Government Equalities Office

Changing Gender Norms: Engaging with Men and Boys

Research report prepared by Stephen Burrell, Sandy Ruxton and Nicole Westmarland, Durham University, for the Government Equalities Office

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Durham Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse

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Introduction

This report provides an in-depth exploration of how to engage with men and boys to address social norms connected to masculinity and challenge and change harmful gender stereotypes in the UK today. The research was commissioned in 2019 by the Government Equalities Office. The primary aim of the project was to consolidate existing knowledge from both research and practitioner experience, and apply that with an engagement toolkit which sits alongside this research report together with a longer literature review. There is surprisingly little research in the UK context on how to engage with men and boys in relation to gendered social norms. As such, this research should be understood as a starting point to open up discussions in this area rather than the final word on the issue.

'Social norms' are implicit and informal rules of behaviour shared by members of a group or society, which most people within that group accept and abide by. 'Gender norms' define the different practices that are expected of women (i.e. what is understood as being 'feminine') and of men (i.e. what is seen as being 'masculine'). There is ambiguity in the ways in which the concept of 'gender norms' is used, and different terms (e.g. 'gender roles', 'masculinities'/'femininities') often overlap or are used interchangeably. For the purposes of clarity, we prefer to use the term *'*gendered social norms*'*.

Research methods

The research involved three stages: first, a rapid evidence assessment of relevant literature; second, seventeen key-informant interviews; and finally, an online survey of 143 practitioners' views. Three online meetings were also held during the project with an NGO expert panel. Given the short timeframe of the project, the research was intended to be exploratory. This is reflected in the concise nature of the rapid evidence assessment, and the relatively small samples for the key-informant interviews and survey. Nevertheless, they still provide diverse, important and useful insights into the impacts of gendered social norms on men and boys in the UK today, and how to develop effective engagement work and policy interventions on these issues.

Review of existing literature

The literature highlights that social and gender norms change over time, across cultures and within particular groups. Whilst attitudes and values can reside in individuals, norms are also embedded in wider organisations, institutions, structures, processes and systems, and reflect the rules, laws, customs and ideologies of different societies (Connell and Pearse, 2014). Changing gender norms is therefore not just about changing individual mind-sets, important though that objective may be.

The literature review demonstrated that gendered social norms continue to significantly shape the lives of men and boys in the UK. While important shifts have taken place, these often reflect changes in what it means to be a man rather than a reduction in the need to conform to certain

ideas of masculinity more generally. Furthermore, changes in normative perceptions do not necessarily equate to changes in behaviour. For instance, research suggests that women still carry out the bulk of childcare and housework despite now playing a significant role in the labour market (van der Gaag et al., 2019).

Expert interviews

The key-informant interviews were wide ranging in nature. They underscored how vital it is to adopt an intersectional approach when seeking to understand and engage with issues around men and masculinities. Gendered social norms can vary significantly among different groups of men and boys and are shaped by different power relations and inequalities in addition to those of gender. For example: older men face an increasing contradiction between their conscious or unconscious desire to live up to norms they grew up with ('be tough', 'be strong', 'be independent'), and the reality that they may be less able to do so. Men with disabilities are often unwilling or unable to live up to 'ideal' models of masculinity based on body strength and performance. Gay, bisexual and/or transgender men are often marginalised as a result of being seen to go against heteronormative masculine expectations. When working with men and boys, it is crucial to take such differences into account to make sure that interventions are relevant to the diverse contexts in which they live their lives.

Another theme across the key-informant interviews was the need to find ways to engage with men and boys positively, without negative preconceptions (which may themselves be based on stereotypes of masculinity). This means providing a source of hope and optimism for men and boys about how they can be part of changes in social norms.

Survey of people working with men and/or boys

The first part of the online survey asked about traditional masculine norms related to health and wellbeing. For each of the five example norms given, the majority of respondents felt they had a strong or moderate influence on the men and boys they work with. This was particularly true of notions that men should not show weakness, and that men should be physically strong (in both cases, 50% felt this norm was strongly held and 30% felt it was moderately held).

The second part of the survey asked for respondents' perspectives on the norms held by the men and boys they work with regarding men's roles within intimate partner relationships. The findings here were more varied and complex. In two cases, the majority of respondents did feel that a traditional gender norm remained highly influential: that women make better caregivers for young children than men (which 43% felt was strongly held and 33% felt was moderately held), and that a man should be the main 'breadwinner' in the family (which 29% felt was strongly held and 37% felt was moderately held). For the other three example norms, responses were more mixed.

The third part asked respondents about their views on the impact of gender norms which could be understood as contributing to violence against women and girls. This set of example norms generated the most diverse findings. In some cases, the majority of respondents suggested that norms of masculinity connected to violence against women and girls were not particularly influential for the men and boys that they work with. Others, however, remained strongly held; for example, for the notion that women sometimes act 'hard to get' for sex and say no when they

really mean yes, 14% viewed this as being strongly held, 22% felt it was moderately held, 22% felt it was weakly held, and only 16% felt it was not held at all.

Conclusions and recommendations

Here we set out key conclusions from the research and a selection of our recommendations for taking this work forward in the UK.

Policy and campaigns - Norms of masculinity are at the roots of a range of significant policy and public health issues, from men's mental health to violence against women. It is important not to lose focus on the importance of structural, legislative and societal change – these play the biggest role in shaping social norms, and attention to norms should not lead to a focus only on individuals. Here are two of our four recommendations on this:

- There is a real need for more engagement with men and boys (and all members of society) across the UK from a young age about gender norms and inequalities.

- Policies, programmes and campaigns should be designed in ways which encourage gender equality and avoid perpetuating harmful norms and stereotypes. In representing and approaching men and masculinities, it is important to avoid reproducing stereotypes and limiting norms around gender in the process.

Engaging with men and boys - Whilst one-off, single-level forms of engagement are an important first step, they are not enough to foster sustainable transformations in gender norms and inequalities.

- Policymakers and practitioners should work together to develop multi-level, in-depth interventions with men and boys to shift gender norms in different contexts.

- A positive approach to engaging with men and boys through dialogue, highlighting opportunities for creating change, is an important element of effective practice.

- Guidance on working with men and boys should focus on how to build effective relationships that enable productive work to happen, and staff and volunteers doing specialist engagement work in this area should be trained to a high standard.

- *Childhood and fatherhood* - Gender norms and stereotypes constrain opportunities for boys and girls by presenting them with a limited set of possible expectations and behaviours, reinforced through e.g. different play environments, toys and clothing.

- Guidance and training for ante-natal, early childhood and health practitioners should be developed so they are aware of the impact of gender norms and how they can be shifted. It is crucial to begin to work with new fathers and with boys at a young age when they may be most receptive to the questioning of norms.

- Norms of fatherhood have expanded in recent decades to include closer involvement with children. The introduction of a number of months of paid leave targeted specifically at fathers would reinforce this trend.

Education - Dominant norms of masculinity for boys and young men at school often involve 'hardness', sporting prowess, 'coolness', and casual treatment of schoolwork. However, away from peer group pressures, boys can be much more reflective. There is considerable variation among boys at school, and social class and ethnicity are frequently more influential on achievement than gender. Here are three of our five recommendations:

- There is a need for greater reflection and learning about gender norms and inequalities throughout the school curriculum.
- Training should be available for all teachers on the influence of gender stereotypes and the benefits of challenging them.
- Literacy programmes should be mindful of the influence of gender norms, and it is not enough for them to be gender neutral if they are aimed at raising the literacy levels of boys and young men.

Health and wellbeing - Many issues connected to the health and wellbeing of men and boys are directly related to social norms and traditional constructions of masculinity, such as the expectation to be 'tough' and 'strong', appear in control, take risks, and not seek help. However, there are also norms relating to masculinity, e.g. around physical fitness, that may positively support health. Two of our four recommendations on this are as follows:

- Attention to gender norms and how these play out for different groups should be a central component of health strategies at national and local levels.
- It is vital to create more supportive community spaces to help address social isolation and loneliness among men, and give them opportunities to explore issues around gender, masculinity, relationships, sexuality, violence, health and wellbeing.

Employment - Organisational structures, cultures and practices tend still to be based on an assumed masculine norm of lifetime, full-time, continuous (male) employment. 'Masculine' values are strongly embedded within many organisations (e.g. through job segregation, sex discrimination, gender pay gaps, sexual harassment, workaholic culture).

- Employers, trade unions and careers advisors should take a more proactive approach to challenging gender stereotypes in employment and training choices.
- Work-based initiatives should be developed to engage men around the health issues they face, including risk-taking and mental health issues.
- Employers should make greater efforts to support men's roles in caring.

Violence against women and girls - Norms of masculinity are a central factor in the continued pervasiveness of violence against women and girls, with expectations of superiority, power and entitlement over women seemingly continuing to be influential in perceptions of what it means to be a man.

- A gendered approach to tackling violence against women and girls is vital for effective policy and practice interventions.

- Transforming gender norms and tackling gender inequalities should form a key part of efforts to prevent violence against women and girls from happening in the first place, and engaging men and boys is a particularly important aspect of this.

Media - Representations of men and masculinities in TV shows, adverts, magazines, films and music videos habitually reflect restrictive, unrealistic and stereotypical images. Increasing and easy access to pornography routinely presents men as dominant and women as sexual objects. However, the media can also be powerful in generating a more positive debate when they challenge accepted ways of thinking and behaving.

- Educational initiatives to assist viewers, and especially young men, to analyse media content critically – and particularly the portrayal of gender – should be significantly expanded.

- Comprehensive relationships and sex education which considers harmful gender norms in relation to pornography is vital, along with the development of media literacy and strengthening the filtering of access to pornographic websites (especially for those under 18).

- There is potential for the development of online communication and social media campaigns which challenge restrictive representations of masculinity.

- Men in positions of power should provide high-profile and proactive support for gender equality and encourage other men to play their part, including by modelling different, healthier ways of being a man.

Developing organisations working with men and boys - There is a range of innovative and impactful work being done with men and boys and on gender norms around the UK; however, it is currently quite fragmented and piecemeal. In addition, engaging men in building gender equality will be counterproductive if an alternative message is given by the underfunding and undervaluing of services for women and girls.

- Organisations leading the way in engaging with men and boys and looking critically at masculinities should be supported and resourced by the Government; however, this should not be at the expense of women's organisations and services.

- Organisations working in this area should be more connected in order to share good practice and collaborate. The Government could help to facilitate this.

Approaching gendered social norms - In order to create normative change, and in ways which can be measured, it is important to be clear and specific in language and frameworks about the norms that we want to shift, how they work and how we aim to change them. We have five recommendations on this, including the following two:

- Policymakers and practitioners should consider how they can embed gender-sensitive and gender-transformative approaches within different interventions - and not only those which explicitly seek to address gendered issues.

- A key task is to illuminate the diverse ways in which many men are already living their lives and challenging stereotypes around masculinity.

Intersectionality - It is important to recognise that men and boys are not a homogenous group and are simultaneously affected by different aspects of their identity and positions within different social categories and systems, including age, social class, 'race' and ethnicity, sexuality and disability as well as gender. These factors also shape gender norms, which vary for different groups of men and boys in different contexts.

- Policy and practice should adopt an intersectional framework to understand the complexities of men's and boys' lives, recognising that some men have more power than others as a result of different social inequalities, to engage with them in relatable and relevant ways.

Evidence gaps - There is a need for more extensive research and measurement of the nature and impacts of gendered social norms in the UK today. We still do not have enough understanding about the dynamics of how to change gender norms. This is especially true for the UK, where there has been less work in this area than in some other contexts.

- Policy and practice should draw from new and existing research on men, masculinities, gender norms and inequalities when developing interventions.

- The Government Equalities Office could play a central role in disseminating promising practices in engaging men and boys around gender norms.

Chapter 1. Introduction

This report provides an in-depth exploration of how to engage with men and boys to address social norms connected to masculinity and challenge and change harmful gender stereotypes in the UK today. The primary aim of the research was to consolidate existing knowledge from both existing research and practitioner experience about how to effectively apply this knowledge to develop a toolkit to support future work with men and boys on issues related to masculine gender norms in the UK.

The research was commissioned in 2019 by the Government Equalities Office (GEO) as a result of its efforts to build evidence on the gender pay gap and how best to close it. To support this work, the GEO is developing research on topics related to the unobserved element of the gender pay gap, including gender norms, and what more Government, schools, parents and individuals can do to help reduce the harmful stereotypes, attitudes and behaviours that can contribute towards it. With this project, the GEO sought to find out more about what works to engage men and boys on gender and relationships in relation to the UK context. The GEO set out the following research questions for this piece of work:

- How are masculine gender norms formed and enacted in the UK?
- How does this vary by demographic? E.g. people from different ethnic minority groups, people with disabilities, people from different socioeconomic groups, LGBT people?
- What impact do masculine gender norms have on the behaviour of men and boys in the UK?
- What impact do masculine gender norms have on the wellbeing of men and boys in the UK?
- Do masculine gender norms contribute to violence against women and girls in the UK?
- What are the best ways to communicate with men and boys about harmful masculine gender norms? How can this knowledge be applied to support delivery of UK policy interventions?
- Have any interventions been successful in reducing the negative impacts of masculine gender norms? How could these be applied in the UK policy context?

These are very broad, complex questions and there was a limited time period for the work to be completed in. We responded to them using a rapid evidence assessment, qualitative interviews with experts, and an online survey of practitioners who work with men and/or boys. The work was supported by an expert panel. However, there are limitations to the research, including our inevitably restricted recruitment approach (relying on networks and snowball sampling) and relatively small sample sizes. In particular, it was difficult to fully apply the intersectional lens that this issue requires. This report should be read with such caveats in mind. There is surprisingly little research in the UK context on how to engage with men and boys in relation to gendered

social norms. As such, this research should be classed as a starting point to open up discussions in this area rather than the final word on the issue.

The remainder of this chapter will explore the concept of gendered social norms and discuss how it is used in this report. Chapter 2 describes the methods the research team used to answer these questions in more detail (including the limitations of the research). Chapter 3 then gives an overview of findings from a rapid evidence assessment of relevant literature. The following two chapters report the findings from the new data collected for this report, based on key-informant interviews (Chapter 4) and an online survey (Chapter 5). We also conducted three online meetings over the course of the project with a panel of nine experts from relevant non-government organisations (NGOs), which informed the development of the research. Finally, in Chapter 6 we bring together our main conclusions and recommendations.

1.1 What are social norms in relation to gender?

Social norms and gender norms are concepts which are highly influential in understanding the gendered behaviours of individuals, as well as the gender relations and inequalities in society more broadly. We begin this report by discussing some of the thinking behind them – which is also much debated and contested. The term ‘social norms’ refers to the implicit and informal rules of behaviour shared by members of a group or society - a ‘reference group’ (Bicchieri, 2006) - that are held in place by empirical and normative expectations, and which most people within that group accept and abide by (Cislaghi and Heise, 2016). Social norms are influenced by a variety of factors, such as belief systems, the socioeconomic context, and through perceived rewards and sanctions for adhering to (or not complying with) prevailing norms. Norms are embedded in formal and informal institutions and produced and reproduced through social interactions. They are learnt primarily by observing:

1. What other people do (X) in situation (Y) (‘empirical expectations’ or ‘descriptive norms’); and

2. How other people react (including not reacting at all) when someone does X in situation Y (‘normative expectations’ or ‘injunctive norms’) (Bicchieri, 2006; Cialdini et al., 2006; Mackie et al., 2015).

Within different social groups and societies, there are many powerful and influential social norms constructed in relation to ideas about gender - often referred to as ‘gender norms’. These specifically define the different things that are expected of women (i.e. what is understood as being ‘feminine’) and of men (i.e. what is seen as being ‘masculine’). As with all social norms, these vary according to context and within different social groups (for example, depending on class, ethnicity, sexuality and age) and societies. This is one reason why it is important to take into account that rather than there being one form of masculinity or femininity, there is a plurality - and these are ordered hierarchically, with some forms holding more power than others (Connell, 2005). Furthermore, these norms often play an important role in maintaining and legitimising gender inequalities – indeed, that may often be where their origins lie (Connell, 2005; Hearn, 2012).

Gendered social norms shape acceptable, appropriate and obligatory actions for individuals in a social group or society. They are both embedded in institutions and nested in people’s minds. They play an important role in shaping women’s and men’s unequal access to resources and

freedoms, affecting their voices, agency and power (Cislaghi, Manji and Heise, 2018). Gendered social norms are usually taken to define the expected behaviour of people who identify as, or are identified by others as being, male or female. In other words, they are constructed in a binary way and often do not recognise or include non-binary or gender-fluid identities. They are frequently heteronormative, with lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender (LGB and/or T)1 people often experiencing marginalisation as a result of dominant gender norms, which they may be viewed as failing to conform to (Connell, 2005). Indeed, more space for dialogue and research is needed to advance our understandings of the relationships between sex and gender, and how gender norms impact on those who do not necessarily identify as a man or a woman or within a binary of masculinities and femininities (Hearn, 2014).

It is important to note that social and gender norms are contested, and are continually subject to debate, dissent and re-evaluation. They change over time, across cultures and within particular reference groups. Whilst attitudes and values reside in individuals, norms are also embedded in wider organisations, structures, and systems, and reflect the rules, laws, customs and ideologies of different societies (Connell and Pearse, 2014). Changing gender norms is therefore not just about changing individual mind-sets.

1.2 Conceptualising gendered social norms

There is sometimes ambiguity in the ways in which the concept of ‘gender norms’ is used, and different terms often overlap or are used interchangeably, such as ‘gender norms’, ‘gender roles’, and ‘masculinities’/’femininities’. For the purposes of clarity, we primarily use the term ‘gendered social norms’ throughout this report, as we are discussing a specific, gendered subset of broader social norms, and how they might apply in different ways for different groups of men and boys.

This also makes it possible to move beyond some of the critiques that have been made about the notion of changing gender norms, or there being ‘healthy’ or ‘harmful’ forms of gender norms. Some theorists (e.g. Flood, 2015a) have contested that gender norms altogether can be seen as harmful, in the sense that people should not feel that they have to conform to any specific social expectations based on their gender or sex. Furthermore, norms of ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’ are relational - they are constructed in relationship with one another and defined in opposition to one another, and this is generally seen as being a hierarchical relationship (Connell, 2005). In other words, the masculine is defined as superior to and dominant over the feminine, and even positive traits commonly associated with femininity are typically subordinated in relation to traits associated with masculinity.

However, social norms more broadly can serve positive societal functions, and it is possible and desirable to strive to create healthier, egalitarian social norms. It could, therefore, be argued that rather than changing gender norms, we should seek to reduce their impacts and, ultimately, remove them altogether from society, so that people can live their lives free from any specific set of expectations based around gender. It is difficult to justify why any positive trait frequently associated with femininity (e.g. being caring) or masculinity (e.g. being courageous) should only

[1] Following Donovan and Barnes (2019a), we use the term LGB and/or T to acknowledge the differences between sexualities and gender identity and to clarify that not all transgender people identify as LG or B but might identify as heterosexual, asexual or pansexual.

be associated with women or men. Furthermore, even when qualities perceived to be positive are gendered in this way, they can still foster negative consequences - for example, an expectation for men to act courageously may not be healthy in all circumstances and might make it difficult for men to be open about being vulnerable.

We can instead focus attention on and encourage healthy social norms that apply to all people, such as equality, respect and non-violence within intimate relationships. Indeed, this debate highlights that by engaging men and boys on the basis of fostering healthier forms of masculinity, for example, there is a danger that interventions might actually reaffirm men and boys' commitment to gender norms, rather than helping them to free themselves from such constraints (Burrell, 2018; Flood, 2018). This underscores the importance of developing a coherent theory of change when engaging with men and boys around issues of gender and social norms (Burrell and Flood, 2019).

Chapter 2. Research methods

The research started in March 2019 and began with a rapid evidence assessment of relevant literature, which was added to throughout the project until August 2019. The second part of the research involved conducting seventeen key-informant interviews, between 23rd April and 17th June 2019. Finally, an online survey of practitioners' views was carried out between 17th May and 14th June 2019. Three online video conference meetings were also held at the early, mid and late stages of the project with a NGO expert panel. Each part of the project (including data collection, analysis and write-up) was carried out by all three members of the research team.

Given the short timeframe of the project, the research was intended to be exploratory. This is reflected in the concise nature of the rapid evidence assessment, and the relatively small samples for the key-informant interviews and survey. The samples are, therefore, not representative of the UK population as a whole and may also not be representative or generalisable to the population doing work with men and boys. Nevertheless, they still provide diverse, important and useful insights into the impacts of gendered social norms on men and boys in the UK today, and how to implement effective engagement work and policy interventions on these issues.

2.1 Expert panel

The purpose of the NGO expert panel was to consult with and hear the views of leading practitioners to help inform different aspects of the research and outputs. The panel was made up of nine members, invited to take part as representatives of a range of different NGOs working on issues closely connected to masculine gender norms and identified by the research team as being particularly influential or important for the UK context. In addition, we consulted with the GEO for advice and feedback throughout the project. Hearing these views was an important way of trying to ensure that the project was pertinent to practice and that as broad a range of perspectives as possible were reflected in the research development, as well as reducing the influence of potential biases as a result of existing standpoints from the research team.

2.2 Rapid evidence assessment

As part of the project, we undertook a rapid evidence assessment to ensure that the review of the literature was carried out as efficiently and rigorously as possible within the timescale of the project (Varker et al., 2015). There is a wide range of literature on issues relating to masculine gender norms; relationships, wellbeing, and violence against women; and engaging with men and boys. However, the extent of research which specifically addresses these issues in combination with each other, in ways which are relevant to interventions in the UK context, is much smaller. Utilising the rapid evidence assessment approach enabled us to find the most applicable publications for this specific project, as it meant including or excluding literature based on the following criteria:

Table 1: Rapid evidence assessment - Inclusion and exclusion criteria

	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Geographical location	UK + research which appears particularly relevant or applicable to the UK context	Lack of relevance/applicability to the UK context
Language	English	Not in English
Publication date	2009-2019, or before if judged to be highly influential or relevant	Pre-2009 unless judged to be highly influential or relevant
Publication format	Journal articles, research-based working papers, other academic research, evaluations, policy briefings, governmental and NGO research reports	Student dissertations or theses, overtly political or commentary pieces, research with obvious methodological weaknesses (e.g. no ethical review, no discussion of methods of analysis)
Aim of study	Medium or high overlap with aims of current study	Low overlap with aims of current study
Study design	Primary empirical research (quantitative OR qualitative) OR systematic reviews OR theoretical development	EITHER lacking explanation of methodology OR secondary literature review OR case commentary

In order to find the most relevant literature, we applied the following search terms within two academic bibliographic databases, Google Scholar and Scopus. The numbers indicate how many results each search yielded in the two databases, specifically for sources published between 2009 and 2019:

Table 2: Rapid evidence assessment - Search terms

	+ Men	+ Boys
Relationships + Norms	-Google Scholar: 4 -Scopus: 1,109	-Google Scholar: 3 -Scopus: 197
Wellbeing + Norms	-Google Scholar: 1 -Scopus: 67	-Google Scholar: 0 -Scopus: 28
“Violence against women” + Norms	-Google Scholar: 2 -Scopus: 130	-Google Scholar: 2 -Scopus: 24
Engaging + Norms	-Google Scholar: 3 -Scopus: 129	-Google Scholar: 0 -Scopus: 32

The publications found as a result of these searches were then sifted for relevance using the inclusion and exclusion criteria. From this, a list of the most applicable literature was produced for detailed review. These publications were then read with notes made about key findings, which

were stored in a shared Durham University Box directory and thematically analysed and synthesised to inform the report and engagement toolkit.

To ensure that we did not miss out on any particularly relevant literature, we also used additional methods to find publications. This has included consulting our own existing reference lists; asking contacts with knowledge of the area (including members of our NGO expert panel); and posting call-outs on relevant mailing lists for recommendations (including: British Sociological Association Violence against Women Study Group Jisc mailing list; Masculinity Studies Jisc mailing list, Men against Violence mailing list; MenEngage Europe mailing list; PROFEM mailing list). As a result, we have also cited publications from prior to 2009 if we judged them to be particularly influential or important for the project.

2.3 Interviews with experts in the field

For the first part of the empirical research for the project, we conducted seventeen qualitative key-informant interviews with individuals identified as experts in relation to practice, policy and research on gendered social norms and engaging men and boys in the UK. The participants were selected based on the research team's knowledge of the field together with suggestions made by the NGO expert panel. Several of the interviewees were representatives or practitioners from different organisations relevant to the topic of the research, and we sought to hear a diversity of views to encapsulate the range of different forms of work being undertaken with men and boys. We also spoke to five academic experts on different aspects of masculine gender norms identified as being particularly influential in the UK context.

The interviews were semi-structured, with a range of questions about masculine gender norms in the UK, how to engage effectively with men and boys, and the work that participants were doing and aware of in this area (see Annex I for topic guide). They lasted approximately one hour on average. Interviews were conducted either through an online video call or by phone and transcribed before being thematically analysed. Five interviewees were women and twelve were men, and they were based in different locations across the whole of the UK. The sample was predominantly white British or white European, and one participant was Black African. The sample was generally middle-aged, with ages ranging from 31 to 71.

2.4 Survey of practitioners who work with men and boys

For the second part of the data collection for the project, we sought the perspectives of people doing some form of work with men and/or boys in their everyday lives in the UK via a short (10-15 minute) online survey. While a survey with men and boys as beneficiaries was considered, this was decided against in this project for two reasons. First, due to the longer timescale and higher ethical requirements of doing research with children. Second, as the main purpose of the study was about engagement with men and boys, people whose role involves working with them were viewed as an important group in themselves to survey.

The survey included a mixture of quantitative and qualitative questions about respondents' views on the impacts of masculine gender norms in the UK today, and how to engage with men and boys about these norms (see Annex II for survey questions). The survey was completed by 143 people. It was distributed online through relevant contacts, networks, organisations and social

media accounts, with the help and advice of the NGO expert panel. The majority of respondents (58%) were women, whilst 41% were men[2] (this may reflect women being more aware of issues relating to gender). There was a mixture of ages, largely clustered around the middle age ranges.[3]

Survey respondents were doing a wide range of different forms of work with men and boys in different contexts, including as: teachers (at all levels of education), support workers, GPs, prison officers, NGO practitioners, youth workers, social workers, probation officers, nurses, volunteers, police officers, counsellors, community development workers and paramedics.

- 36% of respondents worked with men/boys of all ages, whilst 64% worked with a specific age group. In most cases this was with young men/boys as children, teenagers, or aged between 18 and 25; however, some did work with men aged 50 and over, for example. Other respondents simply specified here that they worked with adult men.

- 69% of respondents worked with men and/or boys and women and/or girls, whilst 22% worked predominantly with men and/or boys, and 12% worked exclusively with men and/or boys.

- 69% of participants worked with men and/or boys from all ethnic groups, whilst 33% said that they worked mainly with a specific ethnic group (this was typically white British men/boys, presumably because of the demographics of their local area).

- 14% worked with men and/or boys from a specific faith group - specifically Christianity or Islam.

- 67% worked with men and/or boys from all social classes, whilst 34% mainly worked with men and/or boys belonging to a specific social class (mostly working-class) although in some cases (for example, for a university lecturer) this was middle-class men and/or boys.

- 8% of the sample worked specifically with gay, bisexual and/or transgender men and/or boys.

- 13% of respondents worked specifically with men and/or boys with disabilities.

- The respondents were doing work with men and/or boys across all the different regions of the UK[4], with the majority (20%) based in North East England (which was perhaps unsurprising, given that this is where the research team was located).

[2] Please note that where figures from the survey do not add up to 100% - this is due to number rounding, and in some cases some respondents may have also selected more than one option.

[3] With 3% aged 20-24, 11% aged 25-29, 29% aged 30-39, 23% aged 40-49, 23% aged 50-59, 8% aged 60-69, 1% aged 70-79, and 2% preferred not to say.

[4] 15% were based in North West England, 10% in South East England, 10% in London, 7% in Scotland and 7% in South West England, 6% were working across the whole of the UK and 6% in the East of England, 5% in the East

Midlands and 5% in Yorkshire and the Humber, 4% in Northern Ireland and 4% in Wales, 3% in the West Midlands and 3% stated other, including internationally.

Chapter 3. Review of existing literature

There has been growing public attention and debate in recent years around issues and ideas of men and masculinities, perhaps in particular regarding the notion of 'toxic masculinity' (Flood, 2018). This is a term which is commonly used in media and popular discourse in relation to social problems potentially arising from traditional, restrictive and harmful gender norms and expectations for men and boys: for example, that they should be tough, active and dominant. Meanwhile, researchers have been trying to understand the impacts that socially constructed ideas and norms around gender have on men and boys and, in turn, other people in their lives for several decades. This chapter will explore some of this research further and discuss the key findings from our rapid evidence assessment of the literature in relation to the research questions.

3.1 How are gendered social norms formed and enacted for men and boys?

A long-standing perception about gender norms is that they reflect generally agreed social consensus about particular gender roles, which children are then socialised into by different institutions within society. However, according to Connell and Pearse (2014) research suggests there is no clear consensus in society about these values and norms. Indeed, there are significant differences *within* societies, for example between social classes, rural and urban groups, between ethnic and religious groups, between generations, and importantly, between women and men. Furthermore, rather than children merely being passive 'sponges' of cultural values and norms, research indicates that gendered practices are largely 'produced' through active, non-linear processes of social interaction (Connell, 2005).

Connell's (2005; 2009) work has been particularly influential in shifting the focus away from 'masculinity' as a singular formation towards the idea of diverse 'masculinities' as plural, dynamically interacting with other social divisions such as ethnicity, class, culture, faith, disability, and sexual orientation. She argues that 'masculinities' can be understood as collective as well as individual experiences and practices, conditioned and sustained by the cultures, values and norms within particular groups or institutions (e.g. schools, workplaces, the army, prisons, sports clubs, religious communities). In any given context a certain version of masculinity becomes dominant ('hegemonic') over other subordinated versions (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Within a school, for example, a range of different ways of 'doing' masculinity can be identified - but there will probably be one model that is more powerful than others, to which all boys aspire or are affected by to some degree (Robb, 2007).

However, Mac and Ghaill and Haywood (1994; 2012) have argued that there are other ways of understanding masculinity that are not based on hegemony and dominance. For them, boys (and, to a lesser extent, young men) might be understood more as 'becoming' men and having identities that are far less 'stable' than their older counterparts as they try to make sense of how they fit into the world around them. Whilst, at times, their identities seem rigidly hyper-masculine, in other contexts they are considerably more flexible. Similarly, Anderson (2009) has proposed that contemporary masculinities are much more fluid, flexible, and open – especially in relation to sexual orientation – than previous research has suggested.

3.1.1 Gender norms as defined by the ‘Man Box’

One influential way of understanding masculinity is the idea of the ‘Man Box’ (Kivel, 2007); this refers to a set of rigid and constraining norms or beliefs, communicated directly or indirectly by families, peers, education, the media, and other members of society, that place pressure on men to be a certain way (and are also harmful for women). These dictate that men should: be self-sufficient; act tough; look good; stick to rigid gender roles (e.g. around housework and caregiving); be heterosexual and homophobic; display sexual prowess; be prepared to use violence; and control household decisions and women’s independence (Kivel, 2007).

Based on this framework and survey data from the US, UK and Mexico, a report by Promundo (Heilman, Barker and Harrison, 2017) found that in the UK sample of 1,225 young men aged 18-30, over half agreed that social norms include the expectation that men will act strong (64%), be the primary earner (56%) and not say no to sex (55%). Less than half agreed that norms for men include non-involvement in household work (45%) and using violence to get respect (40%). Other findings were more contradictory. For example, on homophobia, although just under half (49%) agreed that society tells them “a gay guy is not a ‘real man’”, two-thirds (66%) agreed that society tells them friendships between heterosexual and gay men are ‘normal’. Meanwhile, more than half (56%) agreed that there is a social norm that “men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women”, and just under half (46%) agreed that society tells them “it is not good for a boy to be taught how to cook, sew, clean the house or take care of children”.

This study suggests that although young men believe some traditional masculine norms – e.g. around acting tough, being a breadwinner, being sexually active – endure, they may also be identifying with more egalitarian norms in the home, and less punitive approaches towards homosexuality. The study shows that young men’s own views of masculinity are more progressive overall than the social norms they perceive (Heilman, Barker and Harrison, 2017). For instance, in the UK sample, only 39% had the opinion themselves that men should be the primary earner, and only 27% agreed that a husband should not have to do housework. Nevertheless, although the participants often appeared to reject aspects of the Man Box, around a third still endorsed patriarchal notions that “A man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage” (33%) and that “If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time” (37%) (Heilman, Barker and Harrison, 2017).

The Man Box survey was expanded with qualitative data and focus groups, including in England, which highlighted that young men experience pressure to conform to dominant masculine stereotypes, but increasingly also express scepticism towards and detachment from them (Robb, Ruxton and Bartlett, 2017; Robb and Ruxton, 2018). As in the overall study, the majority of young men believed in the importance of treating women as equals. But many still held on to traditional norms about gender roles, seeing men as ‘breadwinners’ or ‘protectors’ and women as ‘carers’. There was also a definite sense that many young men still endorse stereotypical ideas about heterosexual relationships. Meanwhile, a minority believed that gender equality had gone ‘too far’ and that they, as young men, were now at a disadvantage.

A common and noteworthy feature in survey data is that men’s attitudes to gender are consistently less progressive than women’s (Flood, 2015a). British Social Attitudes surveys have found over many years that traditional views of gender roles in the UK continue to decline, in line

with changing social norms (Scott and Clery, 2013), and views on gender roles are increasingly becoming more progressive, as indicated by the 2017 survey (Phillips et al., 2018):

- Less than one in ten (8%) agree that “a man’s job is to earn money”, and “a woman’s job is to look after the home and family”, while over seven in ten (72%) disagree with this statement.
- However, women are more likely than men to disagree with traditional gender roles (74% compared with 69% for men).
- Women (30%) are also less likely than men (36%) to favour a mother of pre-school children staying at home.

However, it is important to take into account that whilst surveys may indicate changes in attitudes, this does not necessarily equate to changes in behaviour.

3.2 How do gender norms vary by demographic?

Theories of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) highlight how various socially and culturally constructed categories such as gender, race, class, disability and sexual orientation interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels, contributing to and multiplying the impacts of systemic social inequalities. A significant theme within research on masculinities is the dynamic interrelationships between these different strands of men’s lives. An important insight of an intersectional approach to men and masculinities is that *all* men are located in multiple relations of privilege and disadvantage (Flood, 2019).

It is, therefore, important to avoid approaching men and boys as if they are a monolithic or homogenous group, when their experiences and practices are likely to differ considerably depending on their intersecting positions in society (Baker, 2013; Miedema et al., 2017). This can also complicate conversations about power, given that many men may simultaneously receive gendered privilege whilst experiencing inequalities in other ways. It is therefore vital to take these intersectional differences into account when engaging with men and boys, to ensure that the approach adopted is relevant to the target audience (Peretz, 2017). Peretz points out that research around men and masculinities can often treat white, heterosexual, middle-class young men as the default and fail to consider how different aspects of men’s identities and social locations can shape their experiences and practices in addition to gender.

3.2.1 Boys and young men

For boys and young men, the impact of gender norms on their attitudes and behaviours is evident as they develop and begins from a very early age. The Fawcett Society Commission on Gender Stereotypes in Early Childhood has highlighted that when children are born, they are unaware of gendered expectations and attitudes (Culhane and Bazeley, 2019). However, by the age of two most children are conscious of the social relevance of gender (Martin and Ruble, 2004), and by the time children reach the end of primary school, they have already developed a clear sense of what is expected of boys and girls and how they are supposed to behave (Bian and Cimpian, 2017).

These expectations are reinforced in various ways. Parents often create a ‘gendered world’ for young children by providing different play environments, toys, and clothing for boys and girls. They also tend to have gendered ideas and expectations about their children’s abilities (Our Watch, 2018). School and nursery practitioners report that they often unknowingly treat children differently based on gender (National Union of Teachers, 2013). Children and young people also have the tendency to ‘police’ one another, ridiculing those who behave in ways that do not conform to certain gender norms and rewarding gender-typical behaviour (Reigeluth and Addis, 2016), including at pre-school age (Martin et al., 2013).

Research has also identified that consumer goods aimed at children continue to be marketed in gender-specific ways (Committee of Advertising Practice, 2018). The Fawcett review concludes that gender stereotypes limit children by presenting them with a specific set of acceptable behaviours, and experiences of early gender bias have potentially damaging long-term effects in terms of development, attainment, wellbeing, occupational segregation and the gender pay gap (Culhane and Bazeley, 2019).

An influential study in London secondary schools by Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2002) suggested that boys aged between 11-14 have sophisticated understandings of the contradictions involved in negotiating masculine identities. Boys defined themselves in large part in terms of their difference from girls and policed each other’s identities by constructing certain other boys as transgressing gender boundaries and thus as ‘gay’. Dominant norms of masculinity appeared to involve ‘hardness’, sporting prowess, ‘coolness’, and casual treatment of schoolwork which could in turn have a detrimental impact on academic performance. The boys were aware of the negative ways they were often seen, which often created resentment in them. ‘Having a laugh’ was a way of being a boy in relation to adult authority and classroom learning and was part of an oppositional culture around which social status could be constructed. Conscientiousness and commitment to work were, in contrast, feminised. However, many of the boys also expressed anxieties about impending exams and what grades they would achieve.

A study by Hartley and Sutton (2013) suggests that, from a young age, children believe that boys are academically inferior to girls and that adults think this too - and these negative academic stereotypes about boys can lead to self-fulfilling consequences. Meanwhile, research by Stahl (2016) has found that working-class boys often exclude themselves from school agendas of university entrance and social mobility. Instead, they internalise their potential academic failure, and prefer employment that is viewed as ‘respectable working-class’, such as a recognised trade.

A study by McDowell (2003) highlighted that employment often appears to be central to the self-esteem and development of young white male working-class school leavers. She found that young men's views of masculinity in some ways conformed to the notion of a 'lad' but also emphasised domestic conformity. Whilst their attitudes and behaviours were varied and complex, the study revealed the continued dominance of a 'traditional' masculinity, rather than a new version more in tune with the requirements of a service-based economy which might, for example, require more emotional, communication and caring skills. Virtually all these young men adhered to conventional masculine aspirations and markers of adult status, such as employment, an independent home and a family.

However, based on interviews with working-class boys in the retail sector, Roberts (2013) argues that the habitual narrative that young working-class men perform poorly at school and would

rather not work in the ‘feminised’ service sector is simplistic. Some at least enjoy the emotional labour in this setting, and not all are attracted to ‘protest masculinity’ in other spheres. Meanwhile, through ethnographic research with young working-class men in the South Wales valleys, Ward (2015) found that the norms of masculinity the young men in his study sought to conform to often had damaging effects, not least for themselves. There was no readily available script for being a young working-class man in what they saw as the feminised world of education, and their inability to create a viable alternative script was holding them back. Those who did adapt best to full-time education post-16 were likely to leave the valleys and create a new life elsewhere.

Young fathers, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are most at risk of becoming disengaged from parenting responsibilities; they are often characterised as ‘irresponsible’ or ‘feckless’ and viewed with distrust by service providers (Ashley et al., 2006). Some young single fathers may experience praise by virtue of being a lone male parent, but this is a minority experience (Hirst, Formy and Owen, 2006). However, many voice a desire for information, advice and inclusion (Quinton, Pollock and Golding, 2002). Recent research suggests that despite countless obstacles and difficulties, young fathers are typically committed to their children and striving to ‘make a go’ of parenthood (Neale and Davis, 2015). Indeed, the experience of becoming a father can itself be a catalyst for helping young men to leave behind a troubled past (Robb et al., 2015). Although some young men have experienced difficult or unsatisfactory relationships with their fathers, most aspire to be fathers themselves, and take that role seriously, often expressing a desire to be a different and more engaged kind of father (Robb and Ruxton, 2018).

3.2.2 Ageing men

Among older men, there is considerable diversity in experiences, with an increasing split between, for instance, affluent early retirees and low-paid men working beyond retirement age. Although the socioeconomic status of older men tends to be higher than that of older women, some groups of men, such as those living alone and/or without partners, are particularly prone to loneliness and social isolation (Beach and Bamford, 2013; Willis et al., 2019). For older men, the dominant discourse of young, active, virile masculinity is counterposed by the ‘othering’ of ageing masculinities (Jackson, 2007). Ageing men, therefore, face an increasing contradiction between their desire to live up to masculine norms of independence, self-reliance and strength, and the reality that they are less able to do so (Ruxton, 2007). Many older men may, therefore,` experience a sense of marginalisation through bodily fragility and loss of sexual potency (Jackson, 2016).

This contradiction is underpinned by widespread gender stereotyping and ageism that undervalues older people’s lives, which research suggests can leave them feeling isolated and excluded from opportunities (Abrams, Eilola and Swift, 2009). This is generated and reinforced in a number of ways, including: negatively framed headlines in the media, lack of regular contact between older and younger generations, and age-based prejudice in the workplace (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and Royal Society for Public Health, 2018). Older men tend to be depicted on the one hand as displaying ‘diminished masculinity’; as sedentary, passing time, asexual. On the other hand, they are often portrayed as ‘grumpy old men’, miserable, moaning, and boring (Barber et al., 2016). For many older men, their relationship with employment and the workplace is central to their identity; this raises a dichotomy for some between their long-standing view of

themselves as ‘productive’ breadwinners, and their self-image in older age of becoming ‘unproductive’ dependents (Ruxton, 2007).

Conforming to restrictive notions of masculinity often results in men avoiding certain behaviours that they take to be ‘non-masculine’. In particular, older men are seen as reluctant to admit to having problems, displaying emotions, or seeking assistance from others. Many are less likely to recognise or acknowledge conditions such as depression, substance abuse, or stressful life events (Kosberg, 2005). They frequently regard visiting the doctor as a sign of weakness and tend to postpone getting appointments – unlike older women, for whom visits to the doctor may have been a more regular feature of their lives (owing to pregnancy, childcare etc). Older men are also less likely than women to use existing care services, due to traditional notions of male independence and self-reliance, and the ‘feminised’ feel of much provision (Davidson and Arber, 2003). Research suggests that these are likely to be factors contributing to men having a lower life expectancy than women (Springer and Mouzon, 2011).

However, these perceptions can also render invisible the hidden realities of many older men’s economic and social contributions, for instance as carers for ill partners, active nurturing grandparents, and campaigners on issues such as the environment. They may also hide the ways in which some older men are already engaging with diverse, grassroots community activities and organisations, such as ‘men’s sheds’, which can have important benefits for their health and wellbeing (Golding, 2011). Moreover, by portraying older men’s lives as fixed and static, such stereotypes underplay the dynamic shifts and disruptions that many encounter (e.g. illness, deaths, grandfathering, new relationships) (Robinson and Hockey, 2011). Although some men cling on to earlier identities and refuse to acknowledge increasing fragility, life changes can help others to move beyond obsessive concerns with work, success, competition and achievement. Jackson (2016) argues that time for self-reflection and stock-taking can result in a new concern for caregiving and a desire to participate actively in emotional work.

3.2.3 Norms in relation to gay, bisexual and/or transgender men

According to a series of British Social Attitudes surveys, the British public has become increasingly accepting of same-sex relationships, especially since the introduction of same-sex marriages in 2014 (Swales and Taylor, 2016). The proportion saying that same-sex relationships are ‘not wrong at all’ is now a clear majority at 66% (Albakri et al., 2019). This suggests a society-wide shift in normative perceptions towards LGBT people. However, this liberalisation of attitudes towards same-sex relations (and also towards premarital sex) appears to be slowing down – with the aforementioned 66% figure actually representing a decrease for the first time, from 68% in the 2017 Social Attitudes Survey (Albakri et al., 2019). Meanwhile, the 2016 survey found that only 53% condemn transphobia completely (Swales and Taylor, 2016). Women were more likely than men to condemn prejudice against transgender people (58% of women say it is “always wrong” compared with 46% of men). Yet the relatively low levels of people with overtly-stated prejudice contrasts with the high proportions of transgender people who report facing regular harassment and intimidation. Furthermore, many respondents who said they were not transphobic went on to say that transgender people should not be able to have certain jobs, such as being a police officer or teacher (Swales and Taylor, 2016).

Whilst public attitudes appear to be becoming more accepting in some ways, the lives of gay, bisexual and/or transgender men, themselves, remain structured by their experiences in a

dominant heteronormative culture and, in particular, by homophobia, biphobia and transphobia (Stepelmen, 2007). For instance, the GEO (2018) National LGBT Survey[5] found that at least two in five respondents had experienced an incident such as verbal harassment or physical violence because they were LGBT in the last 12 months, and a 2017 Stonewall report on hate crime and discrimination found similar patterns (Bachmann and Gooch, 2017). This prejudice and discrimination may often be rooted in the notion that LGBT people are somehow failing to live up to dominant gender norms and expectations.

Despite the seeming endurance of homophobia, Anderson's (2009) 'inclusive masculinity' theory contrasts with earlier studies which argued that hostility to homosexuality was a key element in the formation of young masculine identities (Nayak and Kehily, 1997). McCormack (2012) explored the lives of a group of young, white, mainly middle-class students at sixth form colleges in England, finding similarly that they were more likely to have pro-gay attitudes, and to have friendships with students who were openly gay. Other research has suggested that the use of homophobic language - though still widespread - may be decreasing in some school contexts (White and Hobson, 2015; Bradlow et al., 2017). However, it has been observed that 'softer' forms of masculinity can co-exist alongside 'harder' forms (Segal, 2007). Some scholars argue that rather than a new form of masculinity replacing previous versions, this 'hybridisation' only represents a shift in the practices of certain (relatively privileged) young men, and that homophobic aspects of dominant masculinities are *transforming* rather than *disappearing* (Bridges, 2014). For other (especially marginalised) young men, there is evidence that change is slower, and some struggle even to discuss the issue of homosexuality (Robb, Ruxton and Bartlett, 2017).

Gay, bisexual and/or transgender men have just as varied and diverse experiences and enactments of gender norms as other men, and these are also like to be shaped by their positions in relation to other social categories. There are many unique forms and expressions of masculinity which have developed within LGBT communities. However, many gay, bisexual and/or transgender men are likely to also be influenced by wider societal expectations of gender to some degree. For instance, some may seek to disassociate themselves from femininity, and men perceived as 'feminine' may experience marginalisation within the LGBT community. For some men, they may seek to 'queer' masculinities (bring dominant norms into question by applying a different lens to them and blurring and troubling traditional boundaries and expectations), whilst others may attempt to construct their own affirming sense of masculinity which still to some extent meets with hegemonic gender expectations. Many gay, bisexual and/or transgender men may experience a degree of conflict between, on the one hand, wishing to or feeling pressured to conform to dominant masculine norms, whilst also having an awareness of the limitations of these, or of how they, themselves, have also experienced marginalisation as a result of those same norms (Sánchez et al., 2010; Wilson et al., 2010).

3.2.4 Men from ethnic minority groups

Another critical research strand is the position and experience of men and boys from ethnic minority backgrounds. Issues facing men from ethnic minority groups overlap with those facing other men (indeed, some may have 'multiple memberships' of minority and majority communities), and for many men their cultural and religious identities are likely to play a part in shaping their

[5] Full data available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-lgbt-survey-data-viewer

construction of masculinity. Many ethnic minority men in the UK are also affected by a complex mix of racism, discrimination, and educational and social disadvantage. Yet the ways these experiences play out in practice vary considerably between different groups.

For instance, research suggests that men from African and Caribbean backgrounds are over-represented in the use of mental health services (Keating, 2007; Khan et al., 2017). In 2012, detention rates under the Mental Health Act were 2.2 times higher than the average for people of African origin and 4.2 times higher for those of Caribbean origin. In a survey of median hospital admission periods, the median number of days Black Caribbean men spent in psychiatric hospitals was more than twice the number spent by people of White British origin (Time to Change, 2016). Meanwhile, in a survey of people from minority ethnic groups with mental health problems, 28% of Black Caribbean and 31% of African respondents reported that they had directly experienced racism within services over the last 12 months (Rehman and Owen, 2013).

For African and Caribbean men, the route to services disproportionately takes place through the police and criminal justice system, and they are more likely to experience controlling service responses (Time to Change, 2016). There are a number of potential factors behind these figures, including an increased likelihood of experiencing poverty, housing insecurity and homelessness, difficulties at school and subsequent reduced access to opportunities (Ruxton, 2009; Khan et al., 2017). However, Khan et al. (2017) argue that experiences of racism have a particularly significant influence on the mental health of Black boys and young men, such as through negative and demonising media representations, that can ‘wear down’ their resilience as they grow up. These representations and racist assumptions may be shaped in part by particular gendered stereotypes about Black men and boys.

In a study of discourses within the UK print media, Baker and Levon (2016) point out that representations of masculinity are often highly racialized and classed. They found that Black and Asian men were frequently portrayed as being violent, criminal, and morally and socially deviant, whilst White men were often characterised as being unfairly excluded from society. The study suggests that idealised perceptions of masculinity are frequently associated with White men, and that race plays an important role in shaping the dynamics of hegemonic and subordinate forms of masculinity. Meanwhile, specific groups of ethnic minority men may be blamed or scapegoated for issues connected to masculine norms more broadly, such as child sexual abuse and exploitation, ‘othering’ the problem in the progress (Tufail, 2015). There has also been significant focus placed on ‘father absence’ among Black and ethnic minority fathers in the UK. However, research suggests that non-resident fathers often still contribute to their children’s lives in other ways, and have an active involvement in parenting (Phoenix and Husain, 2007; Reynolds, 2009).

3.2.5 Men with disabilities

Despite important legislative changes to tackle discrimination against disabled people, negative stereotypes persist. In a recent survey, one in three (32%) disabled respondents said that there is a lot of prejudice against disabled people in Britain; non-disabled people gave a somewhat different response however, with just one in five (22%) agreeing (Dixon, Smith and Touchet, 2018). Attitudes to those with less ‘visible’ disabilities (such as mental health conditions or learning disabilities) are more negative than to those with more ‘visible’ disabilities (physical or sensory disabilities). Men aged 18-34 are the group least likely to interact with disabled people and most likely to hold negative attitudes towards them (Aiden and McCarthy, 2014). Women are

generally seen as exhibiting less prejudice towards disabled people than men (Robinson, Martin and Thompson, 2007).

Men with disabilities often live their lives in ways that contradict dominant norms of masculinity, as can sometimes also be the case with older men. They are often unwilling or feel unable to live up to 'ideal' models of masculinity based on body strength and performance (Shakespeare, 1999; Gerschick, 2005; Ruxton and van der Gaag, 2012). Masculine standards and expectations – for example, that they are not allowed to 'fail' and must be 'strong' and 'tough' – can be at odds with the reality of life for disabled men. Masculinity and disability are thus frequently in conflict with each other, with disability associated with being dependent and helpless, whereas masculinity is associated with being powerful and autonomous (Shuttleworth, Wedgwood and Wilson, 2012). Furthermore, if labour markets, health and education systems exclude or marginalise disabled boys and men, as is often the case, then they are unlikely to be able to achieve masculine expectations around being breadwinners and career-builders. If norms of masculinity stereotypically entail having power over women, then how can disabled men be understood if they are receiving large amounts of care and support from women in everyday life (Abbott et al., 2019)?

The main focus of research in this field has been on how masculinity intersects with disability as a generic category, rather than with specific types of impairment (Shuttleworth, Wedgwood and Wilson, 2012). However, some research has begun to address this issue. For example, Wilson et al. (2012) have documented how men with learning disabilities are often represented negatively, in terms of a propensity for violence and sexual aggression, rather than the positive experiences that they may derive from homosocial camaraderie, physical activity and sexual expression (Barrett, 2014). More recently, in a study with men who have Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD), Abbott et al. (2019) found that men with disabilities of this kind can often be denied an adult identity and infantilised, as assumptions are made about their cognitive and physical capacities.

3.3 What impact do gendered social norms have on the behaviour of men and boys in the UK?

Promundo's 'Man Box' study (discussed in section 3.1.1) found that over half of young men in the UK (52%) perceived that their parents, society, or partners think that men should aspire to the constraining norms of the 'Man Box', and high percentages of young men were also found to have internalised these norms (38%) (Heilman, Barker and Harrison, 2017). The study found that the stronger young men's stated belief was in those norms, the more likely they were to show several negative behavioural outcomes. It concludes that men who adhere closely to the rules of the Man Box are more likely to put their health and wellbeing at risk, to cut themselves off from intimate friendships, to resist seeking help when they need it, to experience depression, and to think more frequently about ending their own life.

These findings concur with those of other international studies, which show that men who endorse dominant masculine norms tend to have more risky lifestyles and worse health outcomes (Courtenay, 2000). One recent meta-analysis highlighted that conformity to masculine norms is associated with poor mental health (Wong et al., 2017). According to the Promundo study, young men inside the Man Box are also more likely to use violence, both against women and against

other men, and to have experienced violence themselves (Heilman, Barker and Harrison, 2017). A follow-up to this research estimates that the harmful masculine norms that make up the Man Box cost the UK economy at least £3.1 billion per year, based on six key cost categories: bullying and violence, sexual violence, depression, suicide, binge drinking and traffic accidents (Heilman et al., 2019).

One difficulty in assessing the impact of gender norms on behaviour is that evidence of the existence of a norm in a particular context is often taken, erroneously, to explain the extent to which that norm sustains a particular practice (Cislaghi and Heise, 2018a). Various hypotheses have been put forward to explain what determines the strength of a norm. A review by Chung and Rimal (2016) highlights the need to consider whether a behaviour is enacted spontaneously or after reflection, with norms likely to be more directly influential in the former case. Meanwhile, Cislaghi and Heise (2018a) suggest that the characteristics of a practice (for instance, whether it is 'detectable') can affect the influence a norm might exert.

Another difficulty in analysing the impact of gender norms on behaviour is that social norms are rarely the only drivers behind harmful practices (Kwasnicka, 2016; Grant, 2017). A range of models have been developed to explain the various factors that affect behaviour. One of the most commonly cited is the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which has been adapted by Cislaghi and Heise (2018b) as a framework for developing social norm change interventions. They highlight four overlapping domains of influence (institutional, material, social and individual), and argue that understanding how these factors interact to influence people's harmful practices can help practitioners design effective interventions that include a social norms perspective (Cislaghi and Heise, 2018a). Similarly, Connell and Pearse (2014) analyse how norms and stereotypes are materialised in social life, highlighting the role that key sites such as media, work, organisations, and education play in this process.

For example, media representations of men and masculinities ranging from magazines, to TV shows, to self-help books, to films, influence understandings of what being a man is about (Gauntlett, 2008). Easy access to pornography online regularly presents women as sexual objects, and (heterosexual) masculinity as *"playfulness, flight from responsibility, detached and uninhibited pleasure-seeking and the consumption of women's bodies"* (Gill, 2007). Recent years have also seen the explosion of misogynistic abuse online, often directed at women who are prominent in public life (Lewis, Rowe and Wiper, 2016). However, there is evidence that people are selective in their readings of the normative messages contained in TV and other forms of popular culture (Connell and Pearse, 2014), and the relationship between images, norms and behaviour is not straightforward. For instance, focus group research with young men identified that whilst they continue to experience pressure to conform to particular gender stereotypes, many perceived that images of masculinity promoted in the media and elsewhere were so remote from their own lives as to be irrelevant (Robb, Ruxton and Bartlett, 2017).

Recently, the Committee of Advertising Practice (2018) has produced guidance for advertisers on the depiction of gender stereotypes, arguing that there is a wide body of evidence indicating that these can negatively reinforce how people think they and others should look and behave. The Committee's review (Advertising Standards Authority, 2017) suggests that stereotypes implying that men should be physically strong, unemotional and family breadwinners are limiting and potentially damaging. There are also strong indications that men and boys are increasingly experiencing harm as a consequence of pressure to achieve a certain 'masculine', muscular body

image – reflecting the longstanding pressures experienced by women and girls (Reardon and Govender, 2011). However, in recent years, some companies have also started to challenge norms of masculinity through advertising, such as with Gillette's 'The Best Men Can Be' campaign.

Gender norms are also interrelated with economic change and workplace cultures (Pearse and Connell, 2016). For instance, new patterns of managerial or 'transnational business' masculinity have emerged among men with positions of power in global corporations (Connell and Wood, 2005). These patterns are marked by an extreme commitment to work and competitive achievement, strong division between home and working life, and a declining sense of responsibility for others. However, workplaces may be more or less 'gendered' in the ways they are organised and structured, and this will significantly affect the shifting and dynamic gender relations within them. Organisational structures, cultures and practices tend still to be based on an assumed masculine norm of lifetime, full-time, continuous (male) employment. 'Masculine' values are also strongly embedded within many organisations, with men exercising power over women in the workplace in a variety of ways (e.g. job segregation, sex discrimination, the gender pay gap, sexual harassment) (Collinson and Hearn, 2004).

Norms of femininity associating women with being caring, self-sacrificing, and industrious contribute to women most often being employed in (lower-paid) service industries, or caring professions (e.g. teaching and nursing). Women also continue to do most unpaid domestic and care labour (Connell and Pearse, 2014). Whereas men are over-represented in management, financial, legal, and technical workforces, female managers who attain senior levels are required to act in more masculine ways, working long hours, and delegating, like male managers, domestic responsibilities for childcare, cooking, and housework (Wajcman, 1999). A common and growing feature of the contemporary economy is job insecurity and precarity, with workers increasingly offered short-term or zero-hours contracts rather than a 'job for life'. For many men, the lack or loss of a job, earning power and/or status can represent a significant challenge to their sense of their role and entitlements as men (Nolan, 2005).

3.3.1 Relationships

Research suggests that normative behaviour and expectations for men in relationships may be changing, at least to some extent. For instance, in a Belgian study Meeussen, Vanlaar and Verbruggen (2019) suggest that with more women pursuing careers, it is increasingly seen as desirable for men to be communal and family-oriented within heterosexual relationships, and this in turn leads to greater life satisfaction for women and less work and family conflict.

Thébaud and Halcomb (2019) contend that men and women are increasingly expressing egalitarian preferences for organising family life; however, these frequently come into conflict with workplace norms and practices based on traditional assumptions about the gendered division of labour in the family. This mismatch can, in turn, create work-family conflict, stress, and job and relationship dissatisfaction. It is also important to point out that changes in normative perceptions do not necessarily equate to changes in behaviour. For instance, research suggests that women are still carrying out the bulk of childcare and housework despite now playing a significant role in the labour market (van der Gaag et al., 2019).

Other research indicates that whilst gender-equal attitudes towards relationships may be becoming more influential, stereotypical gender norms remain powerful among young people. These are often based around the notion of boys being romantically and sexually active and dominant, and girls being innocent, passive and having less romantic or sexual agency (De Meyer et al., 2017). A study by De Meyer et al. (2017) in Baltimore, Cuenca, Edinburgh, Ghent and Nairobi also highlighted that heterosexual relationships continue to be seen as the norm among many early adolescents, even if they are becoming more accepting of same sex relationships.

Research also illustrates that the 'sexual double standard' which bestows praise upon men but stigmatises women for engaging in sexual activities continues to be influential among young people (Kelly and Dhaliwal, 2019; Marks, Young and Zaikman, 2019; Moreau et al., 2019). Men may continue to be viewed more often as sexual initiators, and engaging in more receptive sexual behaviours, with women engaging in more performative sexual behaviours (Jozkowski and Satinsky, 2013). It is important to consider the role that pornography may play in the formation of unequal norms within sex and relationships among young people, and how it may also help to normalise sexual aggression, coercion and violence (Hald, Malamuth and Lange, 2013; Wright, Tokunaga and Kraus, 2015; McKibbin, Humphreys and Hamilton, 2017).

Dominant gender norms can also play a part in shaping the relationships of LGB and/or T people. For instance, research by Siegel and Meunier (2019) with bisexual men found that traditional gendered stereotypes about sexual dispositions (e.g. that men are more sexually adventurous), roles during sex (e.g. that men should be dominant and women submissive), relationship desires (e.g. that women prefer long-term intimate relationships and men prefer unattached sexual gratification), and emotional involvement (e.g. women are emotionally sensitive and men emotionally detached) remained influential in their relationships with women. Meanwhile, in research with lesbian women and gay men involved in co-parenting arrangements, Herbrand (2018) found that co-parenting appeared to be well adapted to contemporary social constraints and parenting expectations. However, dominant gender norms (e.g. about who should do the majority of childcare) often remained largely unquestioned in these contexts and sometimes led to tensions and unbalanced power relationships between biological parents.

3.4 What impact do gendered social norms have on the wellbeing of men and boys in the UK?

A common theme within the literature is that the health and wellbeing of men and boys is directly related to gender norms and traditional constructions of masculinity, such as the socialisation of men and boys to be 'tough' and 'strong', to appear in control, and to take risks (Doyal, 2001; Mahalik, Burns and Syzdek, 2007; Ricardo, 2014; Weber et al., 2019). It has been found that those men who more closely identify with 'traditional' forms of masculinity are more likely to live in ways that damage their health, and to suffer from poor mental health (Sloan, Conner and Gough, 2015; Wong et al., 2017; Iwamoto et al., 2018). For some – especially younger men – their masculinity is characterised by risk taking, an ignorance of their bodies and welfare, and a reluctance to seek professional help for physical or emotional health problems (Hearn, 2006; Worthley, Hostetler and Fryre, 2017; Seidler et al., 2018; Brown, Sagar-Ouriaghli and Sullivan, 2019). Pressure to conform to masculine norms can also encourage potentially harmful substance use such as alcohol consumption (Iwamoto and Smiler, 2013; Fugitt and Ham, 2018). Men often speak about their bodies as if they were machines, and think about illness in terms of the

malfunction or failure of a particular body part. They may expect their bodies to always be capable of doing 'manly' things and not to be weak or vulnerable (Ruxton, 2009).

Gendered expectations, where men find themselves wanting against a masculine 'gold standard' which prizes power, control and invincibility have been cited as a key factor that may propel men towards suicide, as a way of regaining control in the face of depression or other mental health problems. The Samaritans report that 6,507 people died through suicide in 2018, stating that "*The causes of suicide are complex, but we know it is both a gender and an inequality issue*." (Simms et al., 2019, p.4) In the UK, men are three times more likely to take their own lives than women, and 2018 saw the first significant increase in suicide in the UK since 2013 – driven primarily by an increase in the male suicide rate (although the suicide rate for young women is now the highest on record) (Simms et al., 2019). Meanwhile, research suggests that a greater degree of gender equality may help protect against suicidality, especially that associated with economic shocks, by reducing the prevalence of a male breadwinner culture (Reeves and Stuckler, 2016).

The Global Early Adolescent Study (Blum, Mmari and Moreau, 2017) found that a range of forces including schools, parents, media and peers reinforce gender norms that girls are vulnerable and boys are strong and independent. The study argues that as a result, boys engage in and are the victims of physical violence to a much greater extent than girls; die more frequently from unintentional injuries; are more prone to substance abuse and suicide; and have a shorter life expectancy (the study also highlights that the consequences for girls in many parts of the world include child marriage; early school leaving; pregnancy; HIV and sexually transmitted infection risk; violence exposure; and depression). A systematic review (Kågesten et al., 2016) of factors that shape gender attitudes in early adolescence globally cited studies from the UK, the US and Finland, showing that while it is, to some degree, acceptable for girls to challenge gender norms, boys who do not conform to masculine stereotypes continue to be socially stigmatised.

In recent years, the relationship between the health and wellbeing of men and boys and gender norms has received increasing attention (Fleming and Agnew-Brune, 2015). In 2018, the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe launched a ground-breaking Strategy which commented that:

> "The concept of masculinities is being used in public health to help in the understanding of how men's exposure to risk factors, their engagement with health and social services, and the responses provided from the system across the life-course are shaped by gender" (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2018a, p.4).

The Strategy, and an accompanying review (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2018b), go on to highlight evidence that key health challenges that particularly affect men – e.g. risk-taking (alcohol consumption, tobacco and other substance use), being overweight, sexually transmitted infections – are strongly influenced by gender norms, interacting with socio-economic, cultural, and individual factors.

The link between gender norms, the 'Man Box' and health-risk behaviours has also been underscored in a report from Promundo (Ragonese, Shand and Barker, 2018). This highlights, on the basis of data from the 2016 Global Burden of Disease dataset, that risk factors such as poor diet, tobacco use, alcohol use, occupational hazards, unsafe sex, and drug use account for more than half of all male deaths and about 70% of male morbidity globally (Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, 2017). Meanwhile, focus groups from the aforementioned 'Man Box' study found

that young men tend to agree with the notion that they find it more difficult than women to express their feelings and seek help for their problems (Robb, Ruxton and Bartlett, 2017).

3.4.1 The complex relationship between masculinity and men's health

A recent report on men's self-care by Global Action on Men's Health (Baker, 2019) acknowledges the importance of the link between gender norms and health-risk behaviours. However, it also suggests that many men do monitor their health status and make conscious decisions about when and how to seek help. The report argues that research such as that by Maclean et al. (2017) illustrate that it is to some extent a myth that men avoid primary care health services. UK evidence suggests that, on average, men consult medical practitioners less than women between the ages of 16-60 (especially in deprived areas), but differences in consultation rates between women and men in receipt of medication for cardiovascular disease and depression reduce substantially and are modest (Wang et al., 2013). Men also use health checks and screening services; for instance, in the UK eight out of ten men aged 65 take up the offer of screening for abdominal aortic aneurysms (Public Health England, 2017).

A meta-analysis by Wong et al. (2017) suggests the need to focus on specific dimensions of masculine norms, rather than on a generic notion of (harmful) masculinity. In this study, conformity to the specific masculine norms of self-reliance, power over women, and being a 'playboy' were consistently related to poor mental health-related outcomes, whereas conformity to the norm of primacy of work was not. There are also some norms relating to masculinity that may support health-seeking behaviour (Gerdes and Levant, 2018; Oliffe et al., 2019). In some environments, for example, men who are actively involved as fathers and caregivers are more likely to have better health, and caring for others may also encourage an ethic of self-care (O'Brien, Hunt and Hart, 2009; Heilman et al., 2017). Many men's interest in fitness and physicality can also be beneficial to their health (Baker, 2019). Some seemingly unhealthy practices can have positive side-effects, too; a Scottish study found that going to pubs provided men with friendship and social support that was important for mental wellbeing (Emslie, Hunt and Lyons, 2013). These are all important starting points when considering what works in relation to engaging men and boys.

An important caveat is that the significant variations between different groups of men and boys interact with gender norms and impact significantly on health and wellbeing. For instance, in the UK the health of the male population is heavily affected by socio-economic disadvantage, with increasing poverty linked to a widening gap in life expectancy (Institute of Health Equity, 2014). Men from the lowest social class, living in the most deprived areas, are up to ten times more likely to end their lives by suicide than those in the highest social class from the most affluent areas.

The highest suicide rate in the UK is currently for men aged 45-49; it has been suggested that men in mid-life are caught between models of their older, more traditional, strong, silent, austere fathers and those of their younger, more progressive, individualistic sons. They are also more likely to live alone without social or emotional support, while facing increased economic pressures (Thornton, 2012). Culture and religion are also important factors; for instance, drinking alcohol is more prevalent among White British men than among Black and Asian men, and Muslim men are far less likely to associate masculinity with alcohol use (De Visser and Smith, 2007).

Men's experiences as victims of violence and abuse can also be shaped significantly by gender norms. Expectations of masculinity can present difficulties for men and boys to accept or recognise such experiences, take them seriously, and report them (Martin and Panteloudakis, 2019; Sivagurunathan et al., 2019). If men are expected to be powerful, invulnerable and in control, then it can contradict assumptions about violence and abuse and about masculinity for men to recognise that they have experienced physical, emotional, or sexual harms, and to seek help and support (Javaid, 2017; Bates, 2019).

There is a widely held assumption that some men always want sex, so the idea of men not consenting to sexual activity can be anathema to dominant gender norms, with the expectation being that a man should be able to stop sexual abuse if he wanted to (Weare, 2018). If a man or boy is subjected to sexual violence by another man, this can also lead to homophobic stereotypes and assumptions, regardless of his sexuality. Meanwhile, gay, bisexual and/or transgender men may experience violence and abuse motivated by homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. Structural homophobia, biphobia and transphobia can provide additional barriers to support for LGB and/or T people who are victims of abuse, and can be used as a tool by perpetrators, who may threaten to publicly reveal the sexuality of the victim in the context of domestic abuse, for example (Donovan and Barnes, 2019b). Gender norms can, therefore, compound men's experiences of violence and abuse and contribute to difficulties in seeking help.

3.5 Do masculine norms contribute to violence against women and girls in the UK?

There is a considerable body of evidence demonstrating the ways in which gender norms, and in particular norms of men and masculinities, play a central role in different forms and manifestations of violence against women and girls (Jewkes, 2012; Fulu et al., 2013; Ricardo, 2014; Casey et al., 2016), and indeed all forms of violence (Fleming et al., 2015a). Most violence in society is perpetrated by men (Fleming et al., 2015a). Yet, given that not all men use violence, and manifestations of violence vary according to context, explanations for this appear to lie in (varying) social constructions of what it means to be a man. In other words, there are norms and expectations we have of men and boys which enable, entitle and require them to use violence within specific settings, often as a way to (re)assert masculine power. These norms promote the idea that violence is sometimes an acceptable, necessary, even desirable response to the problems experienced by men and boys, and as a way to get respect.

In relation to violence against women and girls, these ideas about masculinity can interact with sexist, misogynistic and patriarchal attitudes, norms and social structures, as a key cause and consequence of gender inequality (WHO, 2013; Alexander-Scott, Bell and Holden, 2016). Dominance and control over women are frequently seen as being a key part of the set of attributes and behaviours associated with the shared social ideal of manhood (Jewkes, Flood and Lang, 2015). Indeed, central to the concept of hegemonic masculinity is that it legitimates men's power over women in society, so that these inequalities come to be seen as normal (Connell, 2005). For Connell, whilst male dominance is maintained first and foremost through the successful claim to authority rather than direct violence, this authority is frequently underpinned and supported by violence.

In her theorisation of the 'cultural scaffolding' of rape, Gavey (2018) argues that the psychological and social impacts of dominant gender norms based around cultural fantasies of manhood that rest on the myth of men's invulnerability are central to sexual violence. They can create the conditions for misogynistic views and the violent enforcement of dominance when individual men invested in conventional norms of masculinity face vulnerability or perceive threat, in a context that supports and promotes male power (for instance, by encouraging men to feel a sense of entitlement to sex, and to women's bodies and affections).

According to the Promundo study discussed in section 3.1.1, young men inside the 'Man Box' are more likely to use violence, both against women and against other men, and to have experienced violence themselves (Heilman, Barker and Harrison, 2017). Heilman and Barker (2018) have explored these links further, and their research suggests that there are five key processes through which masculine norms shape the likelihood that men and boys will experience or perpetrate violence:

1. The demand to continually achieve and re-achieve socially recognised manhood.

2. The continual policing of men and boys' performance of masculinity.

3. The 'gendering' of the heart, with men and boys discouraged from showing emotional vulnerability and permitted only a limited range of emotions.

4. Constructing ideas about manhood and womanhood through the dividing of spaces and cultures by gender, with social spaces associated with men often becoming environments in which violence is rehearsed and reinforced.

5. The reinforcement of patriarchal power, with violence being shaped by processes which serve to reinforce structures of power that advantage men over women, and certain men over other men.

These findings have been supported by a subsequent study in Australia (Irvine, Livingstone and Flood, 2018), which found high levels of personal endorsement among young men of rules indicating gender inequitable views and control of women. Furthermore, those who most strongly endorsed Man Box norms reported the poorest outcomes in terms of mental health, experiencing/perpetrating bullying, violence, perpetrating sexual harassment against women, drinking, and car accidents.

Other research also suggests that the stronger men's adherence is to traditional norms of masculinity, the more likely they are to use violence against women (Schumacher et al., 2001; Murnen, Wright and Kaluzny, 2002; Fleming et al., 2015b). Yet, as Flood (2019) points out, norms supporting violence are not necessarily exceptional or 'deviant', and pervasive patriarchal social norms can contribute significantly towards normalising unequal, unhealthy or coercive gendered power dynamics within (hetero) sexual interactions and relationships. Violence against women can, therefore, sometimes be understood as an extension of dominant gender norms, or an attempt to enforce them, rather than a contradiction of them. In this context, gendered social norms play a significant role in the naturalisation and normalisation of men's violence against women, which can involve minimising its seriousness or placing some degree of responsibility on victims for what they are subjected to, for instance based on the notion that women are the gatekeepers of men's behaviour (McCarry and Lombard, 2016). Gender norms may also

encourage men to believe that they are inherently violent and lack the agency to change their behaviour (Forsdike et al., 2018).

Kaufman (1987) has argued that violence by men towards women is closely linked both to men's violence towards other men and towards themselves, which together constitute the triad of men's violence. Each corner of the triad reinforces one another, sharing their roots within the masculine norms through which men are socialised to see the world and expected to conform to. Different forms of violence are, therefore, simultaneously tied up both in the reproduction of men's social power, and in men's insecurities about unattainable internalised standards of masculinity. Meanwhile, Stark (2007; 2009) contends that the construction of masculinity and coercive control are closely intertwined, arguing that being in control is even more important than the capacity to use force within expectations of manhood. As a result, coercive control in the context of domestic abuse can be viewed by perpetrators as a rational and instrumental enactment of masculinity.

Recent research, however, suggests that men's use of coercive control is more dynamic, contestable and open to change than previous research has indicated (Downes, Kelly and Westmarland, 2019). Research by Downes, Kelly and Westmarland (2019) with men attending domestic violence perpetrator programmes shows that some men managed to take steps away from traditional masculine norms and were able to reduce their use of coercive control. This process was found to be uneven and contradictory, with painful realisations of loss and harm existing alongside new discoveries of the benefits associated with letting go of restrictive gender norms.

3.5.1 Men's peer groups and the construction of masculinity

Research has suggested that relations between men often play a significant role in violence against women and girls, given the centrality of men's peer groups to the reproduction of masculine norms. For example, Hearn (2012) has argued that domestic abuse can often be understood through these homosocial relations, with violence providing an important currency through which men define and constitute their masculine identities, and women sometimes being the objects of that currency. In other words, if masculinity is generated through relations among men, then domestic violence provides a means through which those relations - and men's attempts to protect the ideal masculine self - can be regulated (Hearn and Whitehead, 2006).

Some of men's peer groups and organisational cultures may be particularly supportive of or conducive to violence against women (Flood, 2009). For example, Phipps (2018) has highlighted that 'lad culture' on university campuses in the UK can contribute towards creating a context which encourages or enables sexual violence. Meanwhile, Flood (2008) found in research with young men in Australia that social bonds between participants significantly shaped their heterosexual relations with women, in ways which could help to encourage predatory and aggressive sexual behaviour. This included: the policing of homosocial bonds, with friendships between men prioritised over relations with women; sexual activity with women providing a key path to masculine status; the enactment of male bonding through the medium of heterosexual sex itself; and masculine storytelling of their sexual practices to male audiences.

Fabiano et al. (2003) argue that a social norms approach should be a central part of efforts to engage men and boys as allies in the prevention of violence against women. They contend that men's adherence to only consensual sexual activity and their willingness to act as allies are

influenced significantly by their perceptions of the social norms around them. Furthermore, many men have misperceptions about their peers' endorsement of rape-supportive attitudes and behaviours, underestimating the importance that other men place on consent and intervening against sexual violence. However, some researchers have highlighted potential problems with the growing focus on norms within violence prevention work, if it frames gender inequality as *only* being a problem of norms and attitudes (Flood, 2019). Salter (2016) suggests that this approach delinks gender norms from the social, economic and political contexts they are embedded within and shaped by. Similarly, Flood and Pease (2008) point out that a focus only on individual attitudes and behaviours neglects the structural and institutional inequalities that underpin much of violence against women and girls.

3.6 What are the best ways to communicate with men and boys about gendered social norms?

There is a growing body of knowledge on how to work with men and boys in order to address issues around gender. Much of this suggests that for efforts to engage with men and boys to be effective, they must do so in ways which take gendered social norms into account. Gupta (2000) devised an influential continuum to assess the approaches of different health interventions in this regard: they can be gender-unequal, gender-blind, gender-sensitive, gender-specific, gender-transformative or gender-empowering. She argued that gender-sensitive, transformative and empowering programmes which reduce the impact of destructive gender norms and inequalities are best practice for public health interventions, and this is supported by considerable research (for example, see Barker et al., 2010; UNFPA and Promundo, 2010; Jewkes, Flood and Lang, 2015; Peacock and Barker, 2014; Casey et al., 2018; Exner-Cortens et al., 2019; Kato-Wallace et al., 2019). Indeed, the empirical evidence suggests that one of the primary factors in determining the efficacy of interventions with men and boys is the extent to which it is gender-sensitive and gender-transformative.

This means that when working with men and boys, whilst addressing individual attitudes and behaviours is vital, it is also important to place attention on the wider social norms related to gender that men in that context are expected to conform to (Barker et al., 2010; Jewkes, Flood and Lang, 2015). For instance, Pease and Flood (2008) contend that gender norms constructed within families, peer groups, organisations, communities and wider society should be a key focus for campaigns to prevent violence against women, because they are at the core of the attitudes and behaviours which contribute to that violence. Casey et al. (2018) categorise activities to engage men into three interconnecting domains: 1) initial outreach and recruitment with unengaged men and boys; 2) attitude and behaviour change interventions; and 3) ongoing participation in social action. They argue that there is a need for greater conceptualisation and evaluation of how a gender-transformative approach can be applied to work with men and boys, especially in the first and third domains which have received less attention.

A review for the WHO (2007) analysed data from 58 evaluation studies of interventions with men and boys on sexual and reproductive health; fatherhood; gender-based violence; maternal, new-born and child health; and gender socialisation. It found that well-designed programmes showed compelling evidence of fostering changes in behaviour and attitudes. Programmes rated as being 'gender-transformative' had a higher rate of effectiveness than those that were 'gender-sensitive' or 'gender neutral'. Furthermore, integrated programmes, those within community outreach, and

mobilisation and mass-media campaigns produced more behaviour change than those working only at the individual level. There was evidence of behaviour change in all programme areas and in all types of programme interventions. However, few programmes went beyond a short-term time frame.

Effective practice included using positive, affirmative messages showing what men and boys can do to create change (WHO, 2007). This approach has been described as one of 'inviting, not indicting' men and boys (Baker, 2013), and of finding a balance between offering a positive vision whilst also challenging them to engage in change (Burrell, 2018). In addition, whilst mass-media campaigns did have an impact, sustained behaviour change was more likely when combined with interpersonal activities (such as group education and/or individual counselling) (WHO, 2007). In this format, research suggests that the process of facilitation is at least as important in curriculum content in terms of achieving positive impacts on men and boys (Claussen, 2019; Kelly and Dhaliwal, 2019).

A more recent review for the US Agency for International Development (USAID) drew on evidence about engaging men and boys primarily in the Global South in relation to economic growth, trade and agriculture; education; governance, law enforcement and justice systems; conflict, post-conflict and humanitarian assistance; and social development (Greig, 2015). A key element of success was synchronising these efforts with ongoing work with women and girls, either directly though mixed-sex groups, or through co-ordinated work between interventions focusing specifically on women or men. Successful interventions often used a social ecological model, complementing work at the individual level with awareness-raising campaigns on gender norms at the community level. Other effective strategies included: offering men a positive vision of a culturally compelling alternative idea of male gender identity; fostering supportive male peer groups; highlighting men's roles in care work; and building the skills men need for living in gender equitable ways.

The evidence is mixed regarding whether mixed or single-sex group-work is more effective - both can have advantages and disadvantages for participants, depending on aims and context (Ricardo, Eads and Barker, 2011). For instance, people may feel able to open up more freely within a single-sex group, yet it can also be important for men and boys to hear about the experiences of women and girls (Kelly and Dhaliwal, 2019).

A two-year project, led by the Institute of Development Studies, found that the design of programmes working with men and boys for gender equality should incorporate a process of participatory analysis and engagement with target groups, taking account of the particular context in which the work would be set (Edström et al., 2015). Concepts around intersectionality should also be made practical and concrete for programming, with tools developed to help identify the specific factors (such as age, education or class) relevant to each initiative, and how these interlink with gender.

Drawing on a series of diverse case studies, the project developed a set of principles for practitioners and policymakers designing initiatives (Edström et al., 2015), including: engage men and boys on interpersonal gender issues; work with institutions; engage strategically with power, policies and laws; build and work with networks, alliances and partnerships; maximise impact through communication and awareness raising. Several challenges and gaps were also identified, including: limited evidence on the long-term impact of initiatives working with men and boys for

gender equality; projects not being planned collaboratively from the beginning or with careful attention to local context; a lack of engagement between women's and men's organisations and movements; initiatives with men and boys being small scale and intensive, with limited implementation time.

Existing research suggests that gendered social norms can shift as a result of a range of factors, including: broad drivers of change, such as economic development, education or technological change; deliberate efforts to encourage change, such as new laws, policies or programmes, or social and political activism; and/or exposure to new ideas and practices discussed through formal and informal channels (such as conversations or role modelling), including through mass media and social media (Marcus and Harper, 2015a). Although some social norms appear to change with little resistance, others are more strongly contested. Strong resistance to norm change may reflect the influence of deep-seated religious beliefs or cultural values in relation to women's and men's roles in society, and how girls, boys, women and men should behave. Or it can represent reluctance to give up the power held typically by men (or certain groups of men) over others; as more egalitarian social norms take hold, the perceived loss of status for men can feel disempowering. Resistance is also more common where discriminatory gender norms are upheld and promoted by institutions such as the media, schools, religions, or political movements mobilising in defence of 'tradition' and against gender equality (Cislaghi, Manji and Heise, 2018).

A number of approaches to addressing resistance have been proposed. Engaging respectfully with all sections of a community, and tailoring approaches to different groups to emphasise what they are likely to gain from any change rather than focusing on what they stand to lose, can be helpful. 'Aspirational' messages that tap into people's desires for a better life can increase their chances of being accepted and acted on. Opinion leaders (such as religious leaders, community leaders and politicians) can positively influence people's opinions and practices in a given community by supporting norm change. Meanwhile, important figures such as teachers, NGO workers, or sports coaches, can act as role models by adopting more egalitarian social norms in their own lives - and being seen to do so (Marcus and Harper, 2015a).

3.6.1 Engaging with men and boys to prevent violence and abuse

Whilst the above reviews cover a range of work with men and boys, several have focused specifically on the important positive role they can play in ending violence against women and girls. For instance, Fulu, Kerr-Wilson and Lang (2015) suggest that interventions should have a clear theory of change and be rooted in an understanding of the links between masculinities and violence. They contend that multi-component interventions are most effective in preventing violence against women, and that it may be important to target multiple risk factors, work with multiple stakeholders, and/or at multiple levels (including individual, peer, household, and community), and to enter into strategic collaborations. Fulu, Kerr-Wilson and Lang (2015) contend that some element of face-to-face engagement is necessary to achieve lasting social and behavioural change, and can be effectively combined with other approaches, such as skills building. They suggest that interventions that work with both men and women are more effective than single-sex interventions. Finally, they affirm that gender-transformative approaches are more effective than those simply targeting attitudinal and behaviour change.

A recent stocktake by Flood (2015) recognised a growing evidence base demonstrating positive achievements in work with men and boys. He notes that it is increasingly accepted that men

should be engaged as part of efforts to tackle violence against women and promote gender equality, and large numbers of men have participated to varying extents in anti-violence groups, networks and campaigns. However, Flood (2015) points out that there are also some limitations to this work. Again, programmes have focused solely on changing men's attitudes, rather than on transforming structural and institutional gender inequalities. They have also tended to take heterosexual men as the 'norm', failing to sufficiently factor in the diversity among men and masculinities - and have sometimes been simplistic in their conceptualisation of gender.

The Promundo 'Man Box' study (Heilman, Barker and Harrison, 2017) suggests that the process of breaking out of the Box is neither linear nor straightforward. Paradoxically, adhering to the most rigid gender norms provides men inside the Man Box with a sense of belonging, of living up to what is expected of them. Yet at the same time, these norms tell men to be aggressive, to repress emotions, and to pretend to be someone they are not – and have damaging consequences for them and the people around them. Conversely, young men who have broken out of the Box reject these ideas and instead embrace more positive ideas and attitudes about what men should believe and how they should behave. This highlights that some men already are challenging and changing dominant and harmful gender norms in a variety of ways in different contexts.

Chapter 4. Expert interviews

This section is based on seventeen qualitative interviews with experts in the field. The interviews were conducted by the three authors of this report. Experts were identified covering themes felt to be most relevant to the research: early years, education, young men, fatherhood, older men, men's health, LGB and/or T experiences, and violence against women and girls. The majority (twelve) worked for specific NGOs or networks; a smaller number (five) were academics from a range of universities. Whilst a small sample of this kind cannot be fully representative, care was taken to ensure a geographical spread across the UK as far as possible. We also deliberately included participants who were felt to reflect different theoretical paradigms and frameworks, both in relation to the issues involved and to those of the research team. In selecting interviewees, we sought to achieve an appropriate range of viewpoints through discussion of potential candidates with members of the expert panel.

4.1 How are masculine gender norms formed and enacted in the UK?

4.1.1 Social and gender norms: continuity and change

An important issue raised by interviewees was about the meaning of social or gender 'norms'. Although interviewees did not dispute the definition of norms used for this study, it was felt that what they refer to can be vague and unclear. As we discuss further in the next section (4.2), norms can vary for different groups of men and boys, depending on factors such as sexual orientation, class, age, disability, culture, religion and location. Moreover, different norms can co-exist for different groups of men and boys; as one commentator noted (interviewee 1, male academic), many working-class young men who are influenced by dominant masculine norms – e.g. 'be tough', 'be strong', 'don't show emotion' - also have aspirations to be very much involved as fathers in the care of their children.

Norms were seen as changing over time, with non-linear progress, involving both advances and reverses. Having said this, the overall trend was thought to be in a progressive direction. As one interviewee put it:

> "There is a general liberalisation of masculinity. I think that in contrast to 30 years ago when the Second Wave Feminist studies were taking place, boys are much more supportive of equality of opportunity than they were previously" (interviewee 6, female academic).

Nevertheless, some interviewees felt that, for many men and boys, there was a degree of what interviewee 1 (male academic) termed 'in-betweenness'; they may not be doing what their fathers were doing, or would have wanted, in terms of work, but they are also not 'failing' - even if the work they are doing is more likely to be in the service sector than traditional manual work. The same interviewee (interviewee 1, male academic) indicated that many young men see involved fatherhood as part of being a man, but expectations of it not being manly to admit to certain emotions and feelings, especially around caring, are still powerful. These men can be seen as navigating both traditional and modern norms and expectations:

"they've taken on board what you might see as some of the newer aspects of masculinity, at the same time as their behaviour and their lives are still caught up in some things that we might see as a hangover from the past" (interviewee 1, male academic).

A similar concept was put forward by another interviewee who talked about what he called the 'chameleonisation' of masculinity, highlighting that men perform masculinity in different ways at different times of their lives (interviewee 2, male academic).

Some interviewees problematised notions of static and stable gender norms, suggesting that gender norms relating to men and boys may be becoming more flexible. Others pointed out that although gender norms for men and boys had shifted over the past 20-30 years and continue to do so, many powerful patriarchal ideas remained in place and there are still very strong binary constructions that young people feel compelled to comply with.

4.1.2 How context affects social and gender norms

An important theme coming through several interviews, and reflecting points arising from the literature review, is that social and gender norms cannot be delinked from the context in which they are produced. The influence of environmental and social factors was seen to be vital in shaping norms and the different impacts that they have on different men and boys. One interviewee went further, highlighting how norms are enforced by structural factors. As he put it, it's a fallacy that *"adhering to gender norms is a purely internalised thing, rather than something that's brutally reinforced by the world around us"* (Interviewee 3, male director of men's NGO).

Interviewees identified a range of social/structural factors impacting on norms. Perhaps most obviously, early relationships within the family were regarded as very influential, both in entrenching and/or challenging existing norms. One interviewee highlighted the expectations that are routinely placed on boys: *"They will obviously have to be strong and firm…the boys are often told to be tough and 'be a man', words like 'man up' are used from a very early stage"* (Interviewee 4, male director of NGO). Another interviewee believed that those young men who aspire to a different kind of masculinity and reject traditional gender norms had often been influenced by a father who modelled an alternative, or by significant engagement with women (as mothers, sisters, or girlfriends) during their childhood (Interviewee 1, male academic).

4.1.3 Learning gender in childhood

The entrenchment and consolidation of particular norms around masculinity by peers starts young, as many interviewees highlighted. For example, one stated that when boys go to school and are exposed in reception to boys in older year groups there can be a subtle transference of ideas around masculinity between them (in ways that adults are often insufficiently aware of): *"I'm a boy. I have to behave like a boy. I have no idea what that means. So, I will watch the six, seven, eight-year-old boys and see what they do"* (interviewee 5, female member of campaign organisation).

A few interviewees suggested that boys and young men are now much more reflective, and generally less homophobic than previously, yet *"they face a great deal of pressure to conform"* (interviewee 6, female academic). This participant cited particular behaviours that have been

identified in classrooms and playgrounds that reflected this; for example, hierarchical relationships between boys, physical regulation among boys, and bullying practices. Another also reflected on the need to conform, stating that, for the disadvantaged inner-city boys and young men his organisation worked with, *"it is very normal to join negative peer groups, and be involved in criminality"* (Interviewee 4, male director of NGO). He cited several key influences: boys being told to 'be tough' and 'be a man' from a young age; absent fathers; experiencing and/or witnessing domestic violence; school exclusion; and being recruited into gangs.

These themes were echoed in a number of interviews. Masculinity was described by one as a *"defended or defensive identity"* (Interviewee 1, male academic). In other words, young men continually 'police' each other's behaviour, and it remains vital to 'perform' masculinity appropriately in order to be accepted. For instance, many young men are aware of the need to defend against emotional revelation or expressiveness by putting on a front and 'being a man' when with other men. Young men – especially those from particular cultural or religious backgrounds – were seen as disavowing any knowledge of homosexuality when in a group because *"there's that sense that what you must do at all costs is deny the existence of those feelings, because that would threaten your masculinity"* (Interviewee 1, male academic), but may be more likely to discuss it on a one to one basis. For young men, some interviewees saw managing conflict with aggression and physical violence as a common expectation.

4.1.4 Norms and working life

Beyond the immediate realm of the family, many interviewees identified that work continues to be central to most men's identities and that it is important to take into account the norms around 'breadwinning' that affect employment opportunities and patterns for men (and, less directly, influence women too). Whilst it was noted that there may be more flexibility for men in how they perform masculinity now, to some extent this may be forced by changes in wider societal structures, such as the lack of traditional employment opportunities. This varies by community and context though, with one interviewee highlighting the endurance in former industrial areas of *"the old traditional community dynamic, of strong gendered division of labour, and the strong gendered family roles…where a real man is defined by his ability to work, to work hard at physical manual stuff"* (interviewee 2, male academic). For some (older) men, then, there can be a contradiction between the norms they have grown up with of themselves as industrial workers and breadwinners ('productive'), and the reality of their more marginal position in the contemporary labour market ('unproductive'). It was highlighted that in some cases, if living on the margins of society, some men – particularly those with a history of addiction - find ways to 'provide', whilst sailing close to illegality: *"There is a sense of not having to live by the established norms…An effective 'liver on the edge' is a version of that provider manhood"* (interviewee 7, male practitioner in NGO).

4.1.5 The impact of legislation and culture

Alongside the dominance among men of norms around work, it was felt that legislation and culture also strongly influence how men and boys think and act, particularly in relation to care issues. One interviewee who specialises in fatherhood (interviewee 8, female director of NGO) argued that prevailing cultural norms (e.g. of men as actual or potential abusers, or of men lacking competence as carers, or exaggerated beliefs about the extent of fatherlessness) discourage and

undermine men's involvement in caring. She cited the example of shared parental leave in the UK, which defines the mother as the primary carer who 'owns' the leave and can transfer an unused portion to the father, if the couple are eligible. Moreover, she suggested that the gender pay gap not only disadvantages women in the labour market, but also disadvantages men in caring because if the man earns more, then it's much more costly to the family for him to take leave.

4.1.6 Media influences

Interviewees cited the significant contribution of marketing, advertising and retail to the formation of gender norms, especially for children and young people. One highlighted how children's toys, in particular, continue to be highly gendered, sending very different cultural messages to girls and boys. Girls are frequently portrayed as being passive and decorative (e.g. playing with jewellery, dolls), whilst boys are portrayed as having power and dominance (e.g. playing with weapons, action figures) – and less explicit gender coding (e.g. language, colour) is used to reinforce this distinction. Girls and boys are also rarely portrayed as playing together, and maintaining this separation has major impacts on children's understanding of gender, she argued: *"they're studying very hard to work out what it means to be a boy or a girl, or a man or a woman, and they want to get it right"* (interviewee 5, female member of campaign organisation). She also cited evidence that children's media (books, films, TV shows) prioritise male voices and representation, contributing to the norm of male dominance as the 'default' position.

This perspective was also highlighted by two other interviewees, both of whom worked in organisations tackling violence against women and girls. One felt that video games and popular music culture are highly influential (and often harmful) sources in the formation of masculine norms for young men and boys: *"The way women are portrayed in that is actually quite a serious issue"* (interviewee 9, female director of NGO). The other argued that the rise of 'superhero' movies entrenched norms of men 'saving the world' and of women being weaker and in need of men's protection (interviewee 10, male practitioner in NGO). He went on to highlight that although some female superhero films have emerged in recent years, male superheroes still dominate the Box Office.

4.2 How do gender norms vary by demographic?

4.2.1 Ageing men

Several interviewees noted significant variation in norms for men and boys depending on age. On the one hand, as men age, they were thought to feel less pressure to conform to certain masculine expectations. On the other hand, it was highlighted that older men may be more likely to hold onto more traditional norms of masculinity. But overall, the perspectives and needs of older men have rarely been the focus of discussion. Although some of the issues facing young men – the loss of manufacturing jobs, the #MeToo movement against sexual harassment and sexual assault – also bear on older men, there are, as one interviewee put it: *"some particular concerns about health, the body, isolation, and ways of men's bodies working a bit - or even a lot - differently to each other's"* (interviewee 11, male academic). There were also other significant issues raised that are underexplored in research, such as the experiences and expectations of

men in (female-dominated) care homes and hospices, and the lack of visibility of older gay, bisexual and/or transgender men.

4.2.2 Gay, bisexual and/or transgender men

Norms around masculinity can affect gay, bisexual and/or transgender men in significantly different ways to heterosexual men. According to one interviewee, some of the dominant masculine norms about being the breadwinner, being strong, and emotionally unavailable apply differently to them: *"as a gay man, it's pretty much the opposite"* (interviewee 12, male practitioner in LGBT NGO).

The same interviewee identified a range of gendered expectations for gay men: for instance that they should be camp, or be the 'funny gay sidekick' *"because you want people to feel comfortable around you and you want to not be seen as a threat"*. He suggested it is often assumed that gay relationships will take the form of a traditional gendered power dynamic; in other words, one partner will be dominant and one subordinate, one the giver and one the receiver of sex. Or that gay men will have large numbers of sexual partners, bound up with disapproval of promiscuity: *"it's the norm and then therefore I feel like I have to have a particular number of sexual partners"*. Such 'slut-shaming', in his view encouraged by the media, is rarely applied to heterosexual men.

Interviewee 11 also noted that it can be harder to recognise and discuss domestic abuse within the LGB and/or T community *"because of the power dynamic that you're often educated on"*. In other words, it's assumed routinely that domestic violence only involves a man abusing a woman and is inherently connected with issues of masculinity and femininity.

There is also considerable variety among gay, bisexual and/or transgender men. It was suggested that whilst there has been an expansion of spaces available for gay and bisexual men, some may still not feel like these spaces are for them (e.g. men of colour, transgender men, older men).

Transgender men face unique issues too. They receive a lot of negative press; for example, it was highlighted that transgender men have been criticised for binding their chests as they attempt to fit in with mainstream standards of how they should look. For transgender people, there can also be, on the one hand, pressure to be more visible (e.g. through Pride events, from the transgender community), and on the other, pressure to remain invisible: *"for people to assume that you're not trans"* (interviewee 12, male practitioner in LGBT NGO). This conflict is difficult to navigate:

"it can be really hard to find times where you have that confidence and resilience and you feel like, actually, I'm going to outwardly express myself, but then find that that makes you immensely vulnerable and potentially experience some of that abuse" (interviewee 12, male practitioner in LGBT NGO).

4.2.3 Men from refugee communities

A theme that arose in several interviews was the position of asylum-seeking and refugee men. One interviewee drew attention to *"the sense of displacement from home"*, and the way that *"some of them have travelled with families and they really struggled with a liberal, Western democracy that had expectations of them to be liberal Western men"* (interviewee 7, male practitioner in NGO). The norms of the destination country sometimes conflict with their traditional

culture and values, for example of the man being the 'ruler of the family', who is able to discipline his wife and children. In addition, many were seen as needing to contend with a significant shift in their breadwinner status and self-esteem - by undertaking work that undervalued their skills and achievements in their home country. The same interviewee described how a former senior police officer was now working as a security guard:

"the shift in status in everything was massive… I swung in to buy something in Boots. And as I passed him, he turned his back to me, because he did not want to be recognised, because I knew his background. And I know that within his family he struggled with all of that" (interviewee 7, male practitioner in NGO).

4.2.4 Religion

One interviewee highlighted that the intersection of masculinity and religion can present challenges when seeking to shift gender norms. Whilst men who are actively involved in religion may behave in similar ways to other men, *"they bring through this external set of values that they refer back to the whole time"* (interviewee 13, male director of NGO). In such cases, the depth of adherence that an individual has to particular religious beliefs – and therefore their degree of openness to other ideas and norms – was seen as significant. An additional complexity is that there are differences within religions as well as between them; some forms of Christianity, or Hinduism, or Islam, for example, are quite rigid, others are more flexible. Again, this was thought to affect the extent to which men, either individually or in groups, will respond to interventions around gender norms and has implications for engaging men and boys.

4.2.5 Social class

The class system is highly influential in the construction of gendered social norms, as various interviewees acknowledged. One highlighted that men are not all privileged to the same extent by their gender, *"we shouldn't pretend that the negative consequences of some aspects of masculinity bear down on us all equally"* (interviewee 3, male director of men's NGO). He cited the example of suicide: whereas men are three times as likely to die from suicide than women, *"a guy who works on a building site is three times more likely to die from suicide than me".*

Another commented that stereotypes – of women as 'weak' and needing protection from men – are reproduced in very different ways within different social classes of men. He argued that men in the higher social classes dominate positions of privilege, *"but there will be this hierarchy, with working class men expecting to get some crumbs of that privilege and power"* (interviewee 10, male practitioner in NGO). In other words, despite their different class backgrounds, men as a group were striving to gain and maintain their privilege – and felt threatened by losing some of it to women. He acknowledged that *"when men realise that some of them will have to give up some of the seats at the table…that's when they feel that their whole manhood is under attack"*. He felt that it was important to open up conversations with men in these circumstances, and to encourage them to talk about their experiences and how they had learned to be men. In his view, it was important to be:

"very clear that affecting change is not about rejecting ideas about what it is to be a man…It's not about taking anything away, in fact it's about enriching people's lives and giving them more opportunities" (interviewee 10, male practitioner in NGO).

4.2.6 Geographical differences

More than one interviewee pointed to the significance of the ways in which gender norms are interlinked with issues of geography and place. One stressed the importance of structural and economic dynamics in framing issues and norms, alongside social class and social disadvantage (interviewee 2, male academic). Drawing on previous research, he compared the lack of economic opportunities for young men in the declining West of Scotland with the more favourable climate facing young men in London. For the former, traditional expectations of a job in local (heavy) industry had broken down, with little to replace this. For the latter, it was possible to aspire to working in new sectors such as cultural industries, media, and new technology. Although he noted it was difficult to generalise, he suggested, as other interviewees did, that norms around masculinity manifest themselves in different ways in different social and geographical contexts.

4.3 What impact do masculine gender norms have on the behaviour of men and boys in the UK?

Interviewees generally accepted that what it means to act like a man is less clear-cut than it used to be, and that there is now a bit more space for men to act differently from traditional models. In practice, according to one interviewee, some men and boys are distancing themselves from these norms, and that has become more possible in a progressive sense in recent decades (though it remains difficult for men to be visibly pro-feminist). However, he warned that men can also distance themselves from gender norms in a harmful way, for example by embracing extremely sexist and misogynistic viewpoints and practices (interviewee 11, male academic).

Another agreed that, for many men and boys, expectations of masculinity have liberalised somewhat; however, she also suggested that gender norms continue to narrow their opportunities considerably, and lead to harmful impacts on women and girls (Interviewee 6, female academic). For her, strong hierarchies, enforced through gendered social norms, remain in place both among men and boys, and between men and women.

Others identified some of the tensions and contradictions underlying these overall trends. One commented that the pressures for some groups of young men not to change are tougher, not only from peer groups but also economic and social pressures. In his view, the kind of lives such men are caught up in *"don't necessarily allow them the space in which to play around with being a different kind of young man…It's often about survival on the streets"* (interviewee 1, male academic). Another suggested that men and boys can simultaneously take on board and voice critiques of masculinity and see themselves as separate from dominant forms of manhood, whilst still putting harmful masculine norms into practice in other ways (e.g. men with progressive views enacting sexual harassment) (interviewee 13, male director of NGO).

In relation to boys schooling, a common observation was that gendered social norms contribute significantly to boys generally having lower literacy and language skills than girls. This in turn was

seen to negatively affect boys' performance much more broadly at school. As one interviewee put it:

"if you're not adept at writing, that has a knock-on for performance and exams and so forth, and a range of other academic curriculum areas. So, I would say that that explains a great deal of the gender gap." (interviewee 6, female academic).

She also was of the opinion that, for boys, "*general constructions of masculinity aren't necessarily supportive",* and this affected their behaviour:

"the image of the traditional laddish boy and the attributes of the laddish boy are quite antithetical to successful academic achievement…It's that lazy, casual approach. It's about having a laugh, rather than academic diligence. It's about rebellion, nonchalance, independence of mind, etc, rather than a kind of obedient, diligent, hardworking approach that you need to succeed at your GCSEs" (interviewee 6, female academic).

Having said that, she also noted there is considerable variation among boys, and social class and ethnicity are often more influential factors on achievement than gender: *"we know that middle class boys, white boys, and from certain minority ethnic groups as well, are doing pretty well. So, it's wrong to generalise across the board"*.

One interviewee argued similarly that a lack of literacy skills contributes to a poverty of emotional expression for boys who don't have any vocabulary to talk about their feelings other than anger. As a result:

"The little boy of seven who can't talk about his sadness, his anxiety or his worry expresses it as anger. That becomes, quite clearly, the man at thirty who is expressing his sadness, his anxiety and his worry as anger and physical violence" (interviewee 5, female member of campaign organisation).

Boys were described as being expected to be 'cool' at all costs – never to be upset, or to be happy/excited/earnest, or to look like they care: *"At all costs, you must just not be like the girls"* (interviewee 5, female member of campaign organisation). This perspective was echoed by another interviewee who argued that as boys grow into men, they add more and more plates of masculine 'armour', which make it difficult for them to face up to, or admit to, their vulnerabilities – especially when experiencing forms of disadvantage (interviewee 16, male journalist).

It was argued that, over the past 20 or 30 years, it has become increasingly normative for (young) men to put a lot of effort into physicality and aesthetics. One interviewee observed that many men now spend a lot of time at the gym, and/or working out at home – and this is a very prevalent and socially accepted pastime, even for quite young boys (interviewee 6, female academic). Furthermore, she argued that it was no longer necessarily seen as being 'effeminate' for men to care about their appearance (e.g. the proliferation of shaving and grooming products), and although not objectified to the same extent as women, men and boys are starting to face similar pressures to women around looking good. These pressures may be particularly powerful for gay, bisexual and transgender men:

"there's a lot of pressure for us to have six packs and washboard abs. And again, if you see us represented in TV, if there's anything around sex and hooking up, again, it's someone that's got a stereotypically ripped body" (interviewee 12, male practitioner in LGBT NGO).

Related to this emphasis on the body, it was thought that collective sport is an interesting site where norms around masculinity are both constructed and enacted. As one interviewee explained, on the one hand, participation in sporting activity requires men to be tough, strong, and competitive. On the other hand, it can also encourage quite caring, non-competitive homosocial behaviours in some ways (interviewee 13, male director of NGO). The dominance of sport, and kudos attached to sporting prowess – particularly football – among boys in schools was seen as significant, too; not just for those who are participating, but also for those who are not. This was thought to lead to some boys in the latter category developing an ambivalent relationship with the dominant norms around sport.

It was highlighted that an important aspect of social interaction and bonding for men and boys in same-sex groups such as sports teams is joking, joshing and 'banter' - often at other people's expense (interviewee 13, male director of NGO). Often, there was seen to be a lack of leadership on the part of men in challenging other men's behaviour: *"the stereotype is that we don't challenge our friends - the 'Bro Code' clicks in - because, if we do, we run the risk of being socially isolated. Not being part of the group"* (interviewee 14, male practitioner in NGO). Some interviewees suggested that there had been some change in a positive direction in recent years, at least in some environments such as universities. Although it may still be seen as acceptable in some communities to make a 'gay' joke, it was not regarded as acceptable to hold an explicit homophobic position (interviewee 13, male director of NGO). Nevertheless, although gay men are less likely to be ostracised now, many interviewees commented that fear of homosexuality and of transgender people remains an important element of normative masculinity.

Another area where change was felt to be underway is fatherhood. One interviewee believed that *"the idea that men should be involved has become an expectation and…you're a 'bad dad' if you're not"* (interviewee 1, male academic). From his own research, he argued the pioneers were initially middle-class men, professionals in their early 30s, who wanted to distance themselves from their own fathers, and be much more 'hands on'. In practice, he explained, this means being there at the birth, picking children up from school, being more present in the family, and so on. In his view, these norms have got through to younger men too, whatever their background, even if they are not always reflected in their behaviour. Another interviewee concurred that definitions of masculinities are indeed expanding to include a more close-involved fatherhood (interviewee 8, female director of NGO). She argued that it is important to encourage this trend further, and to take a positive approach to the engagement of men and boys, recognising that they want to be good fathers, and to be closer to their children and their partners. Although negative portrayals of fathers as strong, unemotional and distant persist in the media, some interviewees observed that there is more positive, productive, healthy discussion and promotion of fatherhood in the media too.

4.4 What impact do masculine gender norms have on the wellbeing of men and boys in the UK?

As previous sections have highlighted, interviewees concurred that gendered norms for men and boys of being 'strong' and 'unemotional' remain highly influential, often leading to negative outcomes in terms of their health and wellbeing. One interviewee argued, however, that it is important to broaden understandings of what 'strength' means for men and boys:

> "There isn't one particular way of being strong. If you take your shirt off at a football match and have tattoos and drink pints, that's one form, but you can be strong by fighting an illness, by being a good father at home, you don't have to be strong in a traditional way" (interviewee 15, male psychologist).

Other interviewees noted how norms associating masculinity with risk-taking also have a strong influence on men and boys and their health and wellbeing. An interviewee working with men and boys in Scotland accepted that *"We're still seeing the strong man. We're still seeing the heavy drinker. We're still seeing the need to be in control"* (interviewee 14, male practitioner in NGO). However, at the same time he argued there are increasing discussions around more healthy behaviour; he noted that young people in particular are having less sex (Mercer et al., 2013), drinking less (Fat, Shelton and Cable, 2018), and looking after themselves more, and that these trends are reflected in many other countries too. Whilst the overall statistics appear to reflect this, concern remains around risk-taking among some groups. For instance, one interviewee identified that some coping mechanisms sought out by gay, bisexual and/or transgender men can be unhealthy, such as sex work, chem sex (sex under the influence of drugs), and drug and alcohol dependency (interviewee 12, male practitioner in LGBT NGO). More than one interviewee felt that, as a society, there tends to be a lack of concern for the wellbeing of men and boys. As one put it: "*a general collective social indifference to male suffering"* (interviewee 16, male journalist). By contrast, he felt people look at female suffering and feel more protective. In his view, society holds men responsible for their own wellbeing, but doesn't address how men and boys are 'brutalised': *"one of the fundamental problems…is that we tend to talk about how men are, and not talk about how men are made"*.

A key issue for several interviewees was the mental health of men and boys. One suggested that a harmful norm for many (but not necessarily all) young men was that they had to, in their terms, 'man up': *"You don't go to counselling. You don't go to a doctor. You deal with it"* (interviewee 1, male academic). Another argued, however, that a significant factor in men not seeking help was stigma, and that rather than being due to male inexpressiveness, many men didn't admit to mental health problems as it would have negative consequences on their employment prospects (interviewee 3, male director of men's NGO). Another added that a lot of the men and boys they work with have mental health issues and display aggressive and angry behaviours, and are also frustrated at the lack of support available to them (interviewee 4, male director of NGO). Nevertheless, another interviewee believed that male mental health (as with mental health more broadly) is starting to be taken more seriously and discussed more openly (interviewee 10, male practitioner in NGO).

A significant contributing factor to the poor mental health of some men and boys was felt to be isolation and the disappearance of social networks; this can be highly damaging when combined

with alienation from family. Loneliness was also considered a significant issue for older men in particular, often because they have been so reliant on their (female) partners for managing social activities and relationships. One interviewee who runs group work for men described the core of his work as 'creating community': *"through outreach and creating spaces, we provide the opportunity to connect and then create community and find connection out of isolation"* (interviewee 7, male practitioner in NGO).

Although male suicide is receiving much greater attention today, it remains a major problem, and appears to be linked to gendered social norms. It was argued that the continued comparative prevalence of male suicide suggests that some young men continue to bottle up their emotions or feel unable to ask for help in a way that young women might find easier to do. But there is also evidence that suicide is heavily linked to wider social problems, such as unemployment, and that alcohol is often implicated. Similarly, it was also suggested that the role of gender in other social problems – such as homelessness, and the prison population – continues to go unrecognised:

"When you look at the statistics for prisoners, it's a matter of fact many gendered factors are going on. If we talked about exclusion from school, definitely gendered. Homelessness, heavily gendered. Untreated mental health conditions, heavily gendered. All of these go back to gender norms and social norms in one way or another" (interviewee 16, male journalist).

4.5 Do masculine gender norms contribute to violence against women and girls in the UK?

A common view among interviewees was that gendered social norms are at the root of men's violence against women and girls, which is in itself an acute expression of wider male dominated/patriarchal culture. As one put it:

"it [violence] comes from a place of privilege and impunity and entitlement. And it grows as a version of insecurity about manhood, which is about saying that the only way I can prove my manhood is by proving that I'm better than a woman" (interviewee 7, male practitioner in NGO).

Another recalled studies suggesting that before adolescent boys and young men even enter into relationships, they learn a lot of unhealthy ideas and norms about them (e.g. 'I will be in charge of her', 'I will to some extent have control over her') (interviewee 17, female director of women's NGO). Several interviewees argued that pornography is having a significant influence on gender norms for men and boys in the UK today, and this, in turn, is contributing to young men's understanding of, and behaviour within, sexual relationships. Often they were seen as replicating practices that they have seen in pornography. It was argued that most children will have seen pornography and this will give them certain ideas about who sex is for, who is in control, and what is normal (interviewee 17, female director of women's NGO). One interviewee cited work that he was involved in a few years ago to tackle sexual violence in Scotland:

"We saw sharing of images, accessing pornography, forcing people to watch pornography, voyeurism-type offenses. The age went right down to 16 to 18. Young men who were forcing girls to behave in certain ways, to do certain things" (interviewee 14, male practitioner in NGO).

The relationship between masculine norms and violence against women was also acknowledged as being complex. One felt there is no direct relationship between holding certain beliefs and

enacting violence (interviewee 13, male director of NGO). Rather, he felt that some common norms such as the need for a man to 'prove' himself sexually, to judge himself on the number of women that he has slept with, and the idea of being entitled to sex with women, play a significant role. Another layer of complexity identified was that gender norms and expectations can make it difficult to recognise and understand violence and abuse when it does not follow the dominant male/female pattern, for example in domestic violence within LGB and/or T people's relationships.

One interviewee noted, too, that for some communities and groups, there is a level of acceptance that violence is okay, *"that sometimes you may have to express your masculinity by defending yourself, by being aggressive"* (interviewee 1, male academic). In his view, there is a link here to how masculine norms have an impact on violence against women and girls: *"if you think it's okay to use violence generally, then how do I know you're not going to use it in a relationship?"*

Another highlighted the link between masculinity, social inequalities, and violence, and how this has been largely absent from discussions about acts such knife crime, but is central to explaining it: *"There's a lot of young men out there who grew up with violence, so their biography of masculinity is rooted in violence"* (interviewee 14, male practitioner in NGO). Moreover, many young men were seen as lacking the resilience to walk away, and it can make it hard for young men to achieve masculine status in other, more legitimate ways.

Several interviewees focused on the impact on many boys of various forms of violence, either witnessing it, or being victims of it themselves. One stated that boys are rarely seen as vulnerable, and when they act out at school (due, for example, to trauma in their lives), they may simply be seen as a threat, and excluded (interviewee 4, male director of NGO). Another argued, in a similar vein, that violence against children is often tolerated - and for boys, it is to some extent ritualised, with many role models for boys using violence (interviewee 16, male journalist). Furthermore, norms for men and boys of stoicism and emotional inexpressiveness ('don't cry') were seen by this interviewee as making it hard for them to seek help: *"A boy is expected to suck up the pain"*. He concluded that men's wellbeing and women's safety are very much interlinked, and that treating boys with greater kindness, love and compassion is crucial to ending men's violence against women and girls.

4.6 What are the best ways to communicate with men and boys about harmful masculine gender norms?

4.6.1 Positive approaches towards men and boys

A common perspective among interviewees was that it is important to address men and boys with positive aspirational messages. One said that his organisation wanted to promote awareness among boys and men that there are many men who are doing good things and whose lives are going well – and that you, too, can be a different kind of man (interviewee 4, male director of NGO). Another concurred that it is helpful to use examples of men and boys who are enacting healthier, more egalitarian forms of masculinity (interviewee 17, female director of women's NGO). However, another highlighted that although positive messages are needed to create change, the negative conditions facing gay, bisexual and/or transgender men that justify change need to be highlighted too (interviewee 12, practitioner in LBGT NGO).

Several interviewees agreed it is important to adopt a positive, 'asset-based' approach to men and boys, rather than a deficit model which sees men purely as the problem. One felt that the focus should be less on risk factors, and more on protective factors: *"rather than 'toxic masculinity', I want to talk about 'tender masculinity'"*, including issues such as how boys can be emotionally strong, and what healthy relationships look like (interviewee 14, male practitioner in NGO). Another stressed that changing gendered social norms isn't about taking something away, but enriching people's lives. For example, it is fine to 'be strong', but in different, broader ways than are currently encouraged for men and boys (interviewee 10, male practitioner in NGO).

A critical issue raised by many interviewees was how to approach men and boys constructively. One stated that *"preaching about gender equality is not going to do it for young men"* (interviewee 1, male academic) - a view that was echoed by others. He emphasised how difficult it can be, particularly for some groups of young men, to make that transition from the way in which they've seen some older men in their communities behave. In his view, *"raising the issue of gender directly, particularly with young men, is not often a productive approach - there are indirect ways of coming at it, getting them to talk about those things"*. Another fleshed this out further, suggesting it was critical not just to adopt a 'top down' approach, but to help men to help each other to work out ways forward themselves, and provide them with tools to talk to each other about these issues (interviewee 17, female director of women's NGO).

4.6.2 Environment and language

Men and boys want to have these conversations, according to one interviewee, and when they see other men talking openly, *"it relaxes them, it reassures them"* that they can drop their guard a bit (interviewee 14, male practitioner in NGO). For this to happen, it was seen as vital to create more spaces where men and boys can talk about issues around gender, masculinity, relationships, sexuality, violence, wellbeing, and so on. The ground rules for such conversations can usefully contradict masculine norms; one interviewee described how he introduces groups thus: *"You do not have to be competitive in this room, we sit in a circle, we share time. We listen to each other, we do not argue, we learn empathy. And we practice listening skills" (interviewee 7, male practitioner in NGO)*. He noted that he often uses poetry with groups of men as a way of easily entering into conversations about emotion with them.

Sustained engagement is also important, as one pointed out, as the more time you spend with young men, the more they are likely to trust you (interviewee 2, male academic). Another essential component of effective practice was to use accessible, non-stigmatising language (interviewee 15, male psychologist), and it was highlighted that this needs not only to be 'male-friendly', but also inclusive of gay, bisexual and/or transgender groups - and challenging of homophobia (interviewee 12, male practitioner in LGBT NGO). This is likely to have implications for engaging with men and boys through media and social media.

4.6.3 Individual and group work

It was seen as key too to encourage men and boys to be *themselves* more - to get them to think about who they are as individuals, not just as part of a group (interviewee 14, male practitioner in NGO). Another suggested that it is possible to play on that dynamic and try to get each individual to *"identify how they don't agree with the presumed group norms or actions or behaviours or what*

has happened in the past and in that moment can really start to shift those group norms" (interviewee 13, male director of NGO). Sometimes individual work with a young man was identified as being more productive than in a group as the joshing and banter that often occurs in male-dominated settings can be set aside, allowing more personal interactions to develop according to one interviewee (interviewee 1, male academic).

4.6.4 Diversity among men and boys

Another important issue which was raised by some interviewees is to ensure the visibility of diverse groups of men, removing the stigma of being different and responding to their specific needs. This is relevant to various minority groups who are not part of the dominant norm, and touches on issues of race, sexual orientation, disability, faith, and class. This may require innovative thinking around messaging, and the everyday locations (e.g. cafes, public transport, GP surgeries, pharmacies, other closed spaces) that each of these groups frequent. The involvement of community groups on the ground is vital as they are often trusted organisations.

4.6.5 Maintaining focus on structural issues

One interviewee felt strongly that paying attention to communicating about gender norms should not lead to talking only about changing behaviour (interviewee 3, male director of men's NGO). In his view, it remains vital not to lose focus on the central issues of structural, policy/legislative and societal change, which overall play the biggest role in shaping norms. Putting it another way, gender norms are not just free-floating, but they're actually located within, and formed and influenced by, structures, institutions, legislation and policies.

4.6.6 Policy initiatives

Interviewees suggested a number of policy areas where specific interventions could help. These included initiatives to: develop a gender-inclusive literacy programme; encourage boys and men into care work; introduce leave targeted specifically at fathers; and develop education for parenting. It was also felt that there is a need for reflection and learning about gender norms and gender inequality throughout the school curriculum, and that training should be available for all teachers about gender norms and stereotyping.

4.6.7 Media and social media

Opinions differed somewhat among interviewees as to the weight that should be placed on media and social media as a potential vehicle of change. One commented that attitudes are often impervious to messages in popular culture, especially among some young men: *"they're either not aware of them, or they've rejected them"* (interviewee 1, male academic). In his view, the messages of wider mainstream culture are probably not very effective as they come up against more local influences and factors, to do with family, religion, culture, that are much more important. Others, however, were clear that engaging with the media was necessary in order to shift norms. One interviewee suggested that popular 'YouTubers' potentially offer a good route into influencing young people, and are already challenging some gender norms (interviewee 17, female director of women's NGO). Another highlighted the impact of male celebrities – either

consciously or unconsciously – citing the ripple effect of Paul Gascoigne crying in public on a football pitch (interviewee 7, male practitioner in NGO). A third said there is a need for a much greater effort to insert counter-messages to dominant ideas of masculinity in online and social media spaces (interviewee 9, female director of NGO).

4.7 Have any interventions been successful in reducing the negative impacts of masculine gender norms?

Several interviewees highlighted some of the key principles for effective interventions with men and boys. For instance, one argued that helpful guidance should focus on how to build effective relationships with men that enable productive work to happen (interviewee 1, male academic). He argued that this should include how to introduce the topics, how to raise the issue of gender with men, and some examples of good practice. In order to work on changing gender norms and behaviour, it was important to acknowledge the broader structural and contextual issues: *"The workers have to come from a position where they're not saying 'here's the three point plan on how you must change your life'"*. In his view, the relationship between the young man and the worker is key: "*There are things you can do which are about relationships, about standing alongside people, understanding where they're coming from. It's long-term work"*.

There was some scepticism about the value of developing a toolkit if this meant just a set of exercises. One indicated that tools and exercises can be useful, but the thing that makes the biggest difference to group work with men and boys is having an effective facilitator – and making sure all facilitators are trained to a high standard is a challenge (interviewee 13, male director of NGO). Another interviewee identified the skills and attributes of an effective facilitator working in this field (interviewee 7, male practitioner in NGO). They should be an active participant in the group, bringing their own feelings and experiences, rather than just being an outsider or voyeur; model good listening and give equal time to each participant; provide a non-judgemental space; accept different versions of being a man; and establish ground rules of no physical or verbal violence or shaming. He noted however that change takes time, and that efforts may need to be sustained over a long period.

An important caveat about such work with men and boys was highlighted by one interviewee (interviewee 1, male academic). He emphasised the need to understand the context in which men are living and why certain men may behave in certain negative ways. Although it was important not to be judgemental, at the same time workers should avoid colluding with harmful behaviours. There was seen to be a risk, especially for male workers, that supportiveness can be seen as, or might amount to, collusion.

Some interviewees talked about how interventions could address gender norms specifically in relation to their area of expertise. For example, one said that, within gender training, negative assumptions around men's wishes and capabilities in terms of being carers should be challenged (interviewee 8, female director of NGO).

Many interviewees felt that there are lots of ways in which reflection and learning about gender norms should be embedded into different areas of the school curriculum – one cited an example of deconstructing fairy-tales in English classes at primary school level, and the narratives within video games (interviewee 6, female academic). At secondary level, such work would fall most

obviously within PHSE and Citizenship, and other humanities and social science subjects. She felt, however, that shifting gender norms has to be part of a whole-school approach to tackling gender inequality, including across the curriculum, and that initial teacher training should include the benefits of challenging stereotypes for both boys and girls:

"Addressing gender inequality needs to be approached from a whole school perspective. A Maths teacher needs to be just as aware of the classroom dynamics, and making sure that they're managing them from an equity perspective, as does the Citizenship Teacher who's addressing these topics directly" (interviewee 6, female academic).

In terms of policy and legislation, one interviewee specifically praised the recent new standards around gender stereotypes in advertising as an important step:

"Hopefully, what the effect of that will be is to push advertisers to be just a bit more creative, and to just be aware that there are some boundaries here. I think that will be a good and proportionate intervention" (interviewee 5, female member of campaign organisation).

In relation to violence against women and girls, it was suggested that many organisations in the women's sector (e.g. Rape Crisis and Women's Aid) are running effective violence prevention programmes which significantly address gender norms. The White Ribbon Campaign offers an example of men (1000+ White Ribbon 'ambassadors') challenging masculine norms by taking action and speaking out about violence against women. Respect runs domestic violence perpetrator programmes that offer an important example of how it is possible to change deep-rooted and deeply harmful gendered social norms (at least on an individual basis). The Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) programme is not just about bystander intervention (though that is important), and feedback in Scotland suggests that it does help to change norms and expectations among young men. The End Violence against Women (EVAW) coalition ran a campaign called 'We Are Man' which sought to model bystander intervention and help the viewer identify with that. 'Tender' do peer education in London using arts-based methods to prevent domestic abuse and sexual violence.

In terms of engaging with young men (aged 10-25), Future Men (formerly Working with Men) works in schools and educational settings to provide support at major transition points in their lives. In secondary school their work is focused around conflict resolution, family breakdown, domestic abuse, harmful behaviour, and gender-based violence. One approach they use is 'ventoring' (vent and mentoring), giving an opportunity and space for boys to talk about their frustrations, anger, and upsets, and find support. A comparable organisation is the Good Lad Initiative (GLI), which runs interactive workshops with boys and men in schools, universities (especially sports teams), and workplaces, predominantly in the south-east of England, helping them to explore a range of issues around gender equality, violence prevention, homophobia, and mental health. GLI is based on the premise that local norms of behaviour, or ideas of what it is to be a man can greatly influence people's attitudes and behaviours. Their workshops *"reveal some of the unnecessary consequences of these norms and provide space for groups to create new norms"* (GLI website).

In relation to work with older men, Men's Sheds provide spaces where men can share practical interests and practice skills, within a supportive environment that creates social connections and friendship, breaking down the isolation that many older men experience. Among a range of services for various categories of men (including older men), in Ireland the Men's Development

Network provides spaces for men to reflect and talk about key issues in their lives, in a way that challenges norms of male stoicism and inexpressiveness. In either personal reflection or a group, the Network suggests seven key questions for men to explore: How are things? What's going well? What's not going well? Is there anything you need to do? Are there any supports you need? What's one step you might take? What difference might it make?

For gay, bisexual and/or transgender men, the LGBT Foundation run a range of health promoting projects and programmes. For example, the 'Men's Programme' is activity based and includes skills sharing and building friendships and kinships among gay, bisexual and transgender men in non-sexualised environments, e.g. attending art history, and cultural events.

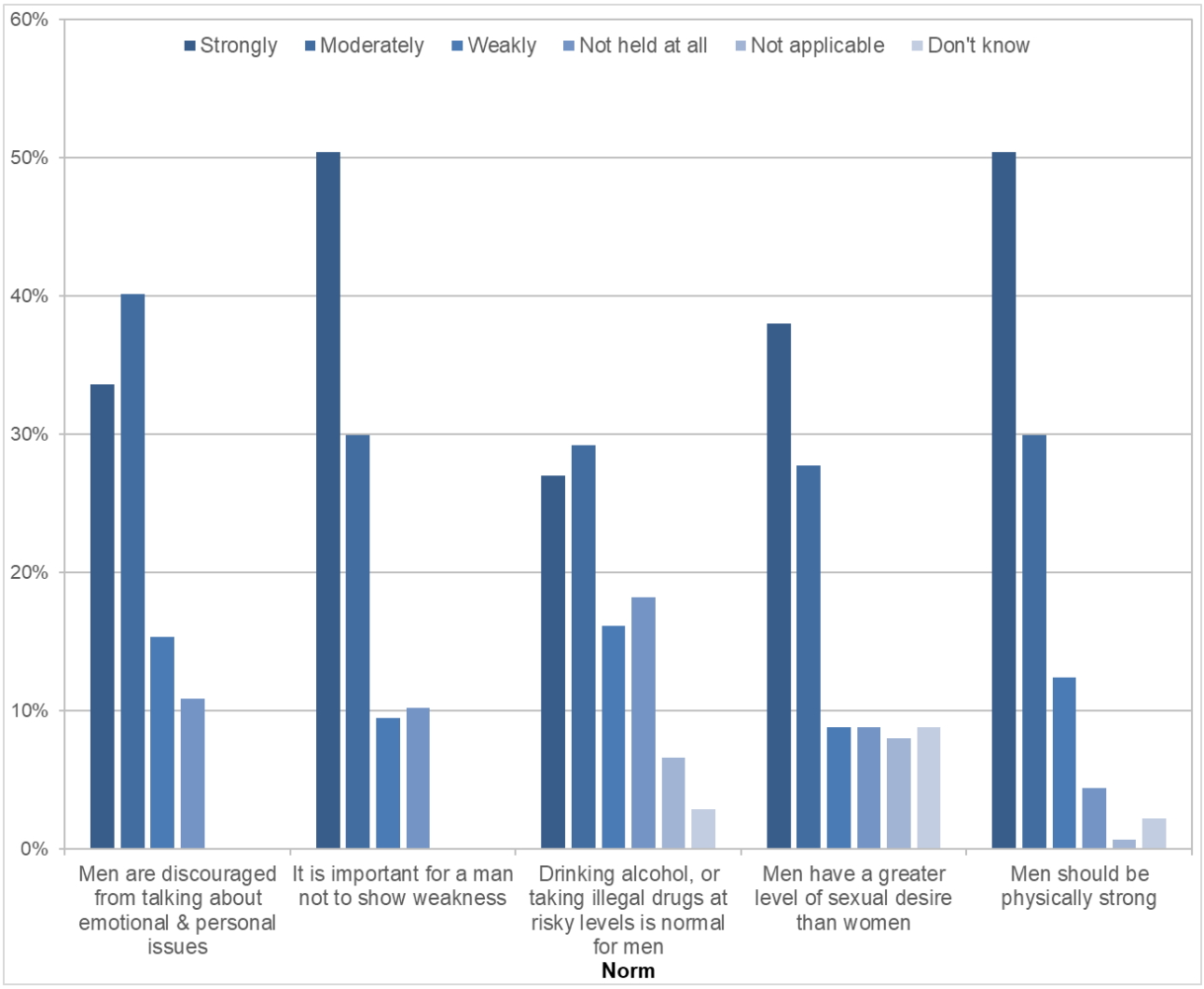
Chapter 5. Survey of people working with men and/or boys

As outlined in Chapter 2, the online survey was completed by 143 people doing various forms of work with different groups of men and boys across the UK, with respondents asked to reflect specifically on the communities or groups of men and boys that they engage with. The survey focused on three key areas in which gender norms can impact upon the behaviours and experiences of men and boys: 1) health and well-being; 2) relationships; and 3) violence against women and girls. In relation to each of these themes, we asked survey respondents how strongly they felt a series of possible examples of norms were held among the men and boys that they work with. Respondents were also asked open questions about their views on the impacts of masculine norms in each of these areas, how to communicate with men and boys about them, and any norms which might be beneficial.

5.1 The health and well-being of men and boys

Survey respondents were asked about five possible norms connected to men's health and wellbeing. Some of the potential norms we suggested in the survey will not have been applicable to all groups of men and boys that respondents may work with - for example, young boys. This is likely to explain why some norms have relatively high numbers of respondents stating "Not applicable" or "Don't know". Where numbers do not add up to 100% this is due to number rounding.

Figure 1: Survey question - Norms related to men's health and wellbeing, n = 137



These results suggest that somewhat traditional masculine norms related to health and wellbeing are continuing to impact on men and boys in the UK - at least among those that the survey respondents work with. For each of the five example norms given, the majority of respondents felt that they had a strong or moderate influence. This was particularly true of notions that men should not show weakness, and that men should be physically strong. In both cases, 50% (69 out of 137 respondents) felt this norm was strongly held and 30% (41 respondents) felt it was moderately held. The norm around consuming alcohol or illegal drugs at risky levels was less strongly held, perhaps pointing to divergences between different groups of men and boys, but it did still appear to be highly influential.

5.1.1 How gender norms impact on the health and wellbeing of men and boys

Respondents were then asked for additional comments about how such norms impact on the health and wellbeing of the men and boys that they work with. Many of the respondents discussed highly detrimental effects here, with key points including:

- Finding it hard to talk about or seek support for their problems, especially in relation to their mental health. This was linked to emotional literacy and not feeling able to express emotions beyond anger.
- Importance of being tough, and not being allowed to be weak or vulnerable - compensated for by, for example, spending lots of time at the gym and trying to become more physically strong.
- High levels of substance abuse, e.g. through alcohol and drugs - perceived as desirable masculine behaviour and as 'self-medication'.
- Masculinity often defined by competition and a 'winner/loser dichotomy', resulting in a sense of inadequacy in attempting to meet these standards, a lack of resilience for dealing with failure, and low levels of self-esteem.
- Risky, 'bravado' behaviours normalised and actively encouraged and masculine expectations contributing to self-isolation, self-harm, and suicidal ideation.
- Gender norms pressuring young men and boys not to work hard at school, being defiant towards teachers, and getting into trouble. This was linked to a general repression of interests that might be perceived as being 'feminine'.
- Encouragement of sexualisation of female peers and unhealthy ideas and expectations of sex and relationships.
- Participating in sport - with failure in traditionally masculine activities of this kind often leading to boys and young men being ostracised or bullied.
- Some of the respondents did point out that some aspects of masculine norms related to health and wellbeing did appear to be changing, at least among some of men and boys. For instance, it was suggested that talking about mental health may gradually be becoming more commonplace for men.

When asked whether there are gender norms related to health and wellbeing which are held by the men and boys that the respondents work with and could be seen as being beneficial, many felt that there were none. However, some potentially positive examples were given, including the following:

- The norm of being physically fit, strong and active, and involved in sports and outdoor activities, can have health benefits (physically and mentally).

- Normative ideas of being a ‘good father’ and role model appear to be becoming increasingly positive and influential in encouraging men to play a greater role in childcare.

- Friendship, team work, loyalty and solidarity are important to many men and boys.

5.1.2 Communicating with men and boys about health and wellbeing

Respondents were also asked about their views on how best to communicate with men and boys about gender norms connected to their health and wellbeing. A range of suggestions were given here, including the following:

- The importance of face-to-face, one-to-one and small group discussions with men and boys which provide a space for reflection on masculine norms.

- The value of skilled facilitation and trusted professional relationships (involving both men and women where possible and appropriate). This should include listening carefully, respectfully and non-judgmentally to what men and boys have to say, drawing on shared experiences, and talking to men and boys *“at their level”*. Humour was also identified as a good engagement mechanism.

- Through role models in men and boys’ lives questioning dominant and harmful gender norms - and the modelling of this behaviour in society more broadly.

- The vital role of schools in challenging gender norms - including in *“everyday teaching, conversations with individuals, PSE lessons and themes in assemblies.”*

- Targeting informal settings in which boys and men are likely to socialise (e.g. sports teams) and spaces in which they feel safe, including through the development of support groups for men and boys.

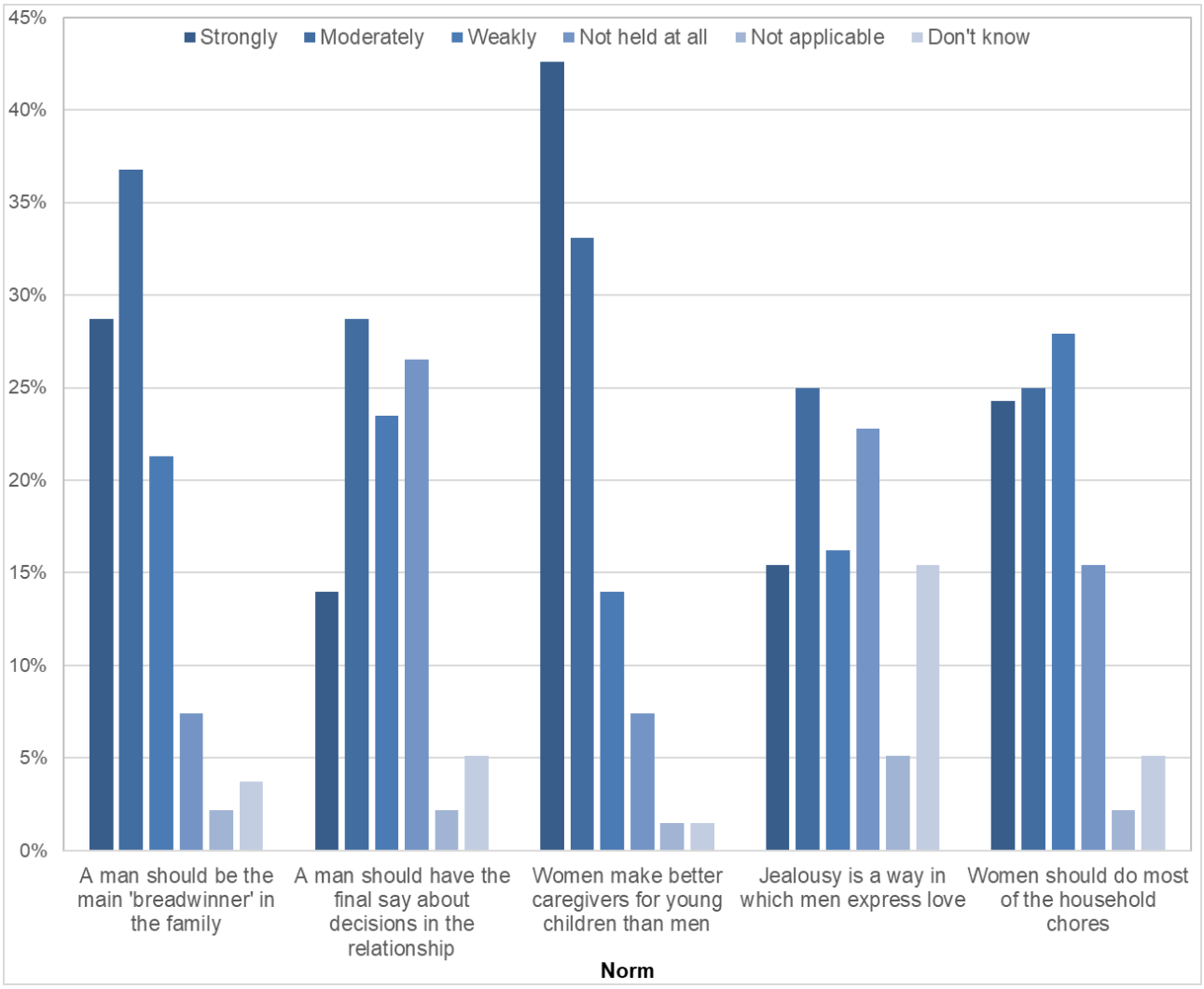
- The potential benefits that having peer-based discussions about these issues can have, to show that men and boys are not alone in their struggles.

- The potential role that social media, gaming platforms etc. could play in challenging harmful norms among young men and boys.

5.2 Men in relationships

The second part of the survey asked for respondents’ perspectives on the norms held by the men and boys they work with regarding men’s roles within intimate partner relationships. This was asked in relation to five possible masculine norms:

Figure 2: Survey question - Norms related to men's role in intimate relationships, n = 136



The findings here were more varied and complex. In two cases, the majority of respondents did feel that a traditional gender norm remained highly influential: that women make better caregivers for young children than men (which 43% /58 out of 136 respondents felt was strongly held and 33%/45 respondents felt was moderately held), and that a man should be the main ‘breadwinner’ in the family (which 29%/39 out of 136 respondents felt was strongly held and 37%/50 respondents felt was moderately held). For the other three example norms, responses were more mixed - whilst large numbers of respondents did feel that these were strongly or moderately held, many others believed that they were weakly held or not held at all. For instance, for the notion that women should do most household chores, 24% (33 out of 136 respondents) felt this was strongly held, 25% (34 respondents) felt it was moderately held, 28% (38 respondents) felt it was weakly held, and 15% (21 respondents) felt it was not held at all. This highlights that the influence of different norms can vary significantly within different groups of men and boys.

5.2.1 How gender norms impact on men and boys and relationships

These views were expanded upon with comments from respondents about the impacts of masculine norms on intimate relationships for the men and boys that they work with. Many respondents suggested that gender norms can foster unhealthy and unequal dynamics, and support dominating behaviour from men within relationships:

- Gender inequality within heterosexual relationships remains commonplace, with the norm still being that men will hold the majority of power. It was also suggested that in many gay and bisexual men's relationships, there is still a tendency for one partner to have more power.

- Continuing to believe that childcare and housework (rather than paid work) are primarily women's responsibility, whilst men should prioritise playing a protective (and potentially possessive) role within a relationship. This was linked to a broader struggle to adapt to changing relationship norms (e.g. loss of the 'breadwinner' status for men) and the roles men can play in that context.

- Sometimes, possessing a lack of value or respect for women and the contribution they make (within and beyond relationships).

- A lack of role models for healthy, egalitarian relationships for many men and boys and a sense of entitlement to certain things (e.g. sex) within a relationship. This was linked to how exposure to pornography is impacting on how men and boys perceive sex and relationships and what is normal within them.

- For some young people, coercive and controlling behaviour within a relationship is to some extent normalised and not recognised as being abusive, encouraged by the idea that jealousy is a sign of love for example.

- Men find it hard to talk about or manage their feelings, vulnerabilities or problems within relationships, or to seek help in relation to them. This was linked to a difficultly in opening up enough to experience genuine intimacy and emotionality within relationships: *"they don't want to talk about love or feelings, they prefer to focus on sex and how to be good at sex."*

- The separation of girls and boys from a young age (e.g. at school) plays a significant role in enforcing gender norms.

- However, some of the respondents did note that for the men and boys they work with, they are increasingly willing to embrace a more egalitarian approach to relationships.

Interestingly, when asked if there are any potentially beneficial gender norms connected to intimate relationships held by the men and boys that they work with, the majority of respondents did not provide any examples. However, some made the following points:

- Many men do aspire to be caring, respectful and loving partners and a good father and/or 'father figure'.

- The notion of men providing for the family can give men motivation and a sense of pride and can encourage an ethic of selflessness.

- Ideas of protectiveness and looking after one's partner could sometimes be seen as positive, *"if it comes from a place of care and compassion rather than possession"*.

One respondent remarked that many men and boys do have the ability to recognise gender norms, and *"know so much of this stuff is rubbish"*, but *"don't know how to fight them (yet)"*. This suggests that a key task is to help men and boys to understand not just that certain expectations of masculinity exist, but how they can actually go about resisting, challenging and changing them.

5.2.2 Communicating with men and boys about relationships

With regards to how to communicate effectively with the men and boys that respondents work with about gender norms connected to intimate relationships, suggestions were similar to those made regarding health and wellbeing. However, the following additional points were made:

- The provision of one-to-one and group support for men to be able *"to discuss feelings and emotions when they are struggling with a relationship"* and to develop men and boys' ability to communicate within relationships. Group activities where men and boys can challenge one another was also identified as impactful.

- Using tools such as vignettes, games and quizzes about relationships in engagement work to provide examples and instigate discussion.

- Provide examples of women and men going against expected gender roles (e.g. female scientists, male caregivers), including within everyday examples we bring up in conversations - doesn't have to be done aggressively, but simply through thinking more carefully about the examples we already use to illustrate points.

- Religious groups can provide an important setting for addressing these issues.

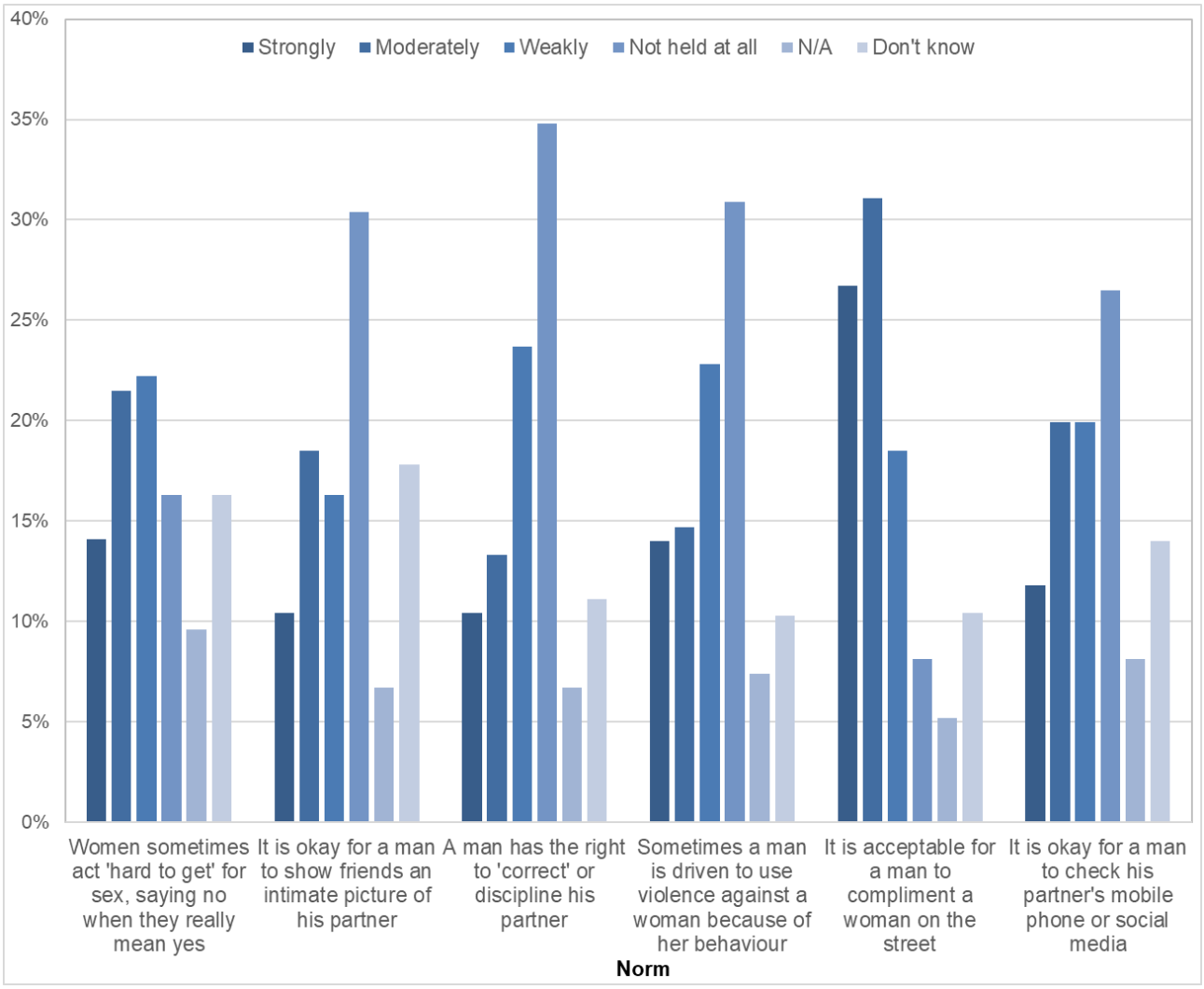
- The new statutory relationships and sex education curriculum offers a vital opportunity to discuss gender norms within relationships. However, it can also be difficult to talk about relationship issues at school, which young men may perceive to be "out of touch" with their experiences from the outset, highlighting the importance of youth work and youth-oriented settings more broadly.

- Organising workshops and providing role model examples in the workplace which challenge competitive, *"workaholic understandings"* of masculinity, and which encourage men to play a more active role in childcare and balancing work life and family life.

5.3 Violence against women and girls

The third part of the survey asked respondents about their views on the extent to which six possible gender norms which could be understood as contributing to violence against women and girls in some way were held by the men and boys that they work with:

Figure 3: Survey question - Norms related to violence against women and girls, n = 136



Interestingly, this set of example norms generated the most diverse findings. In some cases, the majority of respondents suggested that norms of masculinity connected to violence against women and girls were not particularly influential for the men and boys that they work with. For instance, for the idea that a man has the right to 'correct' or discipline his partner, 35% (47 out of 135 respondents) felt this was not held at all, 24% (32 respondents) felt it was weakly held, 13% (18 respondents) felt it was moderately held, and 10% (14 respondents) felt it was strongly held. Meanwhile, regarding the notion that sometimes a man is driven to use violence against a woman because of her behaviour, 31% (42 out of 136 respondents) felt this was not held at all, 23% (31 respondents) felt it was weakly held, 15% (20 respondents) felt it was moderately held, and 14% (19 respondents) felt it was strongly held. This could be seen as a positive finding - that among many men and boys in the UK today, some norms which can support violence against women and girls may not be as strongly held as may have been the case in the past.

However, the norms we suggested for this question were relatively explicit examples, so more subtle norms linked to violence against women may have yielded different results. Furthermore, it could still be seen as concerning that, with the norm that it is okay for a man to show friends an intimate picture of his partner for example, 10% (14 out of 135 respondents) felt this was strongly held, 19% (25 respondents) felt it was moderately held, and 16% (32 respondents) felt it was weakly held among the men and boys that they work with, even if more (30%/41 respondents) felt it was not held at all. In addition, other potentially harmful norms were still viewed as being more influential. Regarding the idea that it is acceptable for a man to compliment a woman on the street, 27% (36 out of 135 respondents) felt this was strongly held, 31% (42 respondents) felt it was moderately held, 19% (25 respondents) felt it was weakly held, whilst only 8% (11 respondents) felt it was not held at all. Meanwhile, for the notion that women sometimes act 'hard to get' for sex and say no when they really men yes, 14% (19 out of 135 respondents) viewed this as being strongly held, 22% (30 respondents) felt it was moderately held, 22% (30 respondents) felt it was weakly held, and 16% (22 respondents) felt it was not held at all.

5.3.1 How gender norms impact on violence against women and girls

These issues were explored further in the follow-up question asking about the impacts of gender norms connected to violence against women and girls for the men and boys that the respondents work with. Many felt that a number of concerning gender norms remained influential:

- Gender norms and expectations of masculinity were seen as being central to violence against women and girls by many of the respondents, with one writing: *"These attitudes and beliefs underpin most, if not all sexual and physical violence toward women and children. Most domestic abusers hold rigid, entrenched beliefs around what women and men should be like."*

- Even if men and boys may not personally agree with norms that can feed into violence against women and girls, *"it's an expectation that you have to say you agree with these views sometimes to fit in with the group".*

- Public sexual harassment *"such as commenting on a woman's body, clothes or looks"* may be particularly frequently tolerated among some men and boys.

- Entitlement and a belief in the right to be in control (e.g. in sex and relationships) appear to be influential norms among some men and boys, which can lead to frustration and potentially aggression when these ideas are challenged.

- Gender norms have significant detrimental impacts on women and girls and can be highly confusing as they try to understand how to navigate relationships - for example, feminine expectations to simultaneously not be 'too keen' or 'frigid'. There remains a sexual double standard in which sexual behaviour by women and by men is perceived and judged considerably differently.

- Gender norms are linked to deep-rooted, everyday sexist assumptions which downplay the status of women - e.g. idioms such as "you throw like a girl".

- Many men and boys have a lot of misconceptions about what women want and find desirable, which are tied up with their own expectations of masculinity.

- Violence against women and girls is often an expression of power and control, yet men enacting it often feel powerless, insecure and inadequate, and perceive women as holding power - the relationship is quite contradictory.

- Abusive behaviours online are a normalised experience for many young people.

- Gender norms can make it difficult for us to recognise when men may be experiencing violence and abuse themselves, or when women are perpetrating it. Men and boys in particular may have a lack of awareness and understanding about violence against women and girls.

- However, several of the respondents did emphasise that norms legitimising violence against women and girls were not strongly held by the men and boys that they worked with - or felt that norms of this kind were in the process of changing. One wrote: *“I work with primary age children. What is encouraging is that, during our discussions, it is clear that this younger generation do not hold such fixed ideas of gender norms. There are still some, mainly to do with the activities they think boys and girls prefer. On the whole, the children tend to feel that boys and girls can like or do anything they want as neither are "better" than the other. This will hopefully help reduce violence and abuse in future.”*

It appeared to be particularly difficult for respondents to think of gender norms which could be seen as positive in relation to tackling violence against women and girls. However, several did feel that the general norm among the men and boys that they work with is that violence against women and girls is unacceptable. This points to the paradox in which violence against women and girls is often seen as a failure to meet masculine standards of behaviour, yet is simultaneously facilitated by some norms of masculinity. For instance, some respondents highlighted the norm of ‘don’t hit a woman’ to be potentially influential in preventing abusive behaviour; however, it was also recognised that this had limitations - such as by feeding into stereotypical ideas of men ‘protecting’ women. In some ways, then, it may be possible to appeal to men’s commitments to masculinity in encouraging them to take a stand against violence towards women. However, this also risks reinforcing gender norms which are, themselves, rooted in the inequalities which foster violence against women - underscoring the care which must be taken in how ideas of masculinity are constructed within violence prevention campaigns.

Meanwhile, some respondents did suggest that learning about violence against women and girls can provoke a sense of injustice in men and boys, which should be cultivated to instigate change. It was pointed out that it can be powerful when men do speak out against violence towards women and girls, and that this, in itself, can potently challenge dominant masculine norms.

5.3.2 Communicating with men and boys about violence against women and girls

The respondents provided similar suggestions as with the previous two parts of the survey for how to communicate effectively with the men and boys that they work with about gender norms

connected to violence against women and girls. However, they did provide some valuable additional ideas too:

- It is particularly important for men to talk to one another about the issue, to challenge sexism and misogyny when they encounter it, and to model that with other men and boys.
- It is crucial for violent and abusive behaviour and harassment to have serious ramifications (e.g. within a school or organisation), to send a strong normative message that it is unacceptable.
- It is possible to have educative conversations, which address gender norms connected to violence and abuse, with children from a young age, by addressing issues such as consent, respect for self and others, healthy and equal friendships and relationships, personal space, and bodily autonomy.
- There is a need for more nationwide and community campaigns about preventing violence against women and girls which address gender norms and inequalities.
- Whilst discussion and support groups for men are important, it is also vital to provide opportunities for men to hear the perceptions and experiences of women and girls, in order to understand the impacts of gender-based violence and the consequences of harmful gender norms.
- Whilst social media and online spaces can be important environments to challenge gender norms, this may be less effective for older men, where using traditional media formats such as television, radio and newspapers may be more impactful.

5.4 Good practice in tackling harmful gender norms

The final main question of the survey asked for respondents' views and experiences on good practice initiatives and ideas for working with men and boys to reduce the harmful impacts of gender norms. The following were some of the key points that they shared:

- The importance of starting two-way conversations - *"to offer men the chance to participate in a dialogue about all this; in various settings"*, rather than simply talking 'at' men and boys.
- Creating a safe and supportive space for discussion about difficult subjects was seen as crucial: *"An environment where men feel safe and confident to speak openly about their concerns and be supported by others in a similar situation."*
- The potential for innovative approaches, such as using creative and arts-based methods or intergenerational engagement, to achieve more powerful impacts.
- The need for change to be promoted through wider society as well as with individual men and boys, and through a holistic, 'whole-institution/organisation' approach.
- Discussions in both single and mixed sex groups can be valuable.

- The need to intervene early and engage with boys (and all children) from a young age. This could include, for instance, *"learning through playing with a wide range of toys"* and discussing gender norms within influential stories, fairy-tales etc.
- Providing more training for practitioners about the biases and stereotypes they may have related to gender.
- The significance of PSHE - and the school curriculum more broadly - for challenging assumptions, and teaching about gender norms and healthy relationships. It was emphasised that this should avoid being heteronormative and do more to teach boys about girls' experiences (e.g. of menstruation).
- For educators, *"setting out your stall at the start of term"* about what is acceptable and what is not, e.g. challenging the policing of rigid gender norms.
- Focusing on young people's positive behaviours, not just tackling the negative ones.
- Helping boys and young men to develop their emotional literacy.
- Ensuring that young people in Pupil Referral Units and those absent from formal education still have opportunities to learn about gender norms.
- Engaging with parents/families/caregivers as well as children and young people, to encourage consistent messages at home and school.
- Adults being open and available for boys to speak to about gender-related issues – for example, sports organisations and coaches can play an influential role in talking to boys and young men about these issues.
- Highlighting positive role models who question gender norms, model gender equality, and encourage men and boys to take up caring activities and professions such as teaching and nursing.
- Bystander intervention approaches can be a powerful way to encourage the challenging of harmful gender norms among peers.
- GPs can play an important role in referring men for therapy and support, even if they are presenting with medical issues.
- Antenatal and postnatal periods being a particularly important time for intervention.
- Lessons learnt from programmes challenging harmful behaviours (e.g. in the Probation Service and domestic violence programmes) could be used more broadly.
- Importance of consistently-funded, long-term, multi-faceted and in-depth work, across the UK and not just in the South East of England.
- There was previously considerable good practice within youth work; however, this was seen as being significantly impacted by funding cuts.

- The importance of changing masculinised workplace cultures through interventions such as awareness raising campaigns, training and ‘Team Toolbox’ talks.

A range of different organisations and initiatives were also suggested by respondents with regards to good and promising practice in work connected to gender norms with men and boys. These are discussed further in the toolkit accompanying this report.

Chapter 6. Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

6.1.1 Shifts in gendered social norms

This research has illustrated that gendered social norms continue to significantly shape the lives of men and boys in the UK. There have been important shifts in gender norms in recent decades, often in progressive directions, in relation to involved fatherhood for example, and towards LGB and/or T rights. However, these shifts often appear to reflect *changes* in what it means to be a man, rather than a reduction in the need to conform to specific ideas of masculinity within a community altogether. Furthermore, changes in normative perceptions do not necessarily equate to changes in behaviour. For instance, research suggests that women internationally are still carrying out the bulk of childcare and housework, despite now playing a significant role in the labour market (van der Gaag et al., 2019). In addition, changes in gendered social norms do not inevitably move in a progressive direction – the opposite can also take place. The increasing normalisation of the use of pornography in the lives of men and boys is one potential example in this respect.

6.1.2 Negative impacts of gendered social norms on men and boys

Gendered social norms appear to be having a range of detrimental impacts on men and boys, and on the people around them. The research participants appeared to feel that the constraints imposed by masculine expectations have a harmful effect on men's health and wellbeing, especially their mental health, contributing to high levels of depression and suicide among men. This could include norms such as those encouraging risk-taking among men and boys and those discouraging men from sharing their emotions or asking for help. Masculine expectations can make it highly difficult for men to recognise and seek support when they are victims of violence and abuse. Gender norms also play a central role in violence against women and girls - especially norms of masculinity, with most violence and abuse being perpetrated by men.

6.1.3 Intersectionality, power, and gendered social norms

The project has also underscored how vital it is to adopt an intersectional approach when seeking to understand and engage with men and masculinities. It can be easy to make generalisations about the impacts of masculine norms, and to assume that men and boys are a homogenous group when, in reality, there are huge variations among them, based on a range of different factors, including age, location, ethnicity, social class, disability and sexuality.

Gendered social norms can vary significantly among different groups of men and boys and are shaped heavily by different power relations and inequalities in addition to those of gender. This means that there are significant power differentials between men and boys, and between different

constructions of masculinity, as well as between men and women, and it is crucial to take these into account to make sure that work with men and boys is relevant to the diverse contexts in which they live their lives.

6.1.4 Engaging with men and boys

This points to an issue that was brought up throughout the research - that we need to find ways to engage with men and boys positively, which do not carry negative preconceptions (themselves often based on stereotypes of masculinity), and which can provide a source of hope and optimism for men and boys about how they can be part of changes in social norms. This can include recognising that existing norms of masculinity are not always inevitably detrimental and can contribute to positive behaviours in men and boys.

Work which seeks to challenge and change harmful norms related to gender has the potential to help address a range of major social issues, including preventing violence against women and promoting gender equitable behaviour among men and boys. However, it also has the potential to significantly improve the health and wellbeing of men and boys themselves, by helping them to liberate themselves from rigid expectations of masculinity and the limitations they impose.

There is thus an urgent need for more gender-transformative engagement with men and boys from an early age. This should not just include programmes and campaigns specifically addressing gender - rather, understanding of gender norms and the need to transform them should be embedded in all of the work that we do, especially if that involves working directly with men and boys (or women and girls).

In order to have long-term, sustainable impacts, this work should be multifaceted, at different levels of society. It is not enough to encourage change among individual men and boys if wider society is not changing with them. Shifting gendered social norms requires organisational, community, institutional and structural change towards gender equality, as well as transformations among individuals and peers. This means that there are things that we can all be doing, every day, to help transform gendered social norms and build a more equal, healthy and peaceful society.

The recommendations set out here are not intended to be comprehensive. Rather, they represent first steps that could be taken towards understanding and addressing the complex issues raised by a focus on masculinity and social and gender norms. They are offered as a contribution to developing debates in this emerging field.

6.2 Recommendations

6.2.1 Policy and campaigns

Norms of masculinity are at the roots of a range of significant policy and public health issues, from men’s mental health to violence against women. It is important not to lose focus on the importance of structural, policy/legislative and societal change – these play the biggest role in shaping social norms, and attention to norms should not lead to a focus only on individuals. These recommendations relate to both governmental and non-governmental organisations.

- There is a real need for more engagement with men and boys (and all members of society) across the UK from an early age about gender norms and inequalities.

- Policymakers should adopt a preventative approach to tackling public health problems through a focus on gender norms; for instance, by developing national and regional campaigns to raise awareness and instigate conversations within communities about their impacts.

- Policies, programmes and campaigns should be designed in ways which encourage gender equality and avoid perpetuating harmful norms and stereotypes. In representing and approaching men and masculinities, it is important to avoid constructing and reproducing certain assumptions, stereotypes and limiting norms around gender in the process.

- More work should be done to audit policies for their potential impacts on gender (and other) inequalities, with consideration given to how implicit gendered assumptions and norms may be contained within them, and the influence of gender on policymaking recognised and made explicit.

6.2.2 Engaging with men and boys

The interviews and survey data suggest that while single-level forms of engagement are an important first step, they are not enough to foster sustainable transformations in gender norms and inequalities.

- Policymakers and practitioners should work together to develop multi-level, long term, in-depth interventions with men and boys to change gendered social norms in different contexts. For example, rather than simply organising a one-off class discussion about gender norms and inequalities, schools should consider involving the wider school community (known as a ‘whole school approach’) including pupils, staff and parents and other members of the community.

- A positive approach to engaging with men and boys through dialogue, highlighting opportunities for creating change, is an important element of effective practice. For example, by illustrating the role they can play in challenging harmful norms in their everyday lives, or by illuminating examples of men engaging in caring, respectful and egalitarian behaviours.

- Guidance on working with men and boys should focus on how to build effective relationships that enable productive work to happen, including how to introduce the topics, how to raise the issue of gender with men and boys, and examples of good practice. Staff and volunteers doing specialist work with men and boys (such as running domestic violence behaviour change programmes) should be trained to a high standard to ensure that workers avoid colluding with harmful gender norms and behaviours.

6.2.3 Early childhood and fatherhood

Gender norms and stereotypes constrain opportunities for boys and girls by presenting them with a limited set of expectations and behaviours, reinforced through e.g. different play environments, toys and clothing. Experiences of early gender bias have potentially damaging long-term effects in terms of development, attainment, wellbeing, occupational segregation and the gender pay gap.

- Guidance and training for ante-natal, early childhood and health practitioners should be developed so they are aware of the impact of gender norms and stereotypes and can explore how they can be shifted. It is crucial to begin to work with new fathers and with boys at a young age when they may be most receptive to the questioning of norms.

- Norms of fatherhood have expanded in recent decades to include closer involvement with children. The introduction of a number of months of paid leave targeted specifically at fathers (rather than sharing the parental leave of mothers) would reinforce this trend and be a significant signal to fathers that their engagement is important.

6.2.4 Education

Dominant norms of masculinity for boys and young men involve ‘hardness’, sporting prowess, ‘coolness’, and casual treatment of schoolwork. However, away from peer group pressures, boys can be much more reflective. There is considerable variation among boys, and social class and ethnicity are often more influential factors on achievement than gender.

- There is a need for greater reflection and learning about gender norms and inequalities throughout the school curriculum.

- Initial and in-service training should be available for all teachers on the influence of gender norms and stereotyping, and the benefits of challenging them for both boys and girls.

- Sports teams and institutions should be encouraged to promote positive attitudes to gender equality among boys and young men, and to address homophobia, racism, and sexism.

- Gendered social norms may be connected to boys, generally, having lower literacy and language skills than girls – interviewees and survey respondents linked ‘doing well at school’ to being seen as ‘feminine’ for the boys they worked with. Literacy programmes should be mindful of the influence of gender norms (e.g. in shaping what activities and what books are seen as ‘feminine’ or ‘masculine’), and it is not enough for them to be gender neutral if they are aimed at raising the literacy levels of boys and young men.

- Boys and young men should be provided with opportunities within school and community contexts to learn the skills required for caring and domestic work, and to explore and develop caring roles in their lives.

6.2.5 Health and wellbeing

The health and wellbeing of men and boys is directly related to social norms and traditional constructions of masculinity, such as the socialisation of men and boys to be 'tough' and 'strong', to appear in control, and to take risks. There is evidence that those men who most closely identify with 'traditional' masculinity are more likely to live in ways that damage their health. However, there are also some norms relating to masculinity, e.g. encouraging physical fitness, that may support health-seeking behaviour. Men who are actively involved as fathers and caregivers are more likely to have better health and caring for others may also encourage an ethic of self-care.

- Key health challenges that particularly affect men – e.g. suicide, risk-taking (alcohol consumption, tobacco and other substance use), being overweight, sexually transmitted infections – are strongly influenced by norms of masculinity, interacting with socio-economic, cultural, and individual factors. Attention to gender norms, and how these play out for different groups of men and women, should be a central component of health strategies at national and local levels.

- A significant contributing factor to the poor mental health of some men and boys is isolation, and the disappearance of social networks. It is vital to create more supportive community spaces to help address this, in which men and boys also have opportunities to explore issues around gender, masculinity, relationships, sexuality, violence, health and wellbeing.

- Ageing men, in particular, are generally seen as reluctant to admit to having problems, to display emotions, or seek assistance from others. Many are less likely to recognise or acknowledge conditions such as depression, substance abuse, or stressful life events, or to use 'feminised' care services. However, many older men's economic and social contributions, for instance as carers for ill partners or active grandparents remain invisible, deserve greater recognition and support.

- The ability of men to seek help as victims of violence and abuse is linked to a number of gender norms, such as men not talking about emotions and needing to be 'strong'. Providers should take this into account when designing, delivering and advertising services.

6.2.6 Employment

Organisational structures, cultures and practices tend still to be based on an assumed masculine norm of lifetime, full-time, continuous (male) employment. 'Masculine' values are also strongly embedded within many organisations (e.g. through job segregation, sex discrimination, gender pay gaps, sexual harassment, a workaholic culture). Norms of femininity associate women with being caring, self-sacrificing, and industrious, contributing to women most often being employed in (lower paid) service industries, or caring professions (e.g. teaching and nursing).

- Employers, trade unions and careers advisors should take a more proactive approach to challenging gender stereotypes in employment and training choices.

- For many men, the lack or loss of a job, earning power and/or status can represent a significant challenge to their self-esteem and masculine self-image. Initiatives such as the

Government's Good Work Plan, therefore, have an important role to play in enabling workers to access fair and decent work, and providing the clarity that employers and workers need to understand their employment relationships, rights and responsibilities.

- Work-based initiatives should be developed to engage men around the health issues they face, including risk-taking and mental health issues. Many men are reluctant to admit to mental health problems as they fear it would have negative consequences for their employment prospects.

- The dominance of a workaholic culture means that caring is not currently defined as being an important norm as part of a successful career for a man. Employers should make greater efforts to support men's actual and potential roles in caring, by addressing barriers to their involvement and striving to go beyond legal entitlements (e.g. in relation to paternity leave).

6.2.7 Violence against women and girls

Norms of masculinity are a central factor in the continued pervasiveness of violence against women and girls, with expectations of superiority, power and entitlement over women seemingly continuing to be influential in perceptions of what it means to be a man. Indeed, research suggests that the strength of men's adherence to traditional masculine norms of this kind is a key risk-factor in the perpetration of violence against women.

- A gendered approach to tackling different forms of violence and abuse is vital for effective policy and practice interventions. This should be based upon the understanding that violence by men against women and girls is a major cause and consequence of gender inequality - and that gendered expectations can also compound the experiences of men and LGB and/or T people who are victims of abuse.

- Transforming gender norms and tackling gender inequalities should form a key part of crucial efforts to prevent violence against women and girls from happening in the first place, and engaging men and boys is a particularly important aspect of this.

6.2.8 Media

Media representations of men and masculinities in magazines, TV shows, adverts, films and music videos habitually reflect dominant - and often unrealistic and stereotypical - images of gender. Increasing and easy access to pornography routinely presents men as dominant and women as sexual objects. Online gaming can entrench stereotypical representations of women and men. Recent years have also seen the explosion of misogynistic abuse online, often directed at women who are prominent in public life. Nevertheless, the media can be very powerful in generating more positive debate when they challenge accepted ways of thinking and behaving. Much greater effort is needed to insert alternatives to dominant ideas of masculinity in online and social media spaces.

- Educational initiatives to assist viewers, and especially young men, to analyse media content critically – and particularly the portrayal of gender – should be significantly expanded.

- Comprehensive relationships and sex education that considers harmful gender norms in relation to pornography is vital, along with the development of media literacy and strengthening the filtering of access to pornographic websites (especially for those under 18).

- There is potential for the development of online communication and social media campaigns that challenge restrictive representations of masculinity (and femininity) and the invisibility of LGB and/or T people.

- Men in positions of power should provide high-profile and proactive support for gender equality and encourage other men to play their part. They should model different, healthier ways of being a man, and speak out about gender inequality and violence against women and girls.

- Media organisations should engage with the training and advice provided by the Committee of Advertising Practice in order to implement the new Code rules banning gender stereotyping in adverts.

6.2.9 Developing organisations working with men and boys

There is a range of innovative and impactful work being done with men and boys and on gender norms around the UK; however, it is currently quite fragmented and piecemeal. In addition, engaging men in building gender equality will be counterproductive if a counter-message is given by the underfunding and undervaluing of services for women and girls.

- Groups, organisations and networks across the UK leading the way in engaging with men and boys and looking critically at masculinities should be supported and resourced by the Government. Whilst early intervention with men and boys may have a long term positive outcome and reduce demand on some women's services, in the short-medium term this should not be at the expense of women's organisations and services.

- Organisations working in this area should be more connected in order to share good practice and collaborate. The Government could help to facilitate this and encourage greater leadership and a more overarching strategy.

6.2.10 Approaching gendered social norms

Social norms and gender norms are frequently discussed in ways which are broad and vague, and delinked from the contexts – social, economic, cultural, legislative, institutional – in which they are formed. In order to create normative change, and in ways which can be measured, it is important to be clear and specific in language and frameworks about the norms that we want to shift. Moving towards gender-transformative approaches that actively seek to address and change masculine norms is vital to effective engagement with men and boys and should be at the core of such practice.

- Policy and practice interventions addressing gender norms should be built upon a clear theory of change, with coherent and realistic definitions and strategies about what gender norms are, how they work and how to change them.

- Policymakers and practitioners should consider how they can embed gender-sensitive and gender-transformative approaches within different interventions - and not only those that explicitly seek to address gender issues.

- The interviews showed that many men already question and resist dominant norms of masculinity and engage in caring, healthy, peaceful and equitable practices, often in spite of powerful ideas of what it means to be a man circulating around them. A key task is to draw greater attention to these practices, and to illuminate the diverse ways in which men are living their lives and challenging stereotypes around masculinity.

- More research and respectful dialogue is needed to better understand the complex (and often contentious) relationships between sex and gender identities, and how gender norms impact on those who don't identify as a man or a woman.

- Whilst it is crucial to engage men and boys in conversations about masculine norms and the detrimental impacts these can have on their lives, it is important to contextualise these issues within a gender-unequal society. Focusing on men and masculinities should form part of broader efforts to build gender justice.

6.2.11 Intersectionality

It is important to recognise that men and boys are not a homogenous group and are simultaneously affected by different aspects of their identity and positions within different social categories and systems, including age, social class, race and ethnicity, sexuality and disability as well as gender. These factors also shape gender norms, which vary for different groups of men and boys in different contexts. For instance, gendered expectations diverge considerably for men and boys over the life course, and their power to resist these norms may vary based upon age, too.

- Policy and practice should adopt an intersectional framework to understand the complexities of men's and boys' lives, recognising that some men have more power than others as a result of different social inequalities, to engage with them in relatable and relevant ways.

- There is a need to develop guidance on how to include the perceptions and experiences of gay, bisexual, and/or transgender men in programmes that address gender norms. Programme interventions rarely address LGB and/or T people's experiences sufficiently and are often based on a predominantly heteronormative (and often binary) framing of gender relations that may not be relevant for many young people growing up in contemporary society.

6.2.12 Evidence gaps

There is a need for more extensive and in-depth research and measurement of the nature and impacts of gendered social norms in the UK today. We still do not have enough understanding about the dynamics of how to change gender norms. This is especially true for the UK, where there has been less work in this area than in some other contexts.

- Policy and practice should draw from new and existing research on men, masculinities, gender norms and inequalities when developing interventions[6].

- The Government Equalities Office could play a central role in disseminating promising practices in engaging men and boys around gender norms, through dialogue with other government departments, events for key stakeholders, and sharing relevant materials online (such as the engagement toolkit based on the findings of this report at www.dur.ac.uk/criva/geotoolkit/).

[6] For example, one useful online repository of materials on gender norms in international development, including a dedicated strand on men and masculinities, is the ALIGN platform (Advancing Learning and Innovation on Gender Norms: www.alignplatform.org). A helpful collection of academic research is curated by Dr Michael Flood at www.xyonline.net.

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Annex I: Key-informant interview topic guide

1. Can you tell me a little bit about the nature of the work that you do?
    a. Is this with a specific group of men and boys, based on e.g. Age? Ethnicity? Location? Disability? Religion? Sexuality/gender?
    b. What are the aims of your work, and what methods do you use?
2. We are defining a social norm as a collectively shared belief about what others in a group do (what is typical) and what is expected of what others do within the group (what is appropriate). From the experiences you have gained from your work, what would you say are some of the key ways in which gendered social norms are enacted by men and boys and influence their behaviour in the UK today?
    a. How strongly do you think men and boys hold to these norms?
    b. Are there any specific norms which you think are particularly influential?
3. What are some of the key locations, people or sources that they are learning these norms from?
4. Are these norms a problem, and if so, for whom?
    a. Do you think that they contribute to violence against women and girls in the UK? To other forms of violence? If so, how?
5. How do you think that society might start to shift these norms, if this is needed?
6. Do you think these norms differ for different groups of men and boys, such as those from different ethnic groups, those with disabilities, those from different socio-economic groups, and gay/bi/trans men?
    a. To what extent do you think gendered social norms are affected by geographical location?
7. Are there circumstances in which men and boys distance themselves from or reject these prevailing norms?
    a. Why do you think this is, and what can we learn from this?
8. What methods can we use to communicate most effectively about these norms?
9. Have you been involved in, or do you know of any, interventions which you would say have been promising or successful in reducing or changing potentially negative impacts of gendered social norms?
    a. Do you have any evidence for this?
10. What components would you find most useful within a toolkit for engaging effectively with men and boys about gendered social norms?

a. Can you provide any examples of similar toolkits?

Annex II: Online survey questions

Gendered social norms survey

Page 1: Survey information

Do you do work with men and/or boys in the UK? Either as part of your general work (e.g. as a teacher, GP, youth worker, prison officer) or as part of a specialist organisation (e.g. in a job where you specialise in doing work with a particular group of men and/or boys)?

We are a team of researchers (Professor Nicole Westmarland, Sandy Ruxton, Dr. Stephen Burrell) based at Durham University, conducting research on behalf of the Government Equalities Office to investigate the impact of gendered social norms on men and boys in the UK today.

The survey should take about 10-15 minutes to complete, all questions are optional, and you can stop taking part by closing the survey window (we will only receive your responses if you press finish). Please note that **the survey will close at the end of the day on Friday 14th June 2019**.

We will use the findings from the survey to help us write a report and develop an engagement toolkit for the Government Equalities Office, and potentially also in other presentations and publications for academic, policy and practitioner audiences. The research will help to inform future policy interventions in this area.

The survey is anonymous and your responses will be kept confidential - at no point will you have to provide any personal details apart from general demographic information. The data from the survey will be stored securely through OnlineSurveys.ac.uk and Durham University Box, a secure cloud-based storage system.

If you have any questions, please contact: [researcher email address]

If you have read the above information and understand that you are free to choose whether or not to take part in this research, you can start the survey by clicking 'next' below. We will take your completion of the survey as confirmation that you consent to taking part.

Page 2: Gendered social norms

Thank you for agreeing to take part in our survey.

For the purposes of this survey, gendered social norms refer to what is expected within a group or community - the 'unwritten rules' of what it means to be a man or boy.

Page 3: Men and boys' health and well-being

1. Thinking about the men/boys in the group or community that you are working with, how strongly held are the following gender norms?

(Strongly, Moderately, Weakly, Not held at all, Not applicable, Don’t know)

- Men are discouraged from talking about emotional and personal issues
- It is important for a man not to show weakness
- Drinking alcohol, or taking illegal drugs, at risky levels is normal for men
- Men have a greater level of sexual desire than women
- Men should be physically strong

a. What **impact** on health and well-being do gender norms such as these have on the men/boys you work with? (Open)

b. What are the most effective ways **to communicate** with the men/boys you work with about health and well-being gender norms? (e.g. through schools, religious groups, social media) (Open)

c. Are there any gender norms related to health and well-being that are held by the men/boys that you work with that are **beneficial**? (Open)

Page 4: Men's role within intimate partner relationships

2. Thinking about the men/boys in the group or community that you are working with, how strongly held are the following gender norms?

(Strongly, Moderately, Weakly, Not held at all, Not applicable, Don’t know)

- A man should be the main 'breadwinner' in the family
- A man should have the final say about decisions in the relationship
- Women make better caregivers for young children than men
- Jealousy is a way in which men express love
- Women should do most of the household chores

a. What **impact** do gender norms such as these have on the men/boys you work with in terms of their role within intimate relationships? (Open)

b. What are the most effective ways **to communicate** with the men/boys you work with about intimate relationship gender norms? (e.g. through schools, religious groups, social media) (Open)

c. Are there any gender norms related to intimate relationships that are held by the men/boys that you work with that are **beneficial**? (Open)

Page 5: Violence and abuse against women and girls

3. Thinking about the men/boys in the group or community that you are working with, how strongly held are the following gender norms?

(Strongly, Moderately, Weakly, Not held at all, Not applicable, Don’t know)

- Women sometimes act 'hard to get' for sex, saying no when they really mean yes
- It is okay for a man to show friends an intimate picture of his partner
- A man has the right to 'correct' or discipline his partner
- Sometimes a man is driven to use violence against a woman because of her behaviour
- It is acceptable for a man to compliment a woman on the street
- It is okay for a man to check his partner's mobile phone or social media

a. What **impact** do gender norms such as these have on the men/boys you work with in terms of violence and abuse against women and girls? (Open)

b. What are the most effective ways **to communicate** with the men/boys you work with about gender norms in relation to violence and abuse against women/girls? (e.g. through schools, religious groups, social media) (Open)

c. Are there any gender norms in relation to violence against women and girls that are held by the men and/or boys that you work with that are **beneficial**? (Open)

Page 6: Engaging with men and boys

4. Are you aware of any good practice initiatives, or do you have any ideas about how the impact of harmful gender norms could be reduced? (Open)

Page 7: About the men/boys you work with?

5. Please briefly describe the work you do with men/boys (e.g. as a teacher, GP, prison officer, scouts volunteer) (Open)

6. What age men/boys do you work with?

- All ages
- Specific age group (please specify)

7. Do you also work with women/girls?

- Yes, we work with both men/boys and women/girls
- We work with both but predominantly with men/boys
- We work exclusively with men/boys

8. What is the ethnicity of the men/boys that you work with?

- All ethnic groups
- Mainly a specific ethnic group (please specify)

9. Do you work with men/boys belonging to specific religious/faith groups?

- All religious/faith groups
- Mainly a specific religious/faith group (please specify)

10. What is the social class of the men/boys that you work with?

- All social classes
- Mainly a specific social class (please specify)

11. Do you work specifically with gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer men/boys?

- Yes (please specify)
- No, we do not focus specifically on sexuality or gender identity

12. Do you work specifically with men/boys with disabilities?

- Yes (please specify)
- No, we do not focus specifically on disability

13. In which region(s) of the UK do you work with men/boys?

- Whole of the UK
- East Midlands
- East of England
- London
- Northern Ireland
- North East England
- North West England
- Scotland
- South East England
- South West England

- Wales
- West Midlands
- Yorkshire and the Humber
- Other

Page 8: About yourself

14. What is your age? (Dropdown list)

15. What is your sex?

- Woman
- Man
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Page 9: Thank you

Thank you for completing this survey about your work with men/boys. We are very grateful to you for taking the time to share your views with us. If you have any questions about the research, or if you would like to receive a copy of the report and engagement toolkit that will be published at the end of the project, please contact [researcher email address].