



HM Government

# **Supporting male victims of crimes considered violence against women and girls**

March 2022



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## 1. Introduction

This document outlines the Government's support for male victims of crimes that fall within the violence against women and girls space. This document sits alongside the [Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls \(VAWG\) Strategy 2021](#) and the Domestic Abuse Plan 2022, as a connected and complementary piece of work. Both the Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, and the Domestic Abuse Plan, set out our ambition to reduce the prevalence of all VAWG crimes, regardless of who they affect, and to support all victims/survivors, including men and boys.

This document can be used by statutory bodies, charity sector practitioners, victims/survivors, and the public alongside the Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, and the Domestic Abuse Plan as: an informational resource on the male victims' landscape, including the specific challenges male victims face; an outline to the support services outlook; and a guide to develop best practice.

The term 'violence against women and girls' refers to acts of violence or abuse that we know disproportionately affect women and girls. These crimes include - and are not limited to - rape, sexual violence, domestic abuse, stalking, 'honour'-based abuse including forced marriage, 'revenge porn', and the harms associated with sex work and prostitution. These crimes have profound and long-lasting physical and mental health impacts and have absolutely no place in our society. The use of this term cannot and should not negate the experiences of, or provisions for, male victims of these crimes. The Government is committed to ensuring that all victims/survivors of these crimes, of all protected characteristics, receive the support they deserve, and recognises its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty provided for in the Equality Act 2010.<sup>1</sup>

The Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, and the Domestic Abuse Plan, are both clear that while we use the term 'violence against women and girls' in both documents, this refers to all victims of any of these offences.

To inform the Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and the Domestic Abuse Plan, the Government conducted a public Call for Evidence, which the Home Office ran in two phases. Phase 1 invited the public to respond to a public survey between 10 December 2020 and 19 February 2021. In Phase 2, the public survey was reopened by the Home Secretary between 12 March and 26 March 2021, following the tragic rape and murder of Sarah Everard.<sup>2</sup> In total, we received over 180,000 responses.

The Call for Evidence was promoted using Home Office press, social and stakeholder channels, and was open to everyone. The public survey was

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<sup>1</sup> [Equality Act 2010 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Violence Against Women and Girls \(VAWG\) Call for Evidence - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

promoted actively to men and boys, including through media such as LADbible Group. The Home Office held a dedicated men and boys focus group with sector stakeholders, and also commissioned a nationally representative survey.<sup>3</sup> Organisations specifically supporting men and boys helped distribute the victim survey to ensure we gathered male victim perspectives. The Government has taken the feedback from the Call for Evidence into account, and recognises the challenges which can be faced by men and boys.<sup>4</sup>

In this document we draw on the testimonies of those victims/survivors who bravely describe the impact these crimes can have. The document is supplemented with case studies to help illustrate some of the subject matter described, and we are grateful to the victims/survivors for bravely sharing their stories, and to the organisations who helped to facilitate. Some names and identifying characteristics have been changed to protect identities. The Government thanks all contributors to the Call for Evidence wholeheartedly for their contributions, and is grateful to victims/survivors for sharing their experiences, and for the expertise of specialist sectors that support victims/survivors, academics, local authorities, and police and Criminal Justice System colleagues.

### **A note on terminology**

In this document, 'sexual assault', 'sexual offence', 'sexual violence' and 'sexual abuse' are used interchangeably and not necessarily in their technical or legal definitions.

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<sup>3</sup> This formed part of the consultation of 2,000 adults aged 16-65 in England and Wales between 12 and 18 January 2021. The sample was nationally representative, with quotas set on age, sex and region, and weighting has been applied on these variables to reflect national profiles.

<sup>4</sup> [Tackling violence against women and girls strategy](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls) - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk))

## 2. Male victims: research and evidence

All victims of VAWG crimes are impacted differently by their unique experiences. While it is important that male victims are not seen as a single homogenous group, we acknowledge that there are patterns and commonalities in some experiences of male victims of VAWG crimes.

In this section we will provide an overview as to the prevalence and scale of male victims of VAWG crimes. The year ending March 2020 ONS Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW)<sup>5</sup> is the most recent CSEW data available for VAWG crimes.<sup>6</sup>

### Boys and children

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 stipulates that a child who sees, hears, or experiences the effects of domestic abuse, and is related to the person being abused or the person perpetrating the abuse, is also regarded as a victim<sup>7</sup> of domestic abuse for the purposes of the Act.<sup>8</sup>

Boys can therefore be victims of domestic abuse in their own right, and the Government acknowledges the short and long-term cognitive, behavioural, and emotional impact that can be suffered by boys as a result. Further information about the impact of domestic abuse on children, the barriers they may face in accessing services, and the need for frontline support to take a trauma-informed approach to recognise the specific needs of children of different age groups or protected characteristics, can be found in the [Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance Framework](#).

In the Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, the Government committed to developing additional support to help teachers deliver the statutory Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) curriculum in schools effectively and confidently. The RSHE curriculum recognises that boys can also be victims of sexual violence, and advocates an understanding of healthy relationships for all pupils.

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<sup>5</sup> The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) is a nationally representative, typically face-to-face victimisation survey in which people resident in households in England and Wales are asked about their experiences of a range of crimes in the 12 months prior to the interview. For the crime types and population it covers, the CSEW provides a better reflection of the true extent of crime experienced by the population than police recorded statistics, because the survey includes crimes that are not reported to, or recorded by, the police.

<sup>6</sup> The Telephone Crime Survey for England and Wales 2021 deployed for use during the COVID-19 pandemic did not include questions on sexual offences and domestic abuse (previously such questions were included in the CSEW in a self-completion module and not asked by an interviewer given the sensitive nature of the questions).

<sup>7</sup> As per the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales the definition of a 'victim' is: a person who has suffered harm, including physical, mental or emotional harm or economic loss which was directly caused by a criminal offence; a close relative (or a nominated family spokesperson) of a person whose death was directly caused by a criminal offence: [MoJ Victims Code 2020 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

[The Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy 2021](#) sets out the Government's commitment to ensuring access to high quality support for all victims and survivors of child sexual abuse, including men and boys, wherever they live in the country and regardless of when the abuse occurred. We are doing this by boosting investment in local and national specialist sexual violence support services.<sup>9</sup>

Men and boys may face specific barriers to accessing some support services, and may experience particular vulnerabilities. We know that due to a number of systemic, environmental, and cultural barriers, some of which are set out in the next section, many do not come forward to report.

### **Domestic abuse and domestic homicide**

The year ending March 2020 CSEW data shows that 13.8% of men and 27.6% of women aged 16 to 74 have experienced domestic abuse behaviours<sup>10</sup> since the age of 16, equivalent to an estimated 2.9 million male victims and 5.9 million female victims. In the year 2019/20, 3.6% of men (757,000) and 7.3% of women (1.6 million) were victims of domestic abuse.<sup>11</sup> Data on the details of cases discussed at Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs), which represent the highest risk domestic abuse cases, show that 6.1% of MARACs held between April 2020 and May 2021 had male victims. The remaining proportion of victims were female.<sup>12</sup>

When looking towards different types of domestic abuse, men are more likely to report being victims of partner abuse (2.4%) than family abuse (1.5%) in the previous year. This follows the same trend as for female victims. Domestic stalking was experienced by 0.7% of men and 1.3% of women in the previous year.

Of the 362 victims of domestic homicides in year ending March 2018 to March 2020, 86 victims were men (24%).<sup>13</sup> In just under 60% of cases (51 victims), the suspect was either a parent or other family member. In just over 60% of cases the suspect was male (53 cases). Both the Respect Men's Advice Line and the male victims support charity, Mankind Initiative, saw an increase in calls regarding suicide ideation over the pandemic period.<sup>14,15</sup> A Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP) and National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) review of domestic homicides and suspected victim suicides

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<sup>10</sup> This includes partner or family non-physical abuse, threats, force, sexual assault, or stalking. See [User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales: March 2020 - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#) for full definitions.

<sup>11</sup> [Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> ONS. 2021. [Domestic abuse victim services - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> ONS. 2020. [Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Statistics on Male Victims of Domestic Abuse - \(mankind.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>15</sup> Respect. 2021. [Men's advice line: service review 2020/21](#)

between March 2020 and 2021 found that of the 39 domestic abuse related suicides identified, 10% (4) involved male victims.<sup>16 17</sup>

## **Sexual assault**

For the year ending March 2020, an estimated 773,000 adults aged 16 to 74 years were victims of sexual assault (including attempts), with an estimated 618,000 female victims and 155,000 male victims.<sup>1819</sup> The Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse estimates that at least 5% of boys and young men experience sexual abuse before the age of 16.<sup>20</sup>

## **Stalking**

According to CSEW, 526,000 men aged between 16 and 74 were estimated to have been victims of stalking in the year ending March 2020 (compared to 977,000 women).<sup>21</sup>

## **So-called ‘honour’-based abuse (HBA), including forced marriage**

Men and boys are also victims of so-called ‘honour’-based abuse (HBA). Just as with female victims of HBA, they may be subjected to it for a variety of reasons. These include: to punish behaviour which is seen as transgressing community norms or compromising family ‘honour’, to attempt to ‘cure’ or mask trans identity or homosexuality, or additionally, in the case of being forced into marriage, to obtain a visa or to find a carer for an individual with a disability.

Data from the joint Home Office and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) shows that around a fifth of cases which they provided advice or support to in 2020 relate to male victims and survivors (21% in 2020). Men appear to be particularly represented in cases where the victim is LGBT (63% male), or where they have mental capacity concerns (55% male).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Bates, L., Hoeger, K., Stoneman, M.J., Whitaker, A. 2021. [Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme \(VKPP\): Domestic Homicides and Suspected Victim Suicides During the Covid-19 Pandemic 2020-2021](#). Home Office.

<sup>17</sup> NB: This is likely to be an under-estimate of all victim suicides with a history of domestic abuse, as it will inherently exclude those suicides where a prior history of domestic abuse was not known to police.

<sup>18</sup> [Sexual offences in England and Wales overview - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>19</sup> Sexual assaults measured by the CSEW combine rape (including attempts), assault by penetration (including attempts), indecent exposure and unwanted sexual touching experienced by people aged over 16.

<sup>20</sup> [The scale and nature of child sexual abuse: Review of evidence \(csacentre.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>21</sup> [Stalking: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>22</sup> Forced Marriage Unit Statistics [Forced Marriage Unit Statistics 2020](#).



## **Case Study: Forced Marriage Unit**

Ahmed,<sup>23</sup> a young man, was facing increasing pressure at home to marry a cousin in Pakistan, with threats to kill him if he did not comply. Ahmed was then sent to Pakistan on the pretext of visiting his grandparents.

Ahmed's girlfriend in the UK alerted the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU), a joint Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and Home Office unit, which leads on the Government's forced marriage policy, outreach, and casework. It operates both inside the UK (where support is provided to any individual) and overseas (where consular assistance is provided to British nationals, including dual nationals).

The FMU advised her to pass their details to Ahmed, for him to make direct contact. Ahmed contacted the FMU a month after he was sent to Pakistan, and stated that he has been forced into an engagement with his cousin, and feared the marriage was imminent. He also stated that while he had been living with his grandparents and paternal uncle in Pakistan his passport had been taken away, and his phone was closely monitored.

The FMU's colleagues within the British High Commission (BHC) Islamabad told him to remain where he was while a formal plan was developed to assist his return to the UK. Before a formal plan could be put in place, Ahmed fled from the family home to the British High Commission in Islamabad without his passport. He was accommodated in a guesthouse through FMU's NGO partners in Islamabad.

In initial communications, Ahmed had indicated that he did not want his parents in the UK to know of his whereabouts, nor did he want FMU to contact police about a Forced Marriage Protection Order (FMPO) until he was safely in the UK, because feared that his life would be at risk in Pakistan. However, he later consented for the police to be informed, as well as his uncle in Pakistan.

Shortly after Ahmed's departure from Pakistan, his family members contacted the BHC and, after discussions, and with Ahmed's consent, his passport and return ticket were arranged and brought to the BHC. BHC staff then made arrangements to facilitate his travels, including pre flights COVID-19 tests.

The FMU made arrangements with their UK NGO partner for Ahmed to be met at the airport on arrival, and accommodated at a safe guesthouse. He was met by them along with police who escorted him to the safe accommodation. Ahmed was then provided temporary accommodation, subsistence allowance, and his ongoing safeguarding needs were discussed with police.

## **Sexual harassment**

Data from the Government Equalities Office's Sexual Harassment Survey in 2020 used a broad, self-defined definition of sexual harassment, and found that, although it is most likely to affect women, men also experience considerable levels of sexual harassment and sexual harassment behaviours, 34% of men reported that they had experienced at least one form of sexual harassment in

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<sup>23</sup> Some names and identifying characteristics have been changed to protect identities.

the last 12 months.<sup>24</sup> In the workplace specifically, men were almost as likely to experience workplace harassment as women (the incidence of experiencing harassment was 30% among women and 27% among men).

## Demographics

The Government recognises that some groups are at higher risk of certain crimes. We are able to determine certain patterns and commonalities of experience, however these groups are not homogenous and may face overlapping challenges.

The CSEW for year ending March 2020 highlights that gay and bisexual men were around twice as likely to experience domestic abuse as heterosexual men; 6% of gay men and 7.3% of bisexual men aged 16 to 74 reported experiencing domestic abuse in the previous year. This compares to 3.5% of heterosexual men.<sup>25</sup>

There is currently no nationally representative data on prevalence of domestic abuse in transgender people.<sup>26</sup> According to the CSEW, transgender people were significantly more likely to have been a victim of all crimes, including crimes considered violence against women and girls (and excluding fraud).<sup>27</sup> More than 1 in 4 transgender people (28%) had experienced crime compared with 14% of <sup>28</sup> people who are not transgender.<sup>29</sup> The Government Equalities Office's National LGBT Survey found that transgender respondents were notably more likely to have experienced most incident types (48%) involving someone they lived with than other respondents (28%). Transgender men were more likely to report incidents such as verbal harassment, controlling or coercive behaviour, and physical harassment or violence than men who are not transgender.<sup>30</sup>

GBT+ men may also be victims of so-called conversion therapy, this is abuse aimed at changing, altering, or 'curing' LGBT identities, and can take the form of verbal, psychological, physical, and sexual abuse.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Government Equalities Office, [2020 Sexual Harassment Survey](#). Please note, the approach to the measurement of sexual harassment taken in this survey is new, and its results are therefore experimental. Readers should treat this data cautiously and refer to the full report at the above link.

<sup>25</sup> ONS. 2020. [Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>26</sup> The CSEW does ask for respondents' gender identity, however the number of transgender victims of domestic abuse are too low to publish. Figures are not published for CSEW estimates based on fewer than 50 respondents.

<sup>27</sup> [Crime in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>28</sup> Used in this document to refer to people whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth – people who are not transgender.

<sup>29</sup> [Crime in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>30</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/721704/LGBT-survey-research-report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721704/LGBT-survey-research-report.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> [What-is-Conversion-Therapy.pdf \(galop.org.uk\)](#)

The CSEW finds that similarly to overall trends in domestic abuse, men from mixed or 'other' ethnic groups are more likely to report being a victim of domestic abuse. For the year ending March 2020 CSEW, 6.1% of those in 'other ethnic groups' and 5.9% of those in the mixed ethnic group reported experiencing domestic abuse in the previous year. The prevalence for all males was 3.6%.<sup>32</sup>

The CSEW data show us that disabled people are more likely to be subject to domestic abuse. This is observed for both men and women, with disabled men being over twice as likely to report experiencing domestic abuse (7.5%) than non-disabled men (3.2%), in the previous year.<sup>33</sup> In the three years ending March 2018, disabled men aged 16-59 (1.1%) were more likely to have experienced sexual assault and attempted sexual assault than non-disabled men of the same age (0.8%).<sup>34</sup> In the year ending March 2020, disabled men (7.5%) were more than twice as likely to have experienced domestic abuse than non-disabled men (3.2%).<sup>35</sup>

The situation for male victims of domestic abuse and some other crimes in the VAWG category can be considerably more difficult and complex where they have parental responsibilities. ONS Crime Survey figures for year ending March 2020 show that 34.1% of male victims experiencing domestic abuse live in a household with two adults and at least one child, and a further 1.4% of male victims live in a household with one adult and at least one child.<sup>36</sup> Among victims of partner abuse who reported children in the household, children witnessed the offence in 20.5% of cases.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> ONS. 2019. [Partner abuse in detail – Appendix tables - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/peopleandpopulation/healthandcare/articles/partnerabuseanddomesticviolence/appendix)

### 3. Identification and reporting

Harmful stereotyping, combined with popular myths and misconceptions around male victims, can act as additional barriers when it comes to reporting and seeking help. For example, stereotypes around masculinity can have a significant role in a male victim's experience of domestic abuse. Male victims may be less likely to disclose that they are being abused or may not recognise they are victims of domestic abuse as they may believe the term 'domestic abuse' is only applicable to women.

The year ending March 2018 CSEW showed that only just over half of male victims of partner abuse (50.8%) reported telling anyone personally about abuse experienced in the previous year. This compares to the 81.3% of female victims.<sup>38</sup> Men and boys may face particular challenges to disclosing abuse due to stereotypes and out of fear of not being believed. Barriers to reporting these crimes, and seeking help from specialist services, can be experienced by all victims, regardless of sex. These can include, but are not limited to: fear of not being believed; lack of faith in the criminal justice system; feelings of shame, guilt or embarrassment; not recognising the situation as abusive; not being aware of how to report crime; fear of losing contact with children; immigration status; fear of their sexuality being revealed; threats of harm from the perpetrator; and, pressure from family and friends to remain in a relationship.<sup>39</sup> Male victims with protected characteristics may be at greater risk of facing barriers to reporting and seeking help.

Popular myths and misconceptions about male victims of crimes such as domestic and sexual abuse can be particularly damaging and act as a further barrier to reporting and help-seeking.

Myths surrounding male victims of sexual abuse can include, but are not limited to: male survivors of sexual abuse will go on to abuse others; men/boys are only sexually abused by other men/boys; physical arousal during sexually criminal abusive acts signifies consent.<sup>40</sup> In their national research, the voluntary sector specialist umbrella agency the Male Survivors Partnership concluded that 20% of the men sampled took over 31 years to disclose being sexually abused.<sup>41</sup>

A University of Durham study examining the experience of male victims of domestic abuse during COVID-19 conducted in collaboration with the Men's Advice line, run by domestic abuse charity Respect - reported that some of their callers described how their ideas about what it means to be man, meant they found it hard to believe that they were a victim of abuse.<sup>42</sup> This can also

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<sup>38</sup> ONS. [Partner abuse in detail, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/peopleandpopulation/healthandcare/articles/partnerabuseindetail/2018): Data year ending March 2018

<sup>39</sup> Such reasons have been reported for victims of partner abuse (see ONS. [Partner abuse in detail, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/peopleandpopulation/healthandcare/articles/partnerabuseindetail/2018): Data year ending March 2018) and responses from the VAWG call for evidence.

<sup>40</sup> [Myths and Facts - MSP - The Male Survivors Partnership](#)

<sup>41</sup> [Male Survivors Partnership](#)

<sup>42</sup> [FINAL Living a Life by Permission report Feb 2021 \(dur.ac.uk\)](#)

impact the ways male victims are abused, for example, using specific insults as part of a pattern of controlling or coercive behaviour. The study reported male victims were told they were mocked by their perpetrators for being “not manly enough.”<sup>43</sup>

#### 4. Access to support services

All victims/survivors deserve access to timely and appropriate support. The importance of access to appropriate services was underscored in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Rape Support Fund, provided by the Ministry of Justice, has been extended until March 2023, to ensure support services have the funding stability they need to meet demand. Core funding for rape support centres through this fund has increased by 50% this financial year (21/22), from £8m to £12m per annum.

On average, in the year ending March 2021, the charity ManKind Initiative experienced 23% more calls to their helpline per month and 61% more visitors to their website per month than the previous year.<sup>44</sup> Some support services - such as the Men's Advice Line, the national helpline for male victims of domestic abuse, run by Respect - also offer web services which allow the user instant and non-instant responses from staff. From 2019-2022, the Government has allocated £168,000 a year for the helpline. In addition to this amount, the Government provided a funding uplift in 2020/21 of a further £151,000 to support the continued running of the service during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021/22, the Government provided another funding uplift of £64,500 to fund additional activity.

The Government also recognises the additional barriers to reporting which male victims with protected characteristics may experience, and that male victims may have specialist needs. Some barriers to reporting and help-seeking are practical and involve service availability.

LGBT victims and survivors may be less likely to seek support because there can be a lack of clarity as to whether services are ‘LGBT friendly’.<sup>45</sup> The support organisation Galop identified that LGBT people experienced a range of structural, cultural, individual, and interpersonal barriers when accessing domestic abuse and sexual violence services in the UK.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> [FINAL Living a Life by Permission report Feb 2021 \(dur.ac.uk\)](#)

<sup>44</sup> [Domestic abuse victim services, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>45</sup> [160719 REPORT LGBT evidence review NIESR FINALPDF.pdf](#)

<sup>46</sup> [For-Service-Providers-Barriers.pdf \(setdab.org\)](#)

## Case Study: Safer Futures Cornwall

When his partner had left for work, Joe<sup>1</sup> (30) decided to try the Safer Futures helpline. Joe had met his partner 18-months ago on a night out. After a whirlwind romance, Joe had moved into his partner's flat. This suited Joe well; he had spent the previous few months between friends' houses after losing his job and struggling with his mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic.

At first, the relationship seemed perfect. However, patterns of coercive control soon emerged, and Joe began to fear his partner's return from work. Joe's self-esteem hit rock bottom and he found himself drinking more and more.

Joe would never have described his situation as domestic abuse, his partner never physically hurt him. However, when Joe started to contemplate suicide he reached out to a friend. His friend had been worried about Joe's relationship and suggested he call the Safer Futures helpline.

Safer Futures is an integrated domestic abuse and sexual violence services provider, run by First Light and Barnardo's, commissioned by Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly's Joint Commissioning Group. It offers a range of gender-informed and gender-inclusive early intervention, prevention, therapy and recovery programmes to children, young people and adults affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence. All aspects of the service are free at the point of delivery and can be reached through a Single Point of Access (SPA) helpline.

In line with other domestic abuse services, it has seen a sharp rise in referrals since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. For men, this increase has been approximately 15%; for women it has been approximately 40%. Both women and men provide helpline support although there are more women to reflect need, and the client has the choice of who they speak to.

Safer Futures provides support services tailored to the needs of the individual. Through one call to the SPA helpline, specialists can undertake a DASH<sup>1</sup>- or domestic abuse, stalking and 'honour'-based violence - risk assessment and create a tailored support pathway. In Joe's case, the DASH risk assessment and professional judgement of the specialist did not indicate immediate risk of harm to Joe. He therefore did not need an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) - who deal with high-risk crisis intervention - but he did need ongoing support. He was provided with a DASA (a domestic abuse safety adviser) for community-based one-to-one meetings. The DASA was able to support Joe to find safe accommodation join a men's peer-support group and access specialist mental health, alcohol, and job support.



Male victims/survivors in the prison estate may have difficulty accessing relevant support services. Figures obtained in a UK study by the Howard League for Penal Reform (2014), detailed that when overcrowding in male prisons increased, the number of recorded sexual assaults by male prisoners rose. Reductions in the amount of contact time between officers and prisoners as a result of COVID-19, could make it more difficult for staff to identify prisoners at risk of sexual assault, or to prevent or detect sexual assaults in prison.<sup>47</sup> In 2020, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service recorded 239 sexual assaults in male secure establishments – including prisons, Youth Offender Institutions and HMPPS managed Immigration Removal Centres - in England and Wales.<sup>48</sup>

It is critical that support services:

- are clear about the support they offer and to whom
- take into consideration the needs of victims/survivors
- understand the impact of harmful stereotyping, combined with myths and misconceptions about male victims that can act as barriers for men to engage.

When commissioning support services, local areas should refer to the National Statement of Expectations and accompanying Commissioning Toolkit, which provide guidance on how to commission victim support services to meet needs effectively and ensure that the local response is collaborative, inclusive, robust, and effective.<sup>49</sup>

We are aware of the excellent resources already in place developed by sector experts that support commissioners and providers to develop and provide the best services for male victims/survivors. The below demonstrate some examples of best practice:

- The Respect Male Victims Toolkit<sup>50</sup>
- LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Service Provision Mapping Study<sup>51</sup>
- Commissioning for Inclusion: delivering services for LGBT+ survivors of domestic abuse<sup>52</sup>
- Male Domestic Abuse Network: Quality Standards for Services Supporting Male Victims/Survivors of Domestic Abuse<sup>53</sup>
- Male Survivors Partnership: Male Service Standards for organisations working with men and boys affected by sexual abuse, rape and sexual exploitation<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> [\\*Coercive-sex-in-prison.pdf](#)

<sup>48</sup> [Safety in custody quarterly: update to December 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>49</sup> National Statement of Expectations 2022

<sup>50</sup> [Respect-Toolkit-for-Work-with-Male-Victims-of-Domestic-Abuse-2019.pdf \(hubble-live-assets.s3.amazonaws.com\)](#)

<sup>51</sup> [Galop-LGBT-Domestic-Abuse-Service-Provision-Mapping-Study-Final.pdf \(domesticabusecommissioner.uk\)](#)

<sup>52</sup> [LGBT-Commissioning-Guidance-final-2.pdf \(galop.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>53</sup> [Service Standards - Male Domestic Abuse Network \(mdan.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>54</sup> [Male Service Standards - MSP - The Male Survivors Partnership](#)

## **Case Study: OUT Spoken Talking Therapy in the prison estate, a Survivors Manchester service**

The OUT Spoken Talking Therapy service model is based on Survivors Manchester's years of experience of working with male victims/survivors of sexual abuse, rape and sexual exploitation in the community and mirrors much of the services they already run, adapted to fit in the prison estate. All services and activities are trauma informed and victim/survivor focused – they develop and deliver services where actions and decisions are underpinned by understanding of the evidence base on working with trauma; whilst also adapting delivery to meet the specific and identified needs of male victims/survivors from the continual feedback cycle.

Survivors Manchester underpin their work with Judith Herman's world-wide recognised 'Trauma and Recovery' (1992) framework. This three stage model follows a process of: 1. Stabilisation; 2. Processing; 3. Integration. The model starts with helping the client become stable by using a range of therapeutic skills and the development of a therapeutic relationship. Once stability is established, the client can then begin to process their 'stuck' experiences, often grieving with a sense of loss, acknowledgement of fear and anger, and releasing the withheld emotion. This time then enables the individual to integrate this experience actively into their 'life story', taking out the disabling emotion from the past to acknowledge the present day living. It's not about forgetting or shutting off the trauma, it's about moving it from feeling it is still here to placing it back where it belongs, in the past.

Michael<sup>55</sup> engaged in OUT Spoken 1:1 talking therapy and the peer-led support group. Michael is serving a 6 year sentence; this is his third prison sentence. The help he received from Survivors Manchester went beyond helping him with the abuse he suffered. It also helped him understand why he used and hurt others. It helped him understand that all the anger he had was misplaced and misdirected. Today he feels that he has a future to look forward to and plan for, without carrying his past around with him.

## **5. Prosecution**

The CSEW for year ending March 2018 found that only 14.7% of male victims of partner abuse had told the police about their abuse, compared to 18.4% of women.<sup>56</sup>

While the Government fully acknowledges the range of barriers many male victims face, we encourage all victims/survivors to report incidents to the police, so perpetrators can be brought to justice. The Government recognises these crimes can have a lasting impact on victims/survivors and will continue to work with partners across local and national government, police, and the voluntary and community sector to support male victims/survivors.

We recognise that having police officers with the right skills is critical in ensuring cases are progressed and managed effectively. We are supporting

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<sup>55</sup> Some names and identifying characteristics have been changed to protect identities.

<sup>56</sup> ONS. [Partner abuse in detail, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/peopleandpopulation/healthandcare/articles/partnerabuseinprison/2018): Data year ending March 2018



police to do this through funding 'Operation Soteria', which is working to improve the police response to rape cases, and the Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (run by the National Police Chiefs' Council, which drives improvement in the policing response to all safeguarding crimes, including adult sexual offences). We are also supporting the recruitment of 20,000 police officers, and the appointment of DCC Maggie Blyth as the full time National Policing Lead on Violence Against Women and Girls. DCC Blyth recognises that there are victims across all offences captured within the VAWG area, including men and boys, and her plans will seek to utilise improvements for all victims regardless of sex.

There were 84,734 domestic abuse-related crimes recorded in the year ending March 2021, and just over a quarter (26.9%) of these involved male victims.<sup>57</sup> Despite increased police-recorded domestic abuse crimes in recent years, the number of domestic abuse perpetrators charged, prosecuted, and convicted has been falling. For the year ending March 2021, only 8% of recorded domestic abuse crimes were assigned an outcome of charged or summonsed in that same year.<sup>58</sup> In domestic related prosecutions for year ending March 2021, 13.6% of victims were male.<sup>59</sup>

In 2017 the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) published a public statement on male victims of crimes considered within their Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy, which outlined the CPS support for male victims/survivors of abuse and reaffirmed their commitments to them. The statement recognised the significant numbers of men and boys affected by these crimes and made several commitments. This included commitments to provide information for prosecutors to help challenge myths and stereotypes, understand the experience of male victims within the Criminal Justice System, and provide details of support services for male victims.

## 6. Commitments

[Annex A](#) of the Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy contains full details of Government progress against the actions committed to in the Male Victims Position Statement 2019.

The Government will continue to build on our work with the sector to support male victims/survivors of these crimes and ensure that timely and high-quality appropriate support is available to them. In addition, we will:

- Continue to involve diverse national men's groups in stakeholder engagement on issues related to VAWG.

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<sup>57</sup> ONS. 2021. [Domestic abuse and the criminal justice system - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

<sup>58</sup> [Domestic abuse and the criminal justice system - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

<sup>59</sup> ONS. 2021. [Domestic abuse and the criminal justice system - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

- Whilst acknowledging the disproportionally gendered nature of VAWG, ensure Government VAWG communication campaigns are inclusive of male victims to raise awareness, challenge harmful societal myths about masculinity, and encourage male victims and survivors to report abuse.
- Continue to utilise evidence from across Government on male experiences of VAWG crimes to inform relevant future Government policies. For example, a comprehensive VAWG [data landscape](#) has been published on Gov.uk. This includes sources from across government, academia and the voluntary sector and includes data on male experiences of VAWG crimes.
- During 2021-22, the Ministry of Justice committed over £1.4 million to the Male Rape Fund. A further £1.4 million will be committed in 2022-23.
- Via the Ministry of Justice, continue to fund Safeline's national male rape helpline and SurvivorsUK's webchat until March 2023.
- Explicitly highlight that the remit of the Minister for Safeguarding includes responsibility for male victims of VAWG crimes.
- Work closely with the Office of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner (DAC), making use of the information provided through the DAC's survivor survey<sup>60</sup> – which is currently being analysed after closing on 31 January 2022 - to inform future potential areas of research.
- Work to develop a framework to coordinate and align funding for victim and survivor support services across Government will be taken forward through the Ministry of Justice's forthcoming Victims Funding Strategy.
- Introduce a Victims Law as soon as possible, to guarantee that victims are at the heart of the criminal justice system. Throughout the recent consultation process, we have engaged directly with victims, including male victims and the specialist services working to support them – to hear first-hand their experiences, and the specific challenges they are facing.
- Increase Ministry of Justice funding for victim and witness support services, to £185 million by 2024-25. Over three years, £47.1m will be ringfenced for community-based services supporting victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence, this includes male victims/survivors.
- Undertake further Government work through the Spending Review, and through a landscape review of the provision of sexual violence support services.

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<sup>60</sup> [Introduction : Survey about domestic abuse services \(homeofficesurveys.homeoffice.gov.uk\)](#)

- The Government is committed to launching the world's first Government funded Victim Support Service specific to Conversion Therapy. This service will provide initial pastoral support and direction to specialist services, such as counselling and emergency housing. It will also act as an information resource on the harms that conversion therapy practices cause, its legal status, and links to specialist support. This helpline will be open to anyone who feels they have undergone conversion therapy, as well as concerned family, friends, and professionals in safe guarding roles.
- Work to raise awareness of this document across Government departments, local authorities, police forces and other statutory bodies.