

AMIS submission of 5 April 2022

PE1909/G - Remove the "gender-based crime" domestic abuse narrative and make it gender neutral and equal

‘Remove the “gender-based crime” domestic abuse narrative and make it gender-inclusive* and equal.’

*N.B. As per our recommendations, we have changed ‘neutral’ to ‘inclusive’ or ‘informed’ and ‘equal’ to ‘proportionate’ in the petition headings.

AMIS is the primary service in Scotland for men/individuals who identify as men, experiencing abuse classed as ‘domestic’, ‘intimate-partner’ or ‘gender-based’. (For brevity, we will use ‘partner’.) We support, including through our national helpline, around 500 individuals annually - the majority of male victim/survivors in Scotland who access support - providing information, safety planning and casework. AMIS also supports friends and family of abused men.

AMIS engages with young people on prevention; professionals, and policymakers on the need for inclusion. AMIS is a member of the Victims’ Organisations’ Collaborative Forum, Police Scotland’s Domestic Abuse Force Forum, a Scottish Civil Justice Council Working Group, and other fora – the lone voice raising awareness of the male experience of partner abuse.

Hearing the prevalent gendered-crime narrative around partner abuse can leave male victims feeling excluded from recognition and support - some report services having treated them as abusers. Our [Annual Report 2021](#) contains some accounts of such barriers:

“All media, press, local and Scots (government) maintain one story of Male perpetrator and female victim. When you have lived the opposite and been the victim seeing this injustice causes additional stress and anxiety.”

“There was really only AMIS.... I was told (by another service) domestic abuse was a gendered crime caused by the patriarchy; so it felt like victim blaming.”

A [Council of Europe \(CoE\)](#) definition informs the Scottish Government strategy, [Equally Safe](#).

“Gender based violence is a function of gender inequality, and an abuse of male power and privilege.... *Gender-based violence against women shall mean violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately.*”
[This definition underpins all Government pronouncements on partner abuse.](#)

The CoE concedes that men are also victims:

“Furthermore, men can also be targeted with gender-based violence: statistically, the number of such cases is much smaller, in comparison with women, but **it should not be neglected.**”

The number of male victims is smaller in [police statistics](#) and [Domestic Abuse \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#) cases, raising the question – do such figures justify the neglect of male victims or are they indicators that the justice system may be failing them?

In the [3rd stage debate](#) (31.00m-41.00m) on the Hate Crime Bill (10 March 2021). Humza Yousaf, then Cabinet Secretary for Justice, excluded ‘sex’ as an aggravator at the behest of four government-funded women’s advocacy groups, which were opposed to the possibility that “men (perpetrators) would use it”. Instead, he proposed a separate misogyny law, reserving this extra protection from gender-based crime for women.

Misapprehensions around the dynamics of partner abuse permeate down through training and guidance to the practice of staff who encounter victims. For example, in [guidance](#) for social landlords, a dismissive tone - including a factual error - regarding male victims could, under the new [Domestic Abuse \(Protection\) \(Sc\) Act 2021](#), lead to the eviction of a male tenant experiencing partner abuse but mistakenly treated as a perpetrator.

Learning points from an English [domestic homicide review](#) highlight the potential dangers of an exclusive gendered approach. David was a lawyer killed by his wife after several encounters with practitioners who, if they had received gender-inclusive training, might have recognised intimate partner violence before it was too late:

“It seems possible that in this case a professional ‘mind-set’ may have been fixed in a particular place, i.e. that women are victims of abuse and

men aren't, and that the wider picture and wider definition of abuse may have been missed."

1. Make domestic abuse policies, guidance, agendas and practices gender-informed*

Government guidance requires that abuse services are informed, and laws implemented using a 'gendered analysis': ['What does gender have to do with violence against women?'](#)

Encouragingly, it advises:

'looking at things from the perspective of men and women' ... to 'find a particular insight' ...

'which means that services or policies can be designed so they are more likely to work for everybody' ... and 'acknowledges that there are differences and that these differences need to be understood to avoid discriminating against some people'.

However, the very title of the paper means that the *current* gendered analysis does not adequately recognise male victimhood or female perpetration. There is an opportunity to undertake a new analysis based on recent evidence (listed below) to aim for a more collaborative approach that recognises every victim's vulnerabilities and strengths. There needs to be an openness to the full range of views and evidence. Recent evidence includes:

- Dempsey, B., 2013. *Men's Experience of Domestic Abuse in Scotland*. AMIS. <https://abusedmeninscotland.org/who-we-are/resources/>
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- Hine, Benjamin, Bates, Elizabeth A., Mackay, Jennifer, Graham-Kevan, Nicola. (2021) *Comparing the Demographic Characteristics, and Reported Abuse Type, Contexts and Outcomes of Help-Seeking Heterosexual Male and Female Victims of Domestic Violence: Part I – Who Presents to Specialist Services?* Partner Abuse Vol 13 Issue 1, DOI: 10.1891/PA-2021-0009 <https://connect.springerpub.com/content/sgrpa/13/1/20>
- Professor Nicola Graham-Kevan, Deborah Powney and Mankind (2022), *Male Victims of Coercive Control: Experiences and Impact*. UKRI Research England, Mankind Initiative, University of Central Lancashire, Criminal Justice Partnership.

<https://www.mankind.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Male-Victims-of-Coercive-Control-2021.pdf>

- Hine, Wallace & Bates 2021 *Understanding the Profile and Needs of Abused Men: Exploring Call Data From a Male Domestic Violence Charity in the United Kingdom*
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/08862605211028014>
- Hine, Bates & Wallace 2020. "I Have Guys Call Me and Say 'I Can't Be the Victim of Domestic Abuse'": Exploring the Experiences of Telephone Support Providers for Male Victims of Domestic Violence and Abuse
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0886260520944551>
- Dr Elizabeth A. Bates 2019. *Men's experience of domestic abuse in Scotland: An Update* University of Cumbria.
<https://abusedmeninscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/bates-lit-review-for-website.pdf>

2) Introduce proportionate* domestic abuse provision and funding for everyone in Scotland - regardless of any protected characteristic

AMIS believes public funding should reflect the level of needs. Government Ministers respond to [parliamentary questions](#) on financing for male victim services by presenting total amounts awarded to large, well-funded organisations that overwhelmingly support women, with few male beneficiaries. They give the misleading impression that services for male victims receive adequate funding. A new and welcome government [grant award](#) for AMIS will undoubtedly help boost service and advocacy provision. However, a much larger gulf than can be justified remains between government provision for male and female victims.

3) Ensure all domestic abuse Joint Protocol guidance, policies and practice for Police Scotland and Crown Office and Prosecutor Fiscal Service are gender informed*

Police Scotland's recent whole-force coercive-control training focused on female victims of men. The trainer referred to men as perpetrators posing as victims more than as actual victims (noted by an AMIS trustee invited to observe). 70% of people using AMIS's services do not report to the police. Revised gender-informed training for all in the justice system would make it easier for any victim to come forward.

Gender stereotypes or assumptions arising from the current 'gender-based crime' approach may have influenced Mr Wright's treatment. If lessons are learnt from the upheld complaints, future frustration, stress,

trauma and cost to victims and their children - and costs to the public purse - might be avoided.

AMIS strongly believes that addressing the needs of male victims should not and need not be at the expense of female victim support. Addressing the needs of female victims should not result in an approach that marginalises male victims.

AMIS is well placed to help create an inclusive gendered analysis and contribute to the proposed [strategy](#) for men and boys.