - Table 1 and 2

⁷ ONS domestic abuse: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales: year ending March 2018 (<https://bit.ly/2FY8UYc>)- Table 24 and ONS BCS Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences 2014/15 <http://bit.ly/1p8CGI0> Table 4.28 on Appendix Table: <http://bit.ly/1M1diC5>

⁸ ONS: [Sexual offences in England and Wales overview](#) (to March 2020)

⁹ ONS: [Sexual offences in England and Wales overview](#) (to March 2020)

¹⁰ ONS: [Sexual offences in England and Wales overview](#) (to March 2020)

¹¹ CSA Centre: [The scale and nature of child sexual abuse: Review of evidence](#)

- 8) 526,000 men aged between 16 and 74 were estimated to have been victims of stalking in the year ending March 2020 (compared to 977,000 women)¹².
 - 9) Data from the joint Home Office and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) shows that around a fifth of cases which they provided advice or support to in 2020 relate to male victims and survivors (21% in 2020)¹³. Men appear to be particularly represented in cases where the victim is LGBT (63% male), or where they have mental capacity concerns (55% male).
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(D) Speakers

The APPG heard from four speakers, all of whom are leaders in their field. The full video of the event can be found on [YouTube](#).

The main points from each presentation are below:

(1) Dame Vera Baird QC: Victim' Commissioner

Dame Vera Baird was unable to attend the meeting but provided the APPG with a statement (see full statement in Annex A). The statement set out a range of issues including:

- There is insufficient focus on tackling crimes of inter-personal violence against men and boys, and they need to be supported in a way that is tailored to their needs.
- Men and boys need their own strategy which includes a consultation. They should have specific policies, strategic targets, milestones and funding, which is independent of a Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy.
- The current Government position on male victims is "lacklustre."
- Physical and sexual violence and domestic abuse against men and boys is not violence against women and girls.

¹² ONS: [Stalking: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales](#)

¹³ [Forced Marriage Unit Statistics Forced Marriage Unit Statistics 2020](#)

(2) Duncan Craig OBE, Chief Executive of Survivors Manchester

Duncan has over 15 years' experience working with survivors of male sexual violence and is a survivor himself. He spoke about his experience of having to travel 200 miles to receive support when he needed it. Duncan stated that one in six males will be affected by sexual violence at some point in their life.

Since he launched Survivors Manchester 15 years ago, they have supported nearly 5,000 male survivors of sexual abuse, rape and sexual exploitation. They are currently receiving two to three new referrals every day of the year and have seen a 124% increase in referrals from 2021 to 2022.

During his time as Chief Executive, he has repeatedly asked Government why the rape, sexual exploitation and child sexual abuse that he and males like him experienced is regarded as a crime against women and girls? He repeated that not once had he, or others, ever received any sensible explanation from the Government to this question. He also asked repeatedly of Government and other commissioners why are there so many services supporting women and girls, but next to no services supporting men and boys?

In this section, clinical psychologist, Martin Seager added that "...being the victim of [abuse] and then [receiving] the secondary victimisation of not being listened to [is to] retraumatising."

(3) Ally Fogg, Chief Executive of the Men and Boys Coalition

Ally posed the question about "who decided to categorise men and boys who have been victims of sexual abuse, domestic abuse and other forms of exploitation as victims of violence against women and girls and why?"

He spoke about the origins of this policy decision and suggested that Government had not intended for it to include men and boys, but that, when challenged on where male victims sat in public policy terms, they had shoehorned them into this overarching definition.

Ally also noted this categorisation did not apply in any other realm of public policy. For example, the overwhelming majority of rough sleeping homeless people are men, but Government and public policy makers do not talk about all "homeless people as being homeless men"; there is no other public policy area where, whenever there is a majority of one type of victim by gender, the minority victims by gender are subsumed by the other.

He made the point that this categorisation of male victims had been entirely imposed without the consideration or consent from the male victims themselves. For example:

- No minister or official has explained or justified to them why this was the case
- At no time did anyone ask male survivors or representative organisations how they felt about being categorised as victims of violence against women and girls.
- He knows no one in the women's or men's sector, or in the wider victim support sector that supports it.

He also stated that he had asked the Home Office for information on the number of men (and their organisations) who had responded to the Government's violence against women and girls strategy (February 2021) alongside a summary of what they had said and what consideration the Government had given to their answers. The Government in its reply has not been, or is unwilling, to give answers. It cannot give him the numbers of men who actually took part.

Ally also spoke about the Home Office's new position statement on male victims¹⁴ which it launched in March 2022. It is noteworthy that in the original publication it was called "Male victims of crimes considered violence against women and girls". He explained, that on the one hand, the statement was useful on its own terms as it showed the Government understands the horrifying extent of intimate violence against men and boys.

However on the other hand, the inclusion of men is not always put into practice. For example:

- Deputy Chief Constable Maggie Blyth, who through the NPCC, is coordinating the national response to the violence against women and girls¹⁵ has made it clear that male victims are not included in her work including the national strategy framework and plan. The framework does not address the circumstances which led to the serial killer, Stephen Port, or the Manchester serial rapist, Reynhard Sinaga, who attacked over 200 male victims. This means there is no national policing response to male victims of these crimes.

¹⁴ Home Office: [Position statement on male victims of crimes considered in the cross-government Tackling Violence Against Women](#) (March 2022)

¹⁵ NPCC: [National response to violence against women and girls](#) (December 2021)

- As the Home Secretary launched the Position Statement, which claimed to be fully inclusive of male victims, there was a campaign called *Enough* (<https://enough.campaign.gov.uk>) which was to support victims of violence against women and girls. However, this campaign did not include male victims.
- Lastly, the Home Office is currently running an open competition to fund voluntary organisations to deliver work preventing violence against women and girls. There is no obligation on any organisation to recognise that male victims even exist, which showed how in reality, men are not being included in the violence against women and girls policy framework.

Ally believes the idea that a national violence against women and girls strategy will address issues for male victims is fundamentally false and calls for the urgent need to develop a parallel male strategy.

(4) Dr Elizabeth Bates, Senior Lecturer in Psychology (University of Cumbria) and Chair of the Male Section of the British Psychology Section

Dr Elizabeth Bates is a world-leader with regard to research on male victims of domestic abuse and she gave a full presentation on the specific barriers that male victims face with respect to help-seeking.

She stated that a key reason for a range of barriers was because of the societal and political stereotype that assumes all men are perpetrators and all women are the victims. This problem and the ensuing barriers were fuelled by similar media coverage, public policy, professional practice and funding.

Male victims who are victims of intimate partner violence who do reach out are likely to be at risk of secondary victimisation. That is, support services regard them as potential perpetrators and/or 'not victims' by virtue of being male.

Dr Bates set out that there was a clear need for a parallel strategy for men and boys because:

- The present situation will exacerbate the problems faced by male victims of intimate partner violence.
- Men would be less vulnerable to legal and administrative aggression, that is, the abuse and control of male victims through legal systems such as the threat of false allegations and the continual breaching of family court orders.

- Men are currently expected to change to fit the current “domestic abuse” system rather than the system being tailored to fit around them.
 - It would help to breakdown problematic stereotypes.
 - It would enable gender responsive and inclusive ways of understanding and provision of appropriate support services.
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(E) House of Lords Questions

On 9 June 2022, Lord Ponsonby led a debate in the House of Lords on male victims of violence which was focussed on this subject. A number of other peers also contributed including Lord Farmer.¹⁶

The minister was not supportive of a separate strategy, claiming that women and domestic abuse organisations would complain. However, there is no evidence to support this and, as Ally Fogg’s testimony shows, many women’s groups would value the clarification of having a women and girls strategy which only covered women and girls.

The Minister also stated that the Government had "engaged widely with the sector before the Domestic Abuse Act and before the Supporting Male Victims document was produced. The whole premise of our actions is based on the advice and support from, and engagement with, the sector."

However, in asking the four speakers and other organisations in this sector who support men, they are clear that the voice of male victims and the male victim sector were not taken into account/listened to on this. All are united on the need for a parallel strategy and the need to stop classifying male victims of these crimes, victims of violence against men and boys. This has been their position throughout all Government consultations and interactions.

In addition, there is no evidence that charities who support female victims of these crimes, oppose a strategy for male victims.

¹⁶ House of Lords Hansard: [Male Victims of Crime](#) (9 June 2022)

(F) Conclusion

After hearing the testimony from the speakers, the APPG believes that to ensure that male victims of intimate violence receive the support and recognition they need, the Government must by International Men's Day (19 November 2022):

- Start the process for creating an "Intimate Violence Against Men and Boys" strategy in partnership and collaboration with male victims and the organisations that represent them. This must be in place by the end of 2023.
- End classifying and defining male victims of sexual abuse/violence, domestic abuse, stalking, forced marriage and so-called 'honour' based violence as victims of violence against women and girls. Male victims should be classed in their own right as "intimate violence against men and boys". This would also include the ending of this imposition on men and boys, of which they have never consented or been consulted on.
- Announce the creation of a national policing strategy and plan to coordinate the response to male victims of these crimes.

Annex 1

Full Statement: Dame Vera Baird QC, Victim's Commissioner.

"It has long been my view and I have spoken out on this several times in the last year, that there is insufficient focus on men and boys in the drive to tackle sexual violence, domestic abuse and other forms of interpersonal violence such as so-called honour-based abuse.

"Men and boys suffer a number of unique barriers when it comes to reporting and seeking help. This includes harmful stereotyping and popular myths and misconceptions around male victims.

"In particular notions of masculinity and perceptions of how men 'should' act or behave can act as powerful deterrents to coming forward and accessing help. The provision of specialist victim support for men and boys is also limited and lacking. "

"As survivors of abuse, men and boys deserve to be fully supported in a way that is tailored to their needs and helps them to cope and recover."

"I have consistently argued that men and boys who are victims of interpersonal violence require their own strategy. The drivers of their abuse differ and, in turn, the harms and impacts are experienced differently. Men and boys deserve better than recent lacklustre Home Office reports.

"It is beyond time for the design of a dedicate men and boys' strategy with specific policies, strategic targets, milestones and funding, which sits independently of a Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy.

"Physical and sexual violence and domestic abuse against men and boys is not 'violence against women and girls'. The Home Office must stop being tone-deaf on this issue and commit to a separate consultation and separate strategy for male victims.

Annex 2

This policy report has been authored by:

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