



HM Government

Position statement on male victims of crimes considered in the cross-Government strategy on ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

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Position statement on male victims of crimes considered in the cross-government strategy on ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

The government recognises that a significant number of men and boys also experience violent and abusive crimes that are captured in the Ending VAWG Strategy such as domestic abuse, all forms of current and historic sexual violence, stalking, and so-called ‘honour based’ violence/abuse (HBV/A), including forced marriage, as well as the risks and harms associated with prostitution and sex work. The government is committed to preventing all forms of gender-based violence and addressing it wherever and however it occurs. We know that these crimes disproportionately affect women and girls, which is why these crimes are captured within the cross-government [Ending VAWG Strategy](#)¹. The Strategy sets out our vision for supporting all victims and survivors, including men and boys, and this position paper is intended to sit alongside the Strategy as a complementary and connected piece of work.

This paper seeks to clarify and strengthen our response to the increasing volume of male victims who come forward to report crimes captured in the Ending VAWG Strategy, and reaffirms our commitment under the government’s VAWG Strategy and Victims Strategy to male victims and survivors of these crimes. It explores the challenges male victims face and outlines additional commitments to better enable victims and survivors to come forward and receive the support they need, and to help bring more perpetrators to justice. This statement does not intend to draw out comparisons nor create division between different groups of victims and survivors.

We are indebted to the expertise of the specialist sectors that support victims and survivors of these crimes, academics, charities, local authorities and police. In particular, we thank victims and survivors who responded to the *Tackling Domestic Abuse* consultation who provided insight and data for the development of this position paper.

Male Victims and Survivors

Victims of crimes captured in the Ending VAWG Strategy will experience and respond differently depending on their unique experiences. It is important that men and boys are not seen as a single homogenous group, and nor should it be assumed that in cases where men are victims, women are perpetrators.

The available data provides an indication of the prevalence of male victims but does not reflect complex interpersonal dynamics within relationships. The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) for the year ending March 2018, estimated 2 million adults aged 16-59 experienced domestic abuse in the last year, equating to a prevalence rate of approximately 6 in 100 adults, not inclusive of children who witness abuse². The prevalence of domestic abuse for men is 4.2%, equating to approximately 695,000 victims and survivors across England and Wales². Between April 2014 and March 2017 there were a total of 400 domestic homicides recorded by the police in England and Wales; 27% of these victims being men (107)². Six in ten male victims of domestic homicide were killed by another male; and around half of male victims were killed by a partner of ex-partner².

An estimated 0.9% of men in England and Wales (140,000) aged 16 to 59 experienced sexual assault in the year ending March 2018, an increase on the

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-to-end-violence-against-women-and-girls-2016-to-2020>

² <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2018>

previous year³. Data collected by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) shows that there has been a 201% increase in the number of men and boys accessing MoJ-funded rape support services from 2014-18, available for men and boys over 13. We also recognise the interplay between child sexual abuse and adult experience of sexual and domestic abuse. Survivors of child sexual abuse have long-term support needs and can be vulnerable to a range of further harms.

Men are also victims of so-called 'honour-based' violence, with male victims forced into marriage for a variety of reasons, such as to strengthen family ties, to secure visas, to attempt to 'cure' or mask trans identity or homosexuality, or to find a carer for an individual with a disability. Data from the joint Home Office and Foreign & Commonwealth Office Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) shows 21% of cases related to male victims and survivors (2017)⁴. The cases dealt with by the FMU suggest that amongst individuals with learning disabilities, men are slightly more likely to be forced into marriage than women. In 2017 of the 8% of cases that involved a victim and survivor with learning difficulties, just over half (55%) were male.

Data from the CSEW (2015-17) shows gay and bisexual men are more likely than heterosexual men to be victims of all crime, including the crimes framed within the Ending VAWG Strategy⁵. Stonewall's research shows almost half (49%) of all gay and bisexual men have experienced at least one incident of abuse from a family member or partner since the age of 16⁶. For transgender individuals, the National LGBT Survey found that transgender men were notably more likely to have experienced an incident involving someone they lived with than gay and bisexual men, including sexual harassment or violence, coercive or controlling behaviour, and physical harassment or violence⁵.

There are also huge effects on children who witness domestic abuse, who can experience short and long-term cognitive, behavioural and emotional effects as a result. We estimate that between a quarter and a third of young people in the UK have been exposed to domestic abuse, with children exposed to parental violence being almost three times more likely to experience violence in their own adult relationships⁷. It is therefore vital that children are protected and supported in abusive households.

These figures clearly show that men and boys can be victims of these crimes and we know due to a number of barriers, some of which are set out below, many do not come forward to report.

Identification and Reporting

It can be difficult for men to identify themselves as a victim or survivor of the crimes framed within the VAWG Strategy, which remain largely hidden. Harmful gender norms, shame or honour, and stereotypes of masculinity and sexuality can act as barriers for male victims and survivors to seek support and can impact on reporting. For example, some male victims have found that harmful gender stereotypes around masculinity prevent them from discussing these issues or reaching out for help until they're in crisis. In their national research, the voluntary sector specialist umbrella

³<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/sexualoffendingvictimisationandthepaththroughthecriminaljusticesystem/2018-12-13>

⁴ 21% of 746 cases. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/forced-marriage-unit-statistics-2017>

⁵ Annex 11 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-lgbt-survey-summary-report>

⁶ https://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/Gay_and_Bisexual_Men_s_Health_Survey_2013_.pdf

⁷ <http://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Safe%20Young%20Lives%20web.pdf>

agency the Male Survivors Partnership concluded that 20% of the men sampled took over 31 years to disclose being sexually abused⁸.

When choosing to report a crime, victims and survivors face a range of barriers, which can be present regardless of gender. These include, but are not exclusive to: fear of not being believed, understood or taken seriously; feelings of shame or guilt; fear of their sexuality being revealed; or not recognising the situation as abuse^{9,10}. It is therefore imperative that the first response from the police is right the first time, every time.

Contributors to SafeLives Insights data, all of whom run specialist front-line domestic abuse services, show that the 4.7% of their clients who are male are just as likely to report a DA incident to the police as their female clients¹¹. The data – which was collected in the three years to March 2018 – also showed that gender made no difference to the number of times victims had reported domestic abuse incidents to the police before they were referred to a specialist service. A notable difference however was that male victims and survivors were more likely to access services through a referral from the police compared to female victims and survivors.

There has been an 18% increase in the number of sexual offences recorded by the police compared with the previous year (for both male and female victims)¹². The number of men and boys aged over 13 reporting a sexual assault has increased by 57% from 3,446 in 2015/16 to 5,399 in 2017/18¹³. More victims and survivors have the confidence to come forward and report the crime to police, with increasingly more individuals also seeking support from specialist third sector providers. High profile court cases and TV dramas have also contributed to the raised awareness of the support available to male victims and survivors of rape and sexual abuse. Following the Coronation Street male rape story, the National Male Survivor Helpline experienced a 1700% increase in calls¹⁴.

Access to support services

All victims and survivors deserve access to timely and appropriate support. Some support services such as the Men's Advice Line, the national helpline for male victims of domestic abuse, offer online communication channels allowing victims and survivors to choose between instant and non-instant responses and their preferred method of contact¹⁵. Whilst all victims and survivors face barriers to reporting, a research study found five key themes explaining men's reluctance to seek help: service target perception; shame and/or embarrassment; denial; stigmatisation; and fear¹⁶. In addition, structural inequalities can discriminate or exclude, explicitly or implicitly, groups of victims and survivors such as gay, bisexual and transgender (GBT) men and boys.

⁸ <http://www.malesurvivor.co.uk/>

⁹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/compendium/focusonviolentcrimeandsexualoffences/yearendingmarch2015>

¹⁰ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/sexualoffencesinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2017>

¹¹ <http://www.safelives.org.uk/>

¹² <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingjune2018>

¹³ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/crimeinenglandandwalesappendedixtables> (Table A4)

¹⁴ 38 persons over 15 hours following the episode <http://www.malesurvivor.co.uk/>

¹⁵ <http://www.mensadvice.org.uk/>

¹⁶ Tsui, V., Cheung, M., & Leung, P. (2010). Help-seeking among male victims of partner abuse: men's hard times. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 38(6), 769–780.

GBT victims and survivors may be less likely to seek support because services are primarily designed with heterosexual women in mind, and evidence suggests GBT men are sometimes discouraged from their use, and unaware of whether they are 'GBT friendly'¹⁷. Men and boys require inclusive support that understands their needs. The support organisation Galop identified that LGBT people experienced a range of structural, cultural, individual and interpersonal barriers when accessing domestic abuse and sexual violence services in the UK and stressed the need for sexual and gender-informed support¹⁸. The research reflects all LGBT people but has relevance for some male victims:

- 1. Structural barriers:** lack of visibility and representation of LGBT issues publicly, lack of established partnerships with relevant LGBT organisations, refusing services based on gender identity or perceived gender identity (aligned with single-sex exemptions in Equality Act 2010);
- 2. Cultural barriers:** lack of LGBT awareness amongst frontline professionals; and
- 3. Individual barriers:** concerns about homophobia/biphobia/transphobia in service provision due to previous poor experiences of reporting/support services, belief they will not be taken seriously.

It is vital that support services are clear about what support they offer and to whom, taking a gender-informed approach; understand the harmful gender and societal norms that can act as barriers for men to engage; take into consideration the needs of the victims and survivors; and understand the gendered experiences of these crimes while recognising the need for a proportionate response. Services should use the [National Statement of Expectations](#) to ensure the local response is as collaborative, inclusive, robust and effective as it can be, and should be provided on the basis of a robust needs assessment¹⁹. Needs assessments are to be well evidenced and should consider the needs of those from marginalised communities, such as BME and LGBT. Experience from victim and survivor services indicates that the gender of the support worker is less of a consideration for male victims and survivors than an appropriate, aware and expert service.

We are aware of the excellent resources already in place developed by sector experts that support commissioners and providers to develop and provide the best services for male victims and survivors, and we encourage the use of the following:

- The Respect Male Victims Toolkit²⁰
- Male Survivors Partnership – male service quality standards²¹
- Barriers faced by LGBT people in accessing non-LGBT Domestic Violence Support Services- Galop¹⁵

Prosecution

While the majority of victims and survivors will not go through a formal criminal justice process, we encourage all victims and survivors to come forward and report incidents to the police, so we can bring more perpetrators to justice.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) published a [public statement on male victims](#) of crimes considered within the Ending VAWG strategy, which outlines the CPS

¹⁷https://www.niesr.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publications/160719_REPORT_LGBT_evidence_review_NIESR_FIN_ALPDF.pdf

¹⁸ <http://www.galop.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/For-Service-Providers-Barriers.pdf>

¹⁹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/574665/VAWG_National_Statement_of_Expectations_-_FINAL.PDF

²⁰ <http://www.mensadvice.org.uk/help-and-information/frontline-workers-and-male-domestic-violence-victims/toolkit-for-work-with-male-victims-of-domestic-violence/>

²¹ <http://www.malesurvivor.co.uk/male-quality-standards/>

support for male victims and survivors of abuse and reaffirms their commitments to them²². The statement recognised the significant numbers of men and boys affected by these crimes and made several commitments. This included commitments to provide information for prosecutors to help challenge myths and stereotypes, understand the experience of male victims within the criminal justice system, and provide details of support services for male victims.

Government recognises these crimes can have a lasting impact on victims and survivors and will continue to work with partners across local and national government, police, and the third sector to support male victims and survivors.

Survivors Manchester Case Study

On a night out in Manchester, Sam (22) became separated from his best friend and whilst outside the City Centre nightclub, he joined a group of party goers and ended up back at a party. As the party began to dwindle Sam was offered 'one for the road', which he accepted, which he states left him feeling unable to concentrate and made everything hazy.

Only partially conscious of his surroundings, Sam states he became aware of two men pulling at his belt and jeans and, as he tried to speak, he found it difficult to say anything. He remembers one of the men telling him he would like this and, shortly after, Sam recognised he was being raped.

Feeling unable to move, as if trapped in his own body, Sam's mind and body shut down until he became consciously aware of the light through the window. He gathered his clothes, which were folded neatly on the side, got dressed and left.

Realising what had happened and feeling an overwhelming sense of shame and guilt for not being able to stop it, Sam stood on the bridge leading back to the City Centre apartment he shared with his girlfriend and contemplated jumping.

Walking through the front door he was greeted by his girlfriend and best friend and immediately broke down, telling of his ordeal and later reporting to the Police.

With the help of Survivors Manchester, an organisation specifically supporting male victims of sexual violence and abuse, Sam says he has been able to address the impact of the trauma and build his own journey of recovery.

Commitments:

Building on our work so far and to further support male victims and survivors, we will continue to work with the sector supporting male victims to ensure that timely and high-quality support is available to help victims cope with, and as far as possible, recover from the impact of these crimes. This includes work to implement service standards and cross-government work to join-up services to create more seamless and integrated pathways of support. In addition, we will:

1. Provide £500,000 to specialist organisations that support male victims and survivors of domestic abuse to bolster support to these victims and survivors nationwide and provide a more comprehensive package of measures.
2. Provide £500,000 to specialist LGBT domestic abuse organisations to improve inter-agency support for LGBT victims and survivors; raise awareness within

²² <https://www.cps.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/public-statement-male-victims-crimes-covered-by-CPS-VAWG-strategy.pdf>

LGBT communities to increase reporting; and improve monitoring and recording practices.

3. Provide £146,000 to Survivors Manchester to support the formation and development of the Male Survivors Partnership, the UK umbrella development agency for organisations working with male victims and survivors of sexual violence; whilst using research to gain a greater understanding of the needs of male survivors to inform commissioners, policy makers and service providers.
4. Improve support for all victims of sexual violence, including men and boys, by providing £24m over the next three years to vital services providing advice, support and counselling to help victims cope and, as far as possible, recover from these devastating crimes.
5. Work with the CPS to improve the gender and relationship breakdown of CPS data and work with police forces to extract data on gender of victims and survivors and perpetrators to understand better the relationship and trends.
6. Ensure communication campaigns are inclusive of men and boys to raise awareness of male victims and encourage male victims and survivors to report abuse.
7. Conduct a review of the National Statement of Expectations and, as part of this, consider its impact on the commissioning of male support services to ensure commissioners are educated on the complexities of commissioning services that are victim and survivor focused, gender aware and provide an appropriate response according to the needs of the victim or survivor, including GBT victims and survivors.
8. Ensure that the subjects of Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education, and Health Education address, for example, the importance of building positive and respectful relationships, consent (including at primary, age-appropriate teaching on boundaries and permission seeking), gender stereotypes, and outlining how and when to seek help.
9. Utilise evidence from across government on male experiences of crimes captured in the Ending VAWG Strategy to inform future policies and training.
10. Explore the potential benefits of giving full commissioning responsibilities for rape and sexual abuse services to five Police and Crime Commissioning areas, to use their local knowledge to plan, prioritise and commission specialist practical and emotional services to better support all victims of sexual violence.
11. Commit to develop a new delivery model for victim and survivor support services, including sexual violence, that will coordinate and combine funding for victim and survivor support services across government to increase its impact.
12. Work across government and with the NHS to implement the Strategy Direction for Sexual Assault and Abuse Services. This includes developing a more integrated, seamless and specialist support pathway for all victims and survivors of sexual violence and abuse.