



# Man Made:

Men, masculinities and equality in public policy

coalition on men & boys

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## coalition on men & boys

The Coalition on Men and Boys was formally launched on 26 November 2007. Current members are Action for Children, Bradford University's Research Unit on Men and Masculinities, the Fatherhood Institute, Men's Advice Line, Men's Health Forum, Relate, Respect (the national association for domestic violence perpetrator programmes), and the White Ribbon Campaign.

The Coalition aims to put issues of concern to men and boys firmly on the public policy agenda, within the context of moving towards greater gender equality. The Coalition is unique in that there is currently no other organisation that addresses these issues across the range of public policy and advises Government and other policymaking and service delivery agencies on them. The Coalition can also, in active collaboration with women's organisations, provide a national lead in encouraging support and responsibility amongst men and boys for measures to tackle discrimination and gender-based violence.

The Coalition has received encouragement and support from the Home Office, the Government Equalities Office and the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

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For further information about the Coalition, visit our website:

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The analysis and recommendations in this report are the responsibility of the Coalition on Men and Boys alone and should not be taken to represent the views of any particular member organisation or the expert advisers. The views expressed do not reflect those of the UK Government, the Government Equalities Office or the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

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## Man Made: Men, masculinities and equality in public policy

### Executive summary

In recent decades there has been increasing uncertainty about how to understand and respond to the experiences of men and boys in the UK. It is often argued that economic and social change has hit men and boys so hard that they are 'in crisis', whereas they are actually experiencing a complex mix of change and continuity. In practice, the profound economic and social shifts that are affecting men and women, and the relations between them, have had uneven effects.

This report by the Coalition on Men and Boys provides a unique, in-depth picture of the circumstances and needs of men and boys in England and Wales, and the issues they currently face. It also seeks to: analyse how public policy can support and engage with men and boys effectively; explore how focusing on them within policy can promote progress towards gender equality and other social goals; and outline practical proposals for reform.

### Key findings

**There is emerging interest among politicians and policy-makers in addressing masculinity issues, and examples of recent policy initiatives by the current Government (e.g. in relation to fatherhood and boys' education).** But men and boys are rarely addressed specifically across the full range of public policies, and there is insufficient reference to the extensive research literature on masculinity in the development of policy.

**The challenges facing some men and boys at the sharp end of social change have become more pressing and visible.** For example, men who are unemployed and/or unskilled (or boys with fathers in these groups) have worse health and education outcomes compared with other men and boys. Regional differences also reflect social class; life expectancy at birth for men living in Manchester is some ten years less than for men in Kensington and Chelsea.

**The enduring dominance of men in positions of power remains largely unaffected.** Eighty-one per cent of MPs and 71 per cent of local councillors are male. Nine out of ten boardroom directors of the top 100 FTSE companies are men, even though they make up just over half the workforce. Men continue to substantially outnumber women at senior levels across business and media organisations, the health service, local authorities, the police and the judiciary.

**International and European standards – in particular the UN Commission on the Status of Women 'Conclusions on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality' (2004) and the Council of the European Union 'Conclusions on Men and Gender Equality' (2006) – provide a framework for further action and a benchmark against which progress can be assessed.**

**Despite the helpful introduction by the current Government of the Gender Equality Duty in 2007, which requires all public sector organisations to address the different needs of men and women in the development of policies and services, implementation at local level has been patchy.** Understanding of the need for action to address the specific disadvantages faced by men or women – rather than providing the same treatment for both – is also weak. The Gender Equality Duty (and associated Race and Disability Duties) are important mechanisms for identifying and tackling issues concerning men and boys, which should be more actively exploited by key stakeholders.

**In the longer term, the introduction of a single 'Equality Duty' will replace the existing duties in relation to gender, race and disability.** Whilst there is a risk that the focus on gender equality may be diluted, this move will draw attention to the complex interplay of gender and masculinities with other equalities strands.

**Public policies concerning men and boys tend to be reactive – because 'something must be done' – often resulting in parallel policies that fail to address sufficiently the relations between men and women, or between different groups of men.** For example, simply adding 'boys' education' strategies to existing approaches to improve 'girls' education' fails adequately to address the issues at stake.

**The experiences and perspectives of men are shaped by various forms of inequality, including not only gender, but age, race, class, faith, sexual orientation, disability and income too.** An emerging theme within the research literature is the dynamic interrelationships between these strands, and their impact on women, children and other men. These differences must be taken more fully into account in the development of public policies.

**It is essential to draw out the connections between specific policy issues.** For example, there is often a tendency to separate out policies on fatherhood (and other men's relations to children) from policies on violence. Similarly, men's health is often affected by their work – by the risks in particular occupations, by long working hours, by workplace restructuring, downsizing and redundancies or by stress and insecurity within the 'flexible' labour market. Their health is affected too by violence and abuse, either to the self or to others. Specific policy areas need to be 'joined up' more coherently.

**Many mainstream government policies – e.g. in relation to the benefits system, welfare reform, employment and criminal justice – tend to be shaped, either explicitly, or more often implicitly, around traditional notions of masculinity as the 'norm'.** For example, the benefits system has tended to prioritise a 'male breadwinner' model of full-time long-term employment in relation to national insurance and pensions; other 'non-contributory' benefits (e.g. child benefit, disability living allowance and carers' allowance) are more likely to be paid to women, but they are usually paid at a lower level.

**Many services (e.g. in relation to health, social care, child welfare) are largely geared towards women, both supporting – but also entrenching – their roles as primary carers.** Services often struggle to engage with men effectively, or do not attempt to do so. Whilst this may be due to lack of resources or skills, men may also be overlooked or 'screened out' by service providers, regarded either as too dangerous to engage with (sometimes understandably so), or as of secondary importance in comparison to women.

## The approach of the Coalition on Men and Boys

The Coalition on Men and Boys believes that responding to the issues facing men and boys matters. If we are to improve the lives of women, children and men themselves, public policies must reflect the specific needs and experiences of men and boys, and address both their power and their needs in a much more sophisticated way than hitherto. This involves thinking not just about what men and boys do, but also about who they are and how their identities are formed.

The Coalition seeks to promote understanding of the relevance of masculinity issues to the development of public policy – and of how new possibilities can be opened up for men and boys to live their lives in more positive and less damaging ways. Moreover, it is time to stimulate and harness far more effectively the huge potential that men and boys have to contribute to the well-being of society, for example in relation to parenting and caring, relationships, health, work, education and anti-violence strategies.

The Coalition on Men and Boys believes that the pursuit of gender equality – including more co-operative and equal relations, greater sharing of care and work responsibilities and reductions in interpersonal violence – is hugely beneficial for both men and women, and is committed to working with women's groups to this end.

## Understanding masculinities

Men's and women's lives, and the gender relations between them, change over time, across cultures and within particular societies. In Britain over the past 40 years, for instance, patterns of male – and especially female – participation in paid work have shifted as the economy has been restructured. Many men are spending more time with their children, and voicing a desire to be more involved fathers (although men's move into the domestic sphere has not matched that of women into paid work). These shifts undermine any crude notion that there is one universal form of 'masculinity' (or 'femininity') applicable to all societies at all times.

There are, however, dominant ways of 'being male' which affect many men's attitudes and behaviour. For instance, they may display an unwillingness to take their own health problems seriously. They may adhere to restrictive codes of masculinity – 'be tough, independent, competitive' – leading to overwork, emotional unresponsiveness, poor health, a desire to control others or a combination of these.

There are also significant differences between men (as there are between women), and the term 'masculinities' has been coined to reflect the many possible ways of 'being a man'. In the UK and other Western countries today, some groups of men – often those who are white, university-educated and on high incomes – establish and wield enormous economic, social and political power over other men, women and children.

This dominance becomes built into social relations and structures so as to make it appear normal and natural for male superiority to be maintained. For instance, it can affect official statistics upon which policy is based. The Government's annual Household Below Average Income figures – which are used to assess poverty levels – attempt to measure the living standards of an individual according to household income. But this assumes that both partners in a couple benefit equally from that income, whereas in practice men tend to control more household resources.

Other men may be marginalised. For example, men who used to work in heavy industry in particular regions may be long-term unemployed, or incapacitated by ill-health or mental illness. Retired men may become socially isolated as work-based networks and friendships recede. Muslim men may encounter suspicion and abuse from non-Muslims as a result of their faith and their practices. Gay men may face hostility and harassment from heterosexuals at work or in the community. Men who are disabled often define their identities in relationship to the 'ideal' models of masculinity based on bodily strength and performance.

The considerable body of research over the last 15 or so years (particularly in relation to home and work, and to violence by men) reflects this diversity. It rejects the argument that men and boys are 'in crisis', or losing out to women and girls. Rather, it seeks to highlight the problems that men create and the problems they experience, the connections between men's power and marginalisation, and men's actual and potential contributions to society. It also draws attention to the commonalities and differences between different groups of men (according to class, race, age, disability, faith and sexual orientation), and the dynamic relations between them. This understanding and analysis should be more strongly reflected in the development of policy.

## Involving men in strategies for gender equality – opportunities and risks

There are several important reasons why some men already act in favour of gender equality – and why more men should do so. Gender equality holds the promise of improvements in men's and boys' relationships – not only with women and girls, but also in the relations they often have with other men and boys. Greater gender equality will reduce the pressures on men to conform to damaging and rigid forms of masculinity. This is likely to reduce men's violence, help to strengthen community safety and develop peaceful conflict resolution and improve family interaction.

Involving men may help to create wider consensus and support for change on issues (e.g. in relation to family, violence, sexual and reproductive health) that have previously been marginalised as 'women's issues'. Engaging with men may encourage the development of effective partnerships between men's and women's organisations.

Alongside these potential benefits, there are some risks in involving men in gender equality strategies. Resources may be diverted from support for women, in a context where such resources (e.g. for refuges or rape crisis centres) are already under threat. Engaging men in gender equality should not involve abandoning support for projects and strategies that focus on women.

Some men also will be resistant to change – especially if the proposed changes entail giving up some privileges (e.g. the positions they hold, better pay than women), and result in them having less power at work and in the home. The emergence in recent decades of a range of vocal 'men's rights' groups, both in the UK and internationally, is evidence of this.

It should not be assumed, however, that all men and boys share the expressed hostility of many 'men's rights' activists to progress for women and girls. Different groups of men and boys have different, and conflicting, interests – and many are fully supportive of moves towards gender equality. For instance, the experience of the White Ribbon Campaign – both worldwide and, since 2004, in the UK – demonstrates how groups of men are working at grassroots level to end men's violence against women. And many fathers are becoming active in local networks connected to children's centres.

## Current UK Government policy

Government policy-making over the past decade has sought to address men and masculinity issues across a number of areas, the most high profile being fathering and boys' education. Some key aspects are as follows:

Measures to reconcile work and caring responsibilities must be set within a context where paid **work** pressures have been intensifying. It is disappointing, therefore, that the Government has not ended its opt-out to the European Working Time Directive. Whilst other moves to widen flexible working arrangements are welcome, there is a role for Government, working with other key stakeholders, in ensuring that these are taken up more readily by men. This could help to retain jobs and provide flexibility for workers in riding out the current recession. Failure to pursue this action is also likely to entrench existing inequalities and the endurance of the gender pay gap. Recent unemployment figures have shown increases in rates for both men and women, with job losses in sectors where men predominate (e.g. manufacturing and construction) alongside job losses in the retail and service sectors where more women than men work. Where young men are concerned, the policy emphasis has been on getting more of them into work (e.g. through programmes such as the New Deal). While the New Deal has contributed to, and indeed accelerated,

a fall in the numbers of long-term unemployed 18-24 year olds, the economic circumstances of some young men – especially those facing multiple disadvantages – remain poor, particularly in the economic downturn (see section on ‘Work’, page 45).

The Government has struck a positive rhetorical tone on involving **fathers** in the care of children, yet concrete policy measures to promote shared parenting have not gone far enough. For example, two weeks paternity leave was introduced in 2003, and there is a current commitment to implement ‘Additional Paternity Leave’ (APL) for fathers up to 26 weeks. But making unused leave entitlements transferable from the mother to the father, as APL does, is a poor substitute for a dedicated ‘daddy month’ and for independent entitlement of fathers and mothers to parental leave (see section on ‘Fatherhood’, page 65).

Over the past few years, there have also been moves to tackle and improve **men’s health**, especially following the introduction of the Gender Equality Duty. For example, policy-makers and practitioners are increasingly aware of men’s reluctance to seek medical help and treatment, and of the importance of improving their access to information and services. As yet, however, the overall government approach tends to be fragmentary, concentrating more on some health issues (e.g. cancer, sexual health, suicide) and less on others of comparable importance (e.g. cardiovascular disease, obesity, diabetes). There is, so far, less evidence of gender being ‘mainstreamed’ across health policy, although efforts to close this gap are emerging in the Department of Health (e.g. the publication of a study on the different ways men and women access healthcare, and production of guidance for the NHS on developing a Gender Equality Scheme). Understanding among health professionals of how men’s health connects to men’s socialisation and their risk-taking behaviour is also underdeveloped, and, at the local level, men’s health remains a largely marginal issue (see section on ‘Health’, page 83).

Interest in bolstering boys’ achievements in **education** goes beyond the needs of boys from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, important though that is. Attention has also focused in recent years on tackling the differences in attainment between boys and girls, whereas in fact social class differences are far greater; research shows that, on average, children who are less able but better off overtake those who are poorer but more able, by age six. Government approaches to boys’ education have centred on improving educational practice generally, and promoting some ‘boy-friendly’ teaching strategies (e.g. boys’ literacy schemes, male mentoring, role modelling, greater use of IT). However attempts to shift the prevailing culture of ‘laddish’ masculinity, sexism and anti-school peer group attitudes are less developed. Such strategies would involve, for example: placing exploration of identity, relationships and equality at the heart of sex education; focusing more on social and emotional aspects of education and learning; and teaching about gender equality and the damaging effects of inequality more generally (see section on ‘Education’, page 105).

In relation to the issue of men’s **violence**, there has been a trend towards increasing social control and punishment (particularly of working-class men), through a range of measures including a massive growth in the use of incarceration. Despite the huge over-representation of men in the statistics on interpersonal and other forms of violence, there has, however, been less engagement in terms of policy with the gendered nature of violence (including pornography, prostitution and child sexual abuse). Insufficient attention has also been given to tackling the links between men’s violence, increasing sexual stereotyping and objectification in the media, and the growth of pornography and the sex industry. There is some acknowledgment of this within Government. For example, ways of shifting the predominant culture and challenging male demand for sexual services (and/or criminalising their use of them) have been proposed (see section on ‘Violence’, page 123). But overall, action is as yet uncoordinated and lacks a coherent vision.

## Ways forward

If the lives of men, women and children are to be improved, then men's participation in achieving change is vital. Indeed, without their involvement, and shifts in the distribution of power between men and women (and between different groups of men), then gender equality will be far harder – if not impossible – to realise.

Whilst some men show little or no desire to give up any privileges they hold, or are wary of developing new forms of masculinity, not all resist change. Indeed many are realising that maintaining the status quo has negative consequences for their health, personal lives and quality of life – and for other men, women and children. Many fathers are spending more time caring for their children than used to be the case. Many men support the desire of their partners to have fulfilling careers outside the home. Many men are willing to take more responsibility for their health if they are offered services that meet their needs. Many women also acknowledge the potential of more flexible and less privileged forms of masculinity which place greater value on support and care.

What is required is to reach a tipping point, where the majority of men come to recognise the benefits – for themselves, women and children – of greater equality and more flexible and positive forms of masculinity, and are prepared to contribute, in all spheres of life, to its achievement.

## Key general recommendations

### **Developing the policy framework**

Men and boys should be addressed explicitly across government policies, programmes and performance frameworks, rather than their presence being left implicit. There should be a particular focus on addressing men and masculinities in relation to policies on work, fatherhood, health, education and violence, and to the priorities of the Minister for Women and Equality. The aim should be to 'join up' policies and programmes by focusing on the relations between groups and integrating ('mainstreaming') gender concerns, rather than targeting separate and parallel strategies at women and men.

In line with the Gender Equality Duty, policy and programmes should address the specific needs of men and boys, where they differ from the needs of women and girls. There may be circumstances where gender analysis leads to the conclusion that specific action orientated at women or men is necessary. The Equality and Human Rights Commission should monitor and enforce compliance with the Duty rigorously, holding public authorities to account.

### **Building institutional mechanisms**

The Government Equalities Office and the Equality and Human Rights Commission should establish designated policy and research positions focusing on how men and boys can contribute to tackling gender and other inequalities.

### **Monitoring progress**

The 'Gender Impact Assessments' (GIAs) required by the Gender Equality Duty of the policies, budgets and structures of public bodies should include assessment of their impact on men and boys. New statements of government policy should only be released publicly after an assessment has been undertaken.

### **Involving men**

Men with senior positions within government, business, trade unions and NGOs should provide high-profile and proactive support for gender equality measures, and encourage other men to play

their part. They should also model good practice for men in organisations, working collaboratively with and supporting female colleagues on gender issues.

Achieving progress towards gender equality requires more than working with men as isolated individuals; the development of men's groups and networks committed to advocacy for gender equality should be encouraged at community level. At local level, these organisations have a potentially important role as stakeholders to be consulted as part of Gender Equality Duty compliance.

### **Sharing good practice in working with men and boys**

There is a need to undertake a further study to establish clear criteria for identifying effective practice in working with men and boys and examples of this in different policy areas (drawing both from UK and international experience). Key issues are likely to include: frameworks for thinking about men, masculinities and gender; strategies for reaching and engaging men and boys; the role of 'transitions' in the lives of men and boys; co-working between men and women; integrated working between adults' and children's services; professional attitudes; and the evaluation of programmes.

Greater efforts should be made both at national and local levels to encourage cross-sectoral links and sharing of good practice between those working with men. This should include a stronger lead from Government, more innovative approaches to funding partnerships bringing together different sectors, and the development of joint training and support networks between local projects. The Coalition on Men and Boys can act as a catalyst and forum for such discussion.

There is a need for educational institutions to increase training opportunities for professionals (including teachers, social workers, youth workers, counsellors, health workers) to develop their understanding of issues relating to men and masculinities and to improve their practice.

### **Improving data collection**

In order to fulfil the Gender Equality Duty, official statistics should be routinely disaggregated by gender. Whilst the provision of such statistics has improved since the late 1990s, gaps remain which should be addressed, e.g. in relation to the staffing of public bodies, access to services, and the intersection of social disadvantage and gender (in particular disability, sexuality, age and men's violence to children).

### **Furthering the research agenda**

The development of policy towards men and boys should draw more extensively on the substantial body of academic research which now exists, both in the UK and in Europe.

Research is necessary to map both mainstream and specialist services working with men across a range of sectors, to improve the number and quality of external evaluations of project work and to explore and disseminate good practice in working with men (and in working with men and women together).

The impact of the different cultural contexts in Wales and England (and Scotland and Northern Ireland) on the development of masculinities has received little research attention, and should be addressed.

### **Increasing funding**

Policy-makers and funders should seek to devote increased resources to innovative projects working with men and boys, in particular those which are seeking to address masculinity issues from a critical perspective. These may include father-inclusive children's services, anti-violence initiatives, health programmes and education programmes in schools. This support should not be at the expense of vital projects to support women and girls, such as refuges and rape crisis centres.

## Key policy-specific recommendations

**Work:** the European Working Time Directive sets a 48-hour maximum working week, but there is an opt-out for UK employees which should be ended. Employers should also take positive measures to tackle the long hours culture, and there should be disincentives for employers to demand overtime work.

**Fatherhood:** antenatal, child welfare, education and health services should engage with fathers actively and routinely and support them to fulfil their responsibilities, whilst recognising the continuing importance of safety issues for mothers and children. Public service providers should use the Gender Equality Duty as a positive tool to design services around fathers' and mothers' diverse needs.

**Health:** action is needed to improve men's use of primary health services. This requires long-term initiatives – such as improved health education in schools – as well as more immediate changes to the opening hours, location, marketing and ambience of services. A national strategy is needed to help achieve this.

**Education:** concerted and planned programmes should be developed in schools to educate boys about the need for respect within relationships and towards women and girls more generally, and to ensure they understand that violence against women and girls (and each other) is unacceptable. Education on emotional well-being, building healthy relationships and on tackling violence should be embedded across the curriculum.

**Violence:** in addition to existing provision within the criminal justice system, each local authority should have a service for men who are perpetrators of domestic violence, accredited against the National Service Standard. This should not be at the expense of provision for victims of abuse but part of a wider strategy to promote prevention work, reduce reoffending and improve outcomes for children.

For additional recommendations in relation to specific policy areas, see sections on 'Work' (page 45), 'Fatherhood' (page 65), 'Health' (page 83), 'Education' (page 105) and 'Violence' (page 123) in the full report.

## About the study

The study is based on five main components: internet and library research to identify and access the range of available data, relevant policy documents and information about practical projects working with men; comments and other input from a team of academic advisers (full biographies are listed on page 3); discussions with civil servants in key government departments; and consultation with the member organisations of the Coalition. The Coalition on Men and Boys is grateful for funding received for this study from the Government Equalities Office and the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

A full report *Man Made: Men, masculinities and equality in public policy*, by Sandy Ruxton, is published by the Coalition on Men and Boys.

# 1. Background to the Report

## Why this report is needed

In recent decades there has been increasing uncertainty about how to understand, portray and respond to the experiences of men and boys in the UK. The media and popular culture have played a key role since the 1990s in weaving together a range of issues – the decline in male manufacturing jobs, educational ‘underachievement’ among boys, suicide rates among young men – into a recurrent story of ‘masculinity in crisis’. In response, they have created new stereotypes of men – the ‘New Man’, ‘New Lad’, ‘Metrosexual Man’ – only to knock each down in turn and replace it with another transitory label.

These representations can be easily dismissed as lightweight, yet to some extent they reflect more profound economic and social shifts that are affecting men, women and children and the relations between them. Contrary to media portrayals, this is a complex mix, not only of change, but also of continuity. The circumstances of some men – especially those who occupy positions of power – have been relatively unaffected. There is a paradox here that, as the challenges facing some men have become more pressing and visible, the enduring dominance of others remains largely unaddressed and invisible.

The Coalition on Men and Boys believes that responding to the issues facing men and boys matters. If we are to improve the lives of women, children and men themselves, public policies must reflect the specific needs and experiences of men and boys and address both their power and their needs in a much more sophisticated way than hitherto. This involves thinking not just about what men and boys do, but also about who they are and how their identities are formed. Going beyond biological explanations, the Coalition seeks to promote understanding of how various forms of masculinity (or ‘masculinities’) are socially constructed – and how new possibilities can be opened up for men and boys to live their lives in more positive and less damaging ways. This may mean, for example, re-examining men’s participation in domestic labour and caring; developing their emotional literacy in relationships with women, children and other men; challenging their use of pornography and prostitution; and holding them to account for their violence.

Recent equality legislation has created a new and unique opportunity to tackle these issues and to identify issues concerning men and boys across the full range of public policies. The Gender Equality Duty, effective from April 2007, requires a process of consultation and involvement with men and women and the organisations that seek to represent them. It also requires all public sector organisations to address the different needs of men and women in the development of policies and services.

Against this background, this report aims to analyse the opportunities and risks in supporting, engaging, and where necessary challenging men and boys in order to make progress towards gender equality and other social goals. The Coalition on Men and Boys believes it is time to stimulate and harness far more effectively the huge potential that men and boys have to contribute to the well-being of society, for example in relation to parenting and caring, relationships, health, work, education and women’s and public safety. It also seeks to explore the problems that men and boys experience and the problems they create, to identify how policy and legislation in England and Wales can impede or promote progress, and to outline practical proposals for reform at all levels. In addressing these issues, the report is unique, providing a benchmark against which future action can be assessed.

The Coalition also believes that men and boys can and should be the allies of women and girls in working towards more equitable and just relationships, and that men themselves have much to learn and to gain in this process. This report starts from the perspective that the pursuit of gender equality – including more co-operative and equal relations, greater sharing of care and work responsibilities and reductions in interpersonal violence – is hugely beneficial for both men and women.

Running through the report there is a tension between the desire to provide short-term policy solutions to specific concerns and the long-term need to understand and address masculinity issues through policy and other measures. This emerges strongly in the recommendations. We acknowledge the difficulties faced by government departments and other stakeholders in responding to conceptual frameworks, and in 'joining up' policy measures (despite recognition in recent years by government of the need for this to happen). Nevertheless we hope that those reading the report, and seeking to develop policy based on its findings, will not simply 'cherry-pick' the easier options and neglect the more complex and important underlying issues.

## Objectives of the report

The report addresses the following specific objectives:

**Contexts and theory:** to identify key issues arising from the existing literature on men, boys, masculinities and gender equality.

**International comparisons:** to draw relevant comparisons with other countries and the UK's international obligations.

**Policy issues:** to consider a range of public policies regarding men and boys and make clear their needs, and the needs of women and children, in relation to them.

**Good practice:** to highlight examples of good practice from around the UK (and internationally, if relevant).

**Participation:** to engage with key stakeholders including NGOs, employers, trade unions, community groups, local authorities, relevant agencies and government departments.

**Recommendations:** to highlight findings that could be shared with government officials and stakeholders to support policy development.

Based on the report's findings, the Coalition on Men and Boys will set out its work programme and priorities for the future.

## Methodology

The methodology has involved five main components. First, internet and library research was undertaken to identify and access the range of available data, relevant policy documents and information about practical projects working with men. The report is not intended to provide a systematic review of the literature; however it does seek to highlight and reference key texts in relation to the issues covered. An important starting point was the online *Men's Bibliography*, which provides a comprehensive and up-to-date list of over 22,000 books and articles on men and masculinities internationally, sorted into over 30 major subject areas (see <http://www.xyonline.net/mensbiblio/> for details). Another essential source was the multi-author *International Encyclopedia of Men and Masculinities*,<sup>1</sup> a key reference guide to current theoretical and empirical research about men and masculinities around the world.

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1. Flood M., Gardiner J.K., Pease B., Pringle K. (eds.) (2007) *International Encyclopedia of Men and Masculinities*, London: Routledge

The report draws significantly upon feminist scholarship, and reflects the growing body of critical studies on men and masculinities which provides the theoretical background to the report's analysis. Much of this latter work, from the mid 1980s onwards, has originated in the US, Canada, Australia and parts of Europe (e.g. the Nordic region, Germany, the UK)<sup>2</sup> – however it is now expanding to include a range of developing countries.

Particular inspiration has also come from the Research Network on Men in Europe<sup>3</sup> (*Critical Research on Men in Europe [CROME]*, [www.cromenet.org](http://www.cromenet.org)), which has been engaged in a joint collaborative project since 1999 to explore men and masculinity issues across Europe.<sup>4</sup> This report draws extensively upon the evidence highlighted by CROME, particularly in relation to home and work, social exclusion, violences, and health. The Network has analysed boys, men and masculinities from the dual perspectives of the problems some men create, and the problems some men experience.<sup>5</sup> This approach goes beyond the simplified focus of much previous research and policy, which tends to regard men and boys either as in need of control or punishment, or in need of help or support. Instead, CROME researchers have rightly been interested in both perspectives, and in particular in the interconnections between them. This approach is reflected in the current report.

Second, a team of academic advisers (full biographies are listed on pages 3-4) has supported the development of the project throughout. Their role has included ensuring the report draws upon the most relevant research, commenting on drafts of the report, identifying gaps in the analysis and providing advice and ideas. In relation to some specific sections of the report, additional comment has been sought from other academics with particular expertise (listed in the 'Acknowledgments' on page 3).

Third, the member organisations of the Coalition have been consulted on all drafts. This process has not only greatly assisted the drafting of the text of the report, the clarification of the style and tone and the targeting of the recommendations. It has also helped the Coalition, at an early stage of its development, to refine and clarify its own values, policy positions and objectives.

Fourth, a series of discussions have been held with civil servants and advisers in three government departments (the Home Office, Department of Health and Government Equalities Office), in order to explore their reactions to drafts of the report, and to make sure the analysis responds appropriately to current debates and public policy issues. Although funded by the Government Equalities Office and the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the report is, however, the outcome of an independent project.

Fifth, the progress and delivery of the project has been overseen by the Steering Group of the Coalition on Men and Boys, composed of the representatives of the member organisations. This group met formally on eight occasions where the report was discussed, but much of the work of revising and commenting was carried out via email and phone contact.

2. Some key early texts are: Kimmel M. (1987) *Changing Men: New Directions in Research on Men and Masculinities*, Newbury Park, CA: SAGE; Connell R. W. (1987) *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*, Palo Alto, California: University of California Press, and (1995) *Masculinities*, Cambridge: Polity Press, Segal L. (1997) *Slow Motion*, Virago: London

3. The network originally included researchers from Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Russian Federation, and the UK – and subsequently Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Spain, and Sweden

4. This work continued as part of another EU-funded programme, *Concerted Action on Human Rights Violations within the EU* ([www.cahrv.uni-osnabrueck.de](http://www.cahrv.uni-osnabrueck.de))

5. See Hearn J., Pringle K. (eds.) (2006) *European Perspectives on Men and Masculinities*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; and Pringle K., Hearn J. et al. (2006) *Men, Masculinities and Europe*, London: Whiting and Birch

## Comments on the methodology

The current project was commissioned through an open tendering process at the beginning of January 2008. The research began in February, and was completed in October. This nine-month period is longer than was originally anticipated, but proved very necessary given the extent of the information uncovered, the complexity of the issues involved, and the need for extensive consultation both with the academic advisers and with the members of the Coalition.

Inevitably, in a wide-ranging short-term project of this kind, it proved impossible to include every relevant public policy issue. We acknowledge there are some gaps. For example, ideally there would be more in the report on issues such as the economic downturn, care (beyond fatherhood) and criminal justice (beyond violence). International issues – foreign policy, trade, environmental policy and so on – are not addressed in any detail. In relation to cross-cutting issues, there is less focus on disability and on sexual orientation than on the other equalities strands. These omissions reflect not only the tight time schedule, but also the restricted remit of the members of the Coalition; for instance, none of the current members focus specifically on disability or sexual orientation. In some areas, there was also a lack of information; for example, less research has been undertaken on the interconnections between disability and masculinities.

Whilst the report does seek to identify some examples of good practice in working with men and boys, we acknowledge the difficulties of defining what 'good practice' is. The theoretical models, aims, objectives and methods of particular interventions vary hugely.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, little of this work has been evaluated and outcomes must be treated with caution. Where case studies are described (usually in box form in the text), they are therefore used for illustrative purposes, and should not be seen as the 'last word' in the field concerned. Further work is required to establish principles and criteria for good practice, and to apply these to existing project and programme work, but this goes beyond the scope of the current report.

Another impact of the short timescale, and the extent of internal consultation with Coalition members, was that it proved impossible to engage with, and interview representatives from, all the stakeholder groups identified in point five of the objectives. Having said this, the report references the research and policy analysis of a wide range of organisations from most, if not all, the sectors identified. In addition, the report's authors had access to, and drew upon, the transcript of the seminar on gender equality held on 3 December 2007 under the auspices of the Government Equalities Office; many of the key stakeholders were present at the seminar.

Finally, the coverage in the report of issues specific to the Welsh context is limited.<sup>7</sup> This reflects both the very small number of sociological studies on men and masculinities in Wales and the lack of a Welsh representative within the Coalition membership (although some organisations do have offices in Wales). Given that it was not possible to do justice to this dimension, we believe that it is necessary for an additional analysis to be undertaken, led and informed by researchers in Wales.

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6. For further discussion of the relationship between theory, policy and practice, see Featherstone B., Rivett M., Scourfield J. (2007) *Working with Men in Health and Social Care*, London: SAGE

7. The report was commissioned by the funders to address issues in relation to men and boys in England and Wales, rather than Scotland and Northern Ireland.

## Structure of the report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

**Section 2 ('Introduction')** identifies key features of the economic and social context in relation to men and masculinities in the UK, and sets out a framework for analysis. It then highlights the reasons why men and boys should be involved in strategies for gender equality, and the risks in seeking to engage them.

**Section 3 ('Men, boys and policy')** sets out the international, European and UK policy background, identifies key features of the institutional architecture in England and Wales and provides an assessment of the policy approaches of the two main political parties to issues in relation to men and boys.

**Section 4 ('Introduction to key sections')** introduces the specific thematic sections of the report, and explores the importance of identifying the connections between themes.

Sections then follow which address in more detail the core themes of **'Work' (section 5)**, **'Fatherhood' (6)**, **'Health' (7)**, **'Education' (8)** and **'Violence' (9)**. Each of these sections outlines the main economic, social, demographic and political trends affecting the specific policy area, sets out current policy approaches and key policy issues, and identifies recommendations.

**Section 10 ('Ways forward')** examines the potential for achieving change through a range of sites and strategies, including public policy, organisations, the media and men's networks. It concludes with a set of general recommendations.

## 2. Introduction

### Men and masculinities: the UK context

Popular psychology<sup>8</sup> and science<sup>9</sup> have repeatedly asserted that men and women are innately different in terms of how they think, feel, communicate and act – and that pervasive inequalities and differences between them are therefore somehow ‘natural’. Yet the weight of evidence from the social sciences suggests men’s and women’s cognitive and linguistic capacities are very similar.<sup>10</sup> And rather than inequalities and differences being biologically determined, they are actively produced by a range of social and economic processes, and in particular by inequalities in power relations between men and women.<sup>11</sup>

Men’s and women’s lives, and the gender relations between them, change over time, across cultures and within particular societies.<sup>12</sup> In Britain over the past 40 years, for instance, patterns of male – and especially female – participation in paid work have shifted as the economy has been restructured. Many men are spending more time with their children, and voicing a desire to be more involved fathers (although men’s move into the domestic sphere has not matched that of women’s into paid work). Other forms of masculine identity have emerged; most notably, the lives of gay men have become much more visible (although many still expect, and experience, discrimination in their daily lives<sup>13</sup>).

These shifts undermine any crude notion that there is one universal form of ‘masculinity’ (or ‘femininity’) applicable to all societies at all times. But some features of men’s experiences are common to all men. All of them benefit, but to greatly varying extents, from the fact that they belong to the dominant group in society; for instance, they generally have higher incomes, and undertake less unpaid caring and household work than women. Yet men are often unaware of these advantages they derive as men; their ‘gender’, and gender issues, are usually invisible to them.<sup>14</sup>

However men’s lives and identities are rich and complex, and they do not benefit equally. Connell’s influential theory of ‘hegemonic masculinity’<sup>15</sup> describes the dynamic processes through which some groups of men – in Western countries, often those who are white, university-educated and on high incomes – establish and wield enormous economic, social and political power over other men, women and children. This dominance becomes built into social relations and structures so as to make it appear normal and natural for male superiority to be maintained.

Other men react in various ways to this dominant masculine ‘ideal’. For example, many accept and participate in this system and enjoy the material and physical benefits. Some are attracted by the simplistic explanations of extremist groups that appear to promise them power and certainty.

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8. The best-known example is John Gray (1992) *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, New York: Harper Collins. In relation to men specifically, Robert Bly (1990) *Iron John*, Reading, MA: Perseus Books, has idealised a mythical pre-industrial past where men were supposedly more connected with their inner selves, justifying for Bly a return to more traditional gender relations.

9. E.g. Anne and Bill Moir (1999) *Why Men Don’t Iron: The Fascinating and Unalterable Differences between Men and Women*, New York: Citadel

10. Cameron D. (2007) *The Myth of Mars and Venus: Do men and women really speak different languages?*, Oxford: OUP

11. Kimmel M. (2000) *The Gendered Society*, New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press

12. For example, historians have identified parallels between shifts in gender relations in Britain in the 1890s and those today, including an emphasis on women’s rights, a rise in female employment, a shifting balance within marriage, and the emergence of issues around sexualities. See Tosh J. (2005) *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family and Empire*, Harlow: Pearson

13. Hunt R., Dick S. (2008) *Serves You Right: Lesbian and gay people’s expectations of discrimination*, London: Stonewall

14. Kimmel M. (ibid.)

15. See Connell R. (1995) *Masculinities*, Cambridge: Polity Press

Some turn their dissatisfaction on themselves, or lapse into passive acceptance of economic inactivity. For some, whether they are powerful or feel powerless, their different relations to power can also be a cause of frustration and hostility, and sometimes violence and abuse, towards other men, women and children.

There are, therefore, significant differences between men (as there are between women), and the term 'masculinities'<sup>16</sup> has been coined to reflect the many possible ways of 'being a man'. The notion of 'masculinities' is linked to social divisions such as class, race, faith, age, disability and sexual orientation – or a dynamic combination of these. For example, African Caribbean working-class boys may exhibit a 'cool' masculinity, based around style and fashion, which is different from (but often imitated by) white working-class boys.<sup>17</sup> Men who are disabled often define their identities in relationship to the 'ideal' models of masculinity based on bodily strength and performance.<sup>18</sup> Men from conservative religious groups have to make sense of their experience within an increasingly sexualised mainstream culture. The lives of gay men are structured by their experiences within a dominant heterosexual culture, and in particular by homophobia.

Geography matters too. The transnational processes associated with 'globalisation' are increasingly impacting upon men (and on gender relations). Forms of exploitation such as pornography, prostitution and trafficking have expanded rapidly over the past decade, fuelled by the growth of communications via the internet, by poverty and inequality, and by an apparently increasing male demand for sexual services. And whereas flows of global capital and shifting investment patterns have enabled some men to accumulate huge wealth, others have experienced a massive decline in jobs in former industrial areas and regions (both in the UK and elsewhere).

At the same time, most men's lives are rooted in their local experiences; the expectations and identity of a young man from the close-knit South Wales Valleys, where work opportunities have changed fundamentally in recent decades,<sup>19</sup> is likely to be very different from that of his counterpart in a more prosperous Home Counties town in the south-east of England.

Masculinities can also be understood as collective as well as individual experiences. The way men think and act is influenced or conditioned by the groups and/or institutions they belong to, be they schools, factories, businesses, banks, the armed forces or the rugby club. For example, fathers make choices about how they behave and communicate about their parenting roles, in part on the basis of the social context they find themselves in (e.g. at work, the school gate, the children's centre). Violence can also be sustained or encouraged by the cultures within particular groups (e.g. among football hooligans) or institutions (e.g. in prisons).

Acknowledging some men's power does not mean ignoring other men's marginalisation. Some men, particularly those at the sharp end of economic and social change, suffer. Men who used to work in manufacturing or the mines may be long-term unemployed, or incapacitated by ill-health or mental illness. Retired men may become socially isolated as work-based networks and friendships recede. Muslim men may encounter suspicion and abuse from non-Muslims as a result of their faith and their practices. Gay men may face hostility and harassment from heterosexuals at work or in the community. Awareness is also growing of the frequency of violent attacks on disabled men (and women).

16. Use of the term 'masculinities' has been criticised for a range of reasons; some prefer the term 'male practices'. See, for instance, Hearn J. (1996) *Is Masculinity Dead? A Critique of the Concept of Masculinity/masculinities*, in Mac an Ghail M. (ed.), *Understanding Masculinities*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press

17. Frosh S., Phoenix A., Pattman R. (2002) *Young Masculinities*, Basingstoke: Palgrave; Sewell T. (1997) *Black Masculinities and Schooling: How Black Boys Survive Modern Schooling*, Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books

18. Shakespeare T. (1999) *When is a man not a man? When he's disabled*, in Wild J.(ed.) *Working with Men for Change*, London: UCL Press; Gerschick T. (2005) *Masculinity and degrees of bodily normativity in Western culture*, in Kimmel M., Hearn J., Connell R., (eds.), *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities*, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE

19. Scourfield J., Drakeford M.(1999) *Boys from Nowhere: Finding Welsh men and putting them in their place*, Contemporary Wales

It is often argued that economic and social change has hit men so hard that they are 'in crisis', whereas in fact men are experiencing a complex mix of change and continuity. Issues such as the suicide rates among young men, educational 'underachievement' among boys, and male unemployment are often used to justify the view that men are 'losing out' to women and that men are the 'new victims'. But these issues, while concerning, tend to hit the headlines partly because they challenge the unspoken assumption – and the everyday reality – that male dominance is the norm.

Media messages and representations reflect and reinforce this dominance. A cross-national study<sup>20</sup> of newspapers, radio and television in 76 countries (including the UK) found in 2005 that four out of five news subjects (i.e. people who are interviewed or who the news was about) were male. Men were 83 per cent of 'experts', and 86 per cent of 'spokespersons' in relation to new stories. They were most likely to appear in stories about politics, government, business or the economy, and women most likely to feature (although to a lesser extent) in health, social issues and the arts. Even in stories that affect women profoundly, such as gender-based violence, it was the male voice (64 per cent of news subjects) that prevailed.

Having said this, the prevalence of the male voice does not necessarily mean that the media reflect the diversity of men's experiences and concerns. Beyond misplaced fears of a generalised male 'crisis' in the UK, it is particular groups of men – especially unemployed and unskilled men (or boys with fathers in these groups) – who face disadvantage and have worse health and education outcomes compared with other men and boys.<sup>21</sup> These are, by and large, the same men and boys about whom concern has repeatedly been expressed by policy-makers and pundits over the years.

A noteworthy example is in relation to health, where recent indications are that inequalities between different groups of men are worsening. Although life expectancy has risen overall, the gap between men living in the poorest areas of England and the average male is two per cent wider than it was ten years ago.<sup>22</sup> Geographical inequalities also persist; life expectancy at birth for men living in Kensington and Chelsea is more than ten years greater than for men in Manchester.

For men who do wield significant power, the traditional gender order appears fundamentally intact. Eighty-one per cent of MPs<sup>23</sup> and 71 per cent of local councillors are male, as are nine out of ten boardroom directors of the top 100 FTSE companies. Men continue to substantially outnumber women at senior levels across business and media organisations, the health service, local authorities and the police and judiciary. And male workers are paid significantly more than female workers – currently 13 per cent more for full-timers and 40 per cent for part-timers. The current rate of progress towards equality in relation to issues such as these is very slow – indeed, across many areas it has recently either stalled or gone into reverse.<sup>24</sup> According to government projections,<sup>25</sup> it will be 2080 before Parliament has equal numbers of male and female MPs, and 2085 before the gender pay gap is closed. The Equality and Human Rights Commission also estimates that, at the present rate, it will take until 2063 for women to achieve equal numbers at senior levels in the judiciary, and until 2081 for women to achieve parity as directors in FTSE 100 companies.

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20. Gallagher M. (2006) *Global Media Monitoring Project*, London: WACC

21. Segal L. (1999) *Why Feminism?*, Cambridge: Polity

22. Comparison of 1995-97 baseline figures with 2004-06 figures. Health Inequalities Unit (2008) *Tackling Health Inequalities: 2007 Status Report on the Programme for Action*, London: Department of Health

23. In the Welsh Assembly elections in 2003, 30 women Assembly Members were elected, giving a 50/50 representation, the only legislature in the world to achieve this. Women currently make up 47 per cent of Welsh Assembly members.

24. According to the annual 'Sex and Power' index, in 2008 fewer women held top posts in 12 of the 25 categories (almost half). In another five categories, the number of women remains unchanged since 2007's index. Women's representation increased in just eight areas. See Equality and Human Rights Commission, *Sex and Power 2008*, available at [equalityhumanrights.com](http://equalityhumanrights.com).

25. Harman: *Equality essential for Britain age discrimination to be banned*, Cabinet Office press release, 26 June 2008

Many men show little or no desire to give up privileges such as these, and/or are wary of developing new forms of masculinity. To make progress towards gender equality and other social goals, it is therefore essential, as Hearn has written, to *'address the resistance of many men to different forms of involvement in gender equality debates, policies and activities; the responsibilities of men in taking part in the promotion of gender equality; and the process of reaching out to other men who are less interested and less involved'*.<sup>26</sup>

Not all men resist change. Indeed many are realising that maintaining the status quo has negative consequences for their health, personal lives and quality of life – and for other men, women and children. Many fathers are spending more time caring for their children than used to be the case. Many men support the desire of their partners to have fulfilling careers outside the home. Many men are willing to take more responsibility for their health if they are offered services that meet their needs. Many women also acknowledge the potential of more flexible and less privileged forms of masculinity which place greater value on support and care. What is required is to reach a tipping point, where the majority of men come to recognise the benefits – for themselves, women and children – of greater equality and more flexible and positive forms of masculinity, and are prepared to contribute, in all spheres of life, to its achievement.

## Involving men in strategies for gender equality

Progress towards gender equality will not only improve the lives of women and girls, but will also stimulate positive transformations in the lives of men and boys. Below we highlight reasons why some men already act in favour of gender equality – and why more men should do so:<sup>27</sup>

**Gender equality holds the promise of improvements in men's and boys' relationships – not only with women and girls, but also in the relations they often have with other men and boys.**<sup>28</sup>

Men and boys live in social relationships with women and girls, as their wives, partners, mothers, aunts, daughters, friends, classmates, fellow employees and so on and the quality of every man's life depends to a large extent on the quality of those relationships. Kimmel writes that gender equality offers men the possibility of 'richer, fuller and happier lives, with our friends, with our lovers, with our partners, with our children'.<sup>29</sup>

**Gender inequality has damaging effects on the personal health and well-being of men as well as women (though in different ways).** As we demonstrate later (section on Health, page 83), men and boys face specific health problems, such as premature death through accident or suicide and higher levels of drug and alcohol abuse. Many of these are linked to attempts by men to live up to dominant notions of masculinity ('be tough', 'compete', 'take risks'). Promoting and nurturing alternative models for being a man can do much to improve men's health and well-being, and reduce the negative impact of their actions – both on themselves and on other people.

**Men may support gender equality because they believe it will contribute to the well-being of their community or society.** Greater gender equality will reduce the pressures on men to conform to damaging and rigid forms of masculinity. This is likely to, for example, reduce men's 'violences'

26. Hearn J., *Men and Gender Equality: Resistance, Responsibilities and Reaching Out*, Orebro, Sweden, 15-16 March 2001

27. For more detail in relation to the reasons below, see Connell R.W., *The Role of Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality*, United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, Expert Group meeting, Brasilia, Brazil, 21-24 October 2003, EGM/Men-Boys-GE/2003/BP.1

28. Hearn J., *Men and Gender Equality: Resistance, Responsibilities and Reaching Out*, Orebro, Sweden, 15-16 March 2001

29. Kimmel M., *Gender Equality: Not for Women Only*, lecture for symposium on Women, Business and Society in the 21st Century, Madrid, 18 April 2005

(i.e. violence in all its forms), and help to improve community safety and develop peaceful conflict resolution. It will also contribute to raising the next generation of boys (and girls) in a framework of gender equality.<sup>30</sup>

**Men can be motivated by interests other than maintaining their own privilege.**<sup>31</sup> They may seek to challenge gender inequality for reasons of political or ethical principle, or through their concern for children's well-being or the rights of women. They may see it as part of a wider project of equality and social justice.

**Some men and boys are discriminated against on grounds directly linked to gender,<sup>32</sup> including their sexuality and/or association with 'feminine' characteristics or activities.** It is therefore in their interests for the current gender order to change.

**Beyond these benefits, it has been argued that addressing men through public policy encourages them to take responsibility for change, and can speak to many men's sense of anxiety and fear as 'traditional' masculinities are undermined.**<sup>33</sup> Involving men may help to create wider consensus and support on issues (e.g. in relation to family, violence, sexual and reproductive health) that have previously been marginalised as 'women's issues'. Targeting men, especially those who have a powerful role within institutions, may unlock additional financial resources and improve overall funding available to meet the needs of women and girls. And engaging with men may encourage the development of effective partnerships between men's and women's organisations.<sup>34</sup>

## Addressing the risks

Encouraging men and boys towards support for gender equality and the development of more positive forms of masculinity is essential. But there are some risks in involving men in gender equality strategies. Many men will be resistant to change – especially if the proposed changes entail giving up some privileges (e.g. the positions they hold, better pay than women), and result in them having less power at work and in the home. The emergence in recent decades of a range of vocal 'men's rights' groups, both in the UK and internationally, is evidence of this.

It should not be assumed, however, that all men and boys share the hostile approach of many 'men's rights' activists to progress for women and girls. Different groups of men and boys have different, and conflicting, interests – and many are fully supportive of moves towards gender equality. Echoing this reality, there are limitations in approaches to gender equality that fail to take into account the diversity among men in terms of their identities, motivations, attitudes and roles.<sup>35</sup>

The problems some men and boys experience can be used to justify attempts to shore up male authority and to undermine the important advances that have been achieved in the status and rights of women and children. Frequent calls for more 'male role models' for boys often rest, implicitly or explicitly, on notions of 'traditional' masculinity, and in particular on the desire for men to control boys' behaviour. What is needed instead is a more fundamental renegotiation of men's roles and relationships.

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30. Kaufman M. (2003) *The Aim Framework: Addressing and Involving Men and Boys to Promote Gender Equality and End Gender Discrimination and Violence*, UNICEF

31. Flood M., *Mainstreaming Men in Gender and Development*, Presentation to AusAID Gender Seminar Series, Canberra, 8 December 2005

32. Hearn J. (ibid.)

33. Flood M. (ibid.)

34. Kaufman M. (ibid.)

35. Crowley N. (2006) 'Men in Gender Equality', in Varanka J., Narhinen A., Siukola R. (2006) *Men and Gender Equality: Towards Progressive Policies*, Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Report 2006: 75

Attempts to engage men in gender equality strategies are sometimes regarded as a distraction from the fundamental task of empowering women, and as an attempt by men to redirect existing gender work for their own purposes. There is also a risk of diverting resources away from support for women, in a context where such resources (e.g. for refuges or rape crisis centres) are already under threat.

Where men do engage in work to promote gender equality, it is important to guard against the possibility that they may inadvertently reinforce inequality in another way. Saying this does not negate or devalue the vital work of men in promoting gender equality. It just means that strategies must always be in place to ensure the quality of the work.

Engaging men in gender equality should not involve abandoning support for projects and strategies that focus on women. Moreover, the risks of not engaging with men should not be ignored. Focusing exclusively on women can leave them with even more work to do<sup>36</sup> and may entrench static definitions of women (e.g. as 'carers') and men (e.g. as 'breadwinners'). Moreover, the vast majority of decision-makers (most of whom are male) will continue to ignore the relevance of gender issues; as a result, gender will remain a peripheral issue and will not be integrated effectively into policy and programmes.

## Conclusion

The analysis above identifies key issues in relation to men and boys in the UK, drawing upon the considerable body of sociological research over the last 15 or so years, particularly in relation to home and work, and to violence by men. It rejects the argument that men and boys are 'in crisis', or losing out to women and girls. Rather, it seeks to highlight the problems that men create and the problems they experience, the connections between men's power and marginalisation, and men's potential to contribute to society. Setting out a framework for understanding gender relations and 'masculinities', it draws attention to the commonalities and differences between different groups of men (according to class, race, age, disability, faith and sexual orientation) and the dynamic relations between them.

The section also explores reasons why some men and boys are – and more should be – involved in strategies for gender equality and new forms of masculinity, and the risks in seeking to engage them in these. There are important challenges to overcome here, but these do not provide a justification for not attempting to move this work forward.

In the next section, we explore the international, European and UK policy contexts in more detail, and identify key aspects of the approaches of the main UK political parties.

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36. Sweetman C. (1997) *Men and Masculinity*, Focus on Gender paper, Oxford: Oxfam GB

## 3. Men, boys and policy

### The international context

‘Men in many contexts, through their roles in the home, the community and at the national level, have the potential to bring about change in attitudes, roles, relationships and access to resources and decision-making which are critical for equality between women and men. In their relationships as fathers, brothers, husbands and friends, the attitudes and values of men and boys impact directly on the women and girls around them. Men should therefore be actively involved in developing and implementing legislation and policies to foster gender equality, and in providing role models to promote gender equality in the family, the workplace and in society at large.’<sup>37</sup>

Former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan

A central principle of international law, articulated in many UN documents from the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights onwards, is equality between men and women. The most complete set of international standards in this area is set out in the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW),<sup>38</sup> which requires ratifying states to abolish sex discrimination and to promote the equality of women with men in all aspects of political, social, economic and cultural life.<sup>39</sup> CEDAW was ratified by the UK Government in 1986.

Interest in the issue of how to involve men and boys in achieving gender equality has grown significantly at international level over the past decade. For example, the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo set out a Programme of Action which highlighted the need to encourage men to take responsibility with respect to child-rearing and housework, family life as well as parenthood and sexual and reproductive behaviour. And at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, the ‘Beijing Declaration’ committed participating governments to ‘*encourage men to participate fully in all actions towards equality*’ (paragraph 25).<sup>40</sup>

In 2004, an important UN Conference on ‘The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality’ called for action on a range of themes, including:

- promoting education based on gender equality;
- engaging men as fathers in socialising and caring for children;
- including men and boys in gender equality and gender mainstreaming policies;
- engaging the media in ensuring less stereotypical imagery and attitudes;
- engaging men and boys in HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention, and in sexual and reproductive health; and
- engaging men and boys in the reduction of gender-based violence.

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37. Report of the UN Secretary General, *The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality*, 22 December 2003, E/CN.6/2004/9

38. See <http://un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/> for details

39. Other international treaties and conventions are also relevant. These include: the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the 1966 International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination; the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child; the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and a range of conventions developed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

40. The accompanying ‘Plan of Action’ reaffirmed the principle of shared power and responsibility between men and women, suggesting that women’s concerns could only be addressed ‘in partnership with men’ towards gender equality.

The Conference concluded, among other things, that key ‘stakeholders’ – governments, UN organisations, civil society – should promote action at all levels to increase the contribution of men and boys to furthering gender equality.

Mirroring this new agenda at the political level, there is some evidence of positive initiatives emerging in a number of countries which are encouraging men to show support for gender equality.<sup>41</sup> For instance, a group of national and international NGOs have formed a global network called MenEngage – A Global Alliance to Engage Boys and Men in Gender Equality.<sup>42</sup> This alliance has held consultations with large numbers of NGOs in Eastern and Southern Africa, South and South-east Asia, India, Europe and Latin America.

Nevertheless, most initiatives have been relatively small-scale and have reached only a small number of men.<sup>43</sup> A UN review of progress since 2004 also concludes that the majority of projects have been initiated by/with NGOs, but often without the engagement of other important stakeholders. What is needed is to scale up initiatives to achieve broader change, backed by sufficient political will.<sup>44</sup>

## European context

‘...in order to improve the status of women and promote gender equality, more attention should be paid to how men are involved in the achievement of gender equality, as well as to the positive impact of gender equality for men and for the wellbeing of society as a whole’.

Council of the European Union, ‘Conclusions on Men and Gender Equality’, 1 December 2006

Gender equality is a fundamental principle of the European Union,<sup>45</sup> and there is a long tradition of support at this level for measures to promote gender equality.<sup>46</sup> In particular, the EU has focused on combating sex discrimination in employment, social security and access to goods and services.

From the mid-1990s onwards, increasing emphasis has also been placed on ‘gender mainstreaming’, which aims to achieve gender equality by bringing this perspective into all policy areas and activities, complementing more traditional approaches based on legislation and positive action. One argument that has been used in favour of gender mainstreaming is that it focuses attention on gender relations rather than on policies specifically for women, and that ‘gender’ therefore becomes a responsibility of men as well as women. Some commentators have suggested, however, that a focus on men may shift attention too far away from women’s interests, and that men and women will be treated as if they face similar obstacles.<sup>47</sup>

41. See, for example, Pease B., Pringle K.(eds.) (2001) *A Man’s World: Changing Men’s Practices in a Globalized World*, London: Zed Books; Ruxton S. (ed.)(2004) *Gender Equality and Men: Learning from Practice*, Oxfam GB

42. Members include: EngenderHealth (US and South Africa), Instituto Promundo (Brazil), Save the Children-Sweden, Sahyog (India), the International Planned Parenthood Federation, UNDP, WHO, the Family Violence Prevention Fund (US) and the White Ribbon Campaign (Canada). <http://www.menengage.org>

43. Barker G., *The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality*, written statement, Commission on the Status of Women, 51st Session, New York, 26 Feb-9 March 2007

44. Moderator’s summary of the interactive dialogue to evaluate progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions on *The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality*, 2 March 2007, 51st session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

45. Article 119 of the 1957 Treaty of Rome addresses the principle of ‘equal pay for equal work’

46. For example, the 1975 Equal Pay Directive (75/117/EEC); the Social Security Directive (79/7/EEC); Article 13 of the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam on anti-discrimination

47. Pease B., *Gendering Men: Implications for Gender Equality*, in Varanka J., Narhinen A., Siukola R.(2006) *Men and Gender Equality: Towards Progressive Policies*, Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Report 2006: 75

In practice, there has been a limited explicit focus on men within EU policy. There has been a longstanding interest in encouraging men as carers (especially for children<sup>48</sup>), but only in the last few years have initiatives to combat violence<sup>49</sup> – and in particular, transnational issues in relation to prostitution, trafficking and sexual exploitation – developed any focus on men and masculinities.

Recently there has been growing awareness of the importance of seeking to engage men and boys in the achievement of gender equality more broadly. In 2006, for example, Finland's EU Presidency<sup>50</sup> organised an expert conference on men and gender equality,<sup>51 52</sup> and the EU Council of Ministers<sup>53</sup> – the heads of Member State governments – subsequently agreed a set of 'Conclusions on Men and Gender Equality' (see box on previous page). These promote a range of actions at Member State level, including:

- development of education methods to eliminate gender stereotypes and to improve the capacity of men and boys to care for themselves and others;
- reinforcement of institutional structures for promoting gender equality, both in the public and private sectors;
- measures to ensure equal career opportunities, and to encourage men and boys to choose education and employment in female-dominated fields (and vice versa);
- recognition of the gender dimension in health;
- punitive measures against the perpetrators of violence, and preventive measures targeted especially at men and boys;
- policies to reconcile professional and private life, in order to support an equal sharing of domestic and caring responsibilities;
- encouraging men to take-up family leave entitlements;
- promotion of awareness-raising and take up of flexible working; and
- increasing gender-related research and the exchange of good practice.

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48. The 'European Commission Childcare Network', an expert group supported by the European Commission between 1986 and 1996, undertook studies on a range of issues related to the reconciliation of employment and family responsibilities. See in particular, Ghedini P., Chandler T., Whalley M., Moss P. (1995) *Fathers, Nurseries and Childcare*, European Commission Equal Opportunities Unit/EC Childcare Network, and Jensen J. (1996) *Men as Workers in Childcare Services: A discussion paper*, EC Childcare Network, Brussels: European Commission

49. For a summary of the activities of the EU's Daphne Programme on violence against women and children, see Bellander-Todino I., *The Daphne Program and Projects Directed Towards Men*, in Varanka J., Narhinen A., Siukola R.(2006) *Men and Gender Equality: Towards Progressive Policies*, Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Report 2006: 75

50. The EU Presidency is responsible for setting the priorities for the Council of Ministers, and is held for a six month period by every Member State in turn.

51. Varanka J., Narhinen A., Siukola R.(2006) *Men and Gender Equality: Towards Progressive Policies*, Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Report 2006: 75

52. In March 2001, Sweden organised an EU conference on 'Men and Gender Equality' in Örebro, as part of their EU Presidency.

53. The Council of Ministers is the EU's principal decision-making body, and each Member State government has a seat on the Council.

54. The Council of Europe should not be confused with the Council of Ministers of the European Union. The Council of Europe is a distinct organisation with a wider membership than the EU, focussing on the protection and promotion of human rights and democracy. The European Convention on Human Rights, now incorporated into UK law, is the most important instrument developed by the Council of Europe.

55. These include: Recommendation No.R(96) 5 on reconciling work and family life; Recommendation No. R(98) 14 on gender mainstreaming; and Recommendation Rec (2003)3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making.

Within the Council of Europe (CoE),<sup>54</sup> a range of recommendations have also been developed to assist Member States in moving towards gender equality;<sup>55</sup> whilst these are not legally binding, they have significant political weight. Particularly relevant to the current report, recent recommendations have addressed violence against women,<sup>56</sup> gender mainstreaming in education,<sup>57</sup> the inclusion of gender differences in health policy,<sup>58</sup> and gender equality standards and mechanisms.<sup>59</sup> Whilst there has been a limited focus specifically on men and gender equality within the CoE's activities, a compilation of CoE texts on this theme highlights that the Council of Europe's Steering Committee for Equality between Women and Men has devoted specific attention to the question of men and gender equality: *'The main objective of its activities around this issue is to draw attention to and initiate a debate about the fact that gender equality cannot be achieved by women alone, but by women and men working together.'*<sup>60</sup>

Among European countries, there is considerable difference in approaches to gender equality law and policy, and in the extent to which they have explored men and masculinity issues. These have been categorised<sup>61</sup> into three broad groups: former Eastern bloc countries (e.g. Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Poland) that are in the process of developing their gender equality strategies, but with very little specific emphasis on men; established EU Member States (e.g. Ireland, Italy, Germany, the UK) that have developed equal opportunities and gender equality policies within the EU framework, with some specific emphasis on men; and the Nordic nations (e.g. Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden) that have, since the 1980s, developed gender equality mechanisms and some focused policies in relation to men (especially within the context of the Nordic Council of Ministers).

Some of the most innovative approaches in relation to policy on men and boys have come out of the Nordic region (see boxes below and overleaf).

In **Finland** there has been a Men's Section (the 'Subcommittee on Men's Issues') at government level since the late 1980s. Its remit is to: act as an expert discussion forum; initiate public discussion on men's issues; prepare and introduce initiatives; and produce reports. The membership comprises male and female activists, researchers and representatives of interested groups – from gay rights to fathers' rights groups. The Subcommittee has been an important forum for those with differing opinions and interests in politics around men. In addition, since 1995, an amendment to the Act on Equality between Women and Men has required all state committees, commissions and appointed local authorities to have a minimum of 40 per cent membership for both women and men; in 2005 this was extended to all organisations involved in municipal cooperation.<sup>62</sup>

56. Recommendation Rec (2002) 5 on the protection of women against violence. In addition, a CoE Task Force has produced a draft final activity report on *combating violence against women, including domestic violence*, which will be considered by the Committee of Ministers later in 2008.

57. Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on gender mainstreaming in education.

58. Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)1 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the inclusion of gender differences in health policy.

59. Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)17 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on gender equality standards and mechanisms.

60. Steering Committee for Equality between Women and Men, 'Promoting gender equality: a common issue for women and men', Compilation of Council of Europe texts dealing with the question of men and gender equality 1995-2000, EG (2002) 7

61. Hearn J., Pringle K. (eds.) (2006) *European Perspectives on Men and Masculinities*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

62. See Hearn J., Niemi H. (2006) *Men's movements and feminism in Finland: organisations, networks and social relations*, in A. Moring (ed.) *Democracy and Gender*, Nytkis/Otava, Helsinki and Hearn J. and Niemi H. (2006) *Is there a "men's movement" in Finland?: The state of men's gender-conscious organising*, Norma. *Nordic Journal of Masculinity Studies* Vol. 1(1)

In 2007, the Government of **Norway** set up a 'Men's Panel', with the purpose of contributing to debate on men, boys and gender equality and coming up with some new policy proposals. This has stimulated a stronger focus on men and gender equality issues in the media. The panel's proposals are not binding, and it is not yet clear which recommendations will be followed up by the Government. In addition to the panel, a large survey was undertaken, focusing on men (but with both male and female respondents). The Government recently drafted a White Paper on men and gender equality to send to the Parliament. The White Paper proposes concrete measure in response to a range of topics, including: perspectives on masculinities; boys' education; career choices and the labour market; men as fathers and partners; masculinities, health and lifestyles; and masculinities and violence.

## UK Government structures and mechanisms

Influenced by the EU approach, considerable changes have occurred in formal equality mechanisms at UK level since the advent of the Labour Government in 1997. These include the introduction of: Ministers for Women; a Government Equalities Office; Public Service Agreements; a Gender Equality Duty (and Race and Disability Duties); the Equalities Review; and the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Below, we describe these structures, mechanisms and initiatives in more detail, and highlight the extent to which they address men and masculinity issues.

### Ministers for Women

In 1997, the Cabinet post of Minister for Women was established (with a second Minister in support) to lead across government on issues facing women. Although some critics argue that the Government has not made sufficient progress in tackling deep-seated inequalities (including those facing many women), a range of policies and programmes over the past decade have benefited women in particular, including: the introduction of a National Minimum Wage and a National Childcare Strategy; increases in child benefit; new family-friendly leave arrangements; measures to tackle violence against women; and establishment of the Sure Start and Children's Centres programmes.

In 2007, the Ministers for Women set out their priorities as:<sup>63</sup> supporting families, particularly as they bring up children and care for older and disabled relatives; tackling violence against women, and the way women who commit crimes are dealt with; and empowering black and ethnic minority women to build cohesion. Whilst these headline priorities do not mention men specifically, the supporting paper highlights that many fathers say they would like to be more involved in caring for their children, and sets out a desire to work with employers, trade unions and others to give fathers a right to take up to 26 weeks additional paternity leave. In relation to the second priority on tackling violence against women, men who are violent are an important implicit target of policies in this area.

Following the expansion of the portfolio, the Minister for Women was retitled Minister for Women and Equality. An 'Inter Ministerial Group on Equalities', which met for the first time in January 2008, has also been established to progress equalities and human rights issues which cut across departmental boundaries. This is especially necessary as different departments lead on different aspects of the equalities agenda.<sup>64</sup>

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63. Priorities for the Ministers of Women, Cm 7183, July 2007

64. For example, the lead on race and faith policy is the Department for Communities and Local Government; on disability and on age policy the Department for Work and Pensions; on some aspects of discrimination law in the workplace (religion, belief, sexual orientation) the Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform; on education policy the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills; on human rights law and policy the Ministry of Justice.

## Women's Unit/Government Equalities Office

A Women's Unit was set up by the incoming Government in 1997 to advise on initiatives, consider policies across government and support the development of 'joined up' thinking. In 2001, the remit of the Unit was widened so that it had lead responsibility within Government for policy on women, gender equality, sexual orientation and the co-ordination of equality.<sup>65</sup> Drawing on experience at EU level, a core aspect of the work of the Women's Unit has been on mainstreaming gender across government policies and activities. Although the Unit has published guidance on assessing gender impact,<sup>66</sup> the approach across government departments has not been systematic, tending to focus only on the problems facing particular groups.<sup>67</sup>

In October 2007, the Unit was incorporated into a new department – the 'Government Equalities Office' (GEO) – reporting to the Ministers for Women, reflecting a desire to address a broader 'equalities' agenda, including not just gender, but also age, race, faith, disability and sexual orientation.<sup>68</sup> Key current priorities for the GEO include: updating the legislative framework with a new Equality Bill;<sup>69</sup> delivering on the priorities of the Ministers for Women; taking forward the cross-Government Equality Public Service Agreement for 2008-2011 (see below); developing a cross-Government Strategy with other departments; building an improved evidence base; and helping public services to promote equality and diversity.<sup>70</sup>

Over the past decade, men and boys have not featured as a specific work stream within the work of the Women's Unit, nor are they explicitly addressed within the GEO Business Plan 2008-2009. This is partly due to lack of resources, but probably also to the relative invisibility of masculinity as a gender issue. However, as a result of a mapping exercise that was conducted to inform the UK position for the 2007 UN Commission on the Status of Women, the Government stated its intention<sup>71</sup> to review its progress in this area. This commitment forms the basis for the current report.

## Public Service Agreements

An important related initiative is the establishment of equalities objectives in some of the 30 'Public Service Agreements'<sup>72</sup> (PSAs) (and an accompanying National Indicator Set) for government departments set out in the conclusions of the 2007 Treasury-led Comprehensive Spending Review; a new three-year spending period against these objectives began in April 2008. PSAs are a good example of a new kind of equality lever and of cross-departmental working on equality issues.

Several of the new PSAs are directly relevant to men and masculinity issues. Although it does not lead on all equalities strands, the GEO is responsible for overseeing the 2008-11 'Equality PSA' – PSA15 – the first time there has been a cross-governmental equality target. This seeks to '*address the disadvantage that individuals experience because of their gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief*'. This PSA will focus on '*reducing inequalities in pay, independence and choice, discrimination, fair treatment and civic participation*'.<sup>73</sup> A number of other PSAs are

65. This was reflected in a new title, the 'Women and Equality Unit'.

66. Women and Equality Unit (2002), *Gender Impact Assessment*, London: Department of Trade and Industry

67. Lister, R. (2001) *New Labour: a study in ambiguity from a position of ambivalence*, Critical Social Policy, 21

68. The GEO has a budget of £84m for 2008 – 2009; the bulk of the expenditure is a £70m grant to the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

69. The aim of the Equality Bill, among other things, is to streamline and strengthen anti-discrimination measures and to move away from individuals fighting for their rights to a more systematic approach to discrimination.

70. Government Equalities Office (2008) Business Plan 2008-2009

71. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Sixth periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW/C/UK/6, 14 June 2007

72. Public Service Agreements (PSAs) were introduced in the 1998 Comprehensive Spending Review in order to set aims and objectives for public service delivery and drive improvements in outcomes.

73. Government Equalities Office (ibid.)

also relevant to equality and to men and masculinities, in particular in relation to employment, business success, health, criminal justice, older people, community empowerment and child welfare. For example, PSA18 on promoting *'better health care and well-being for all'* highlights suicides among young men.

This PSA and indicators process is mirrored at local level, with local authorities across England agreeing new three-year 'Local Area Agreements' (LAAs), which will include objectives relevant to equalities issues in their areas. LAAs will have to demonstrate an understanding of the makeup of their area and any particular issues facing specific groups that are affecting their take-up of services, drawing on the knowledge and experience of community organisations. Local targets will be included in the LAA, based on the national PSA and indicators framework.

### The Gender Equality Duty<sup>74</sup>

A significant new mechanism in relation to gender equality in particular, both at central and local levels, is the introduction in April 2007 of the Gender Equality Duty;<sup>75</sup> this imposes a statutory duty on 'public authorities'<sup>76</sup> to promote equality between men and women, and to pay 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment between men and women in all of their functions (e.g. policy-making, service provision, employment matters).<sup>77</sup> The duty requires public authorities to draw up 'Gender Equality Schemes' (GESs) that set out specific objectives, reporting against them every year, and reviewing them every three years; in establishing the objectives authorities will have to consult fully with employees and other key stakeholders. Authorities will also have to assess the impact of their current and proposed policies and practices on gender equality, and disaggregate data by gender in order to identify areas of concern. Although it is rather early to assess the impact of the Duty, there are indications that implementation has been variable so far.<sup>78</sup> Understanding of the need for action to address the specific disadvantages faced by men or women – rather than providing the same treatment for both – is also weak. In future, implementation will be monitored by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (see below).

The Equal Opportunities Commission's Code of Practice for the Gender Equality Duty argues that gender roles and relationships structure men's and women's lives: *'Women are frequently disadvantaged by policies and practices that do not recognise their greater caring responsibilities, the different pattern of their working lives, their more limited access to resources and their greater vulnerability to domestic violence and sexual assault. Men are also disadvantaged by workplace cultures that do not support their family or childcare responsibilities, by family services that assume they have little or no role in parenting, or by health services which do not recognise their different needs'*.<sup>79</sup> The Code goes on to cite some specific examples of gender issues affecting men, that

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74. Since 2001, a Race Equality Duty has required public authorities to take the lead in promoting equality of opportunity and good race relations, and preventing unlawful discrimination. The Disability Equality Duty (2006) also requires public authorities to carry out their functions with due regard to: the need to eliminate unlawful disability discrimination and disability-related harassment; promote equality of opportunity for disabled people; promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life. There is no comparable duty on public authorities in relation to gays and lesbians.

75. The Duty follows from the provision in the 2006 Equality Act allowing for the creation of a public duty to promote equality on the ground of gender.

76. The Duty also applies to a public authority in relation to services and functions which are contracted out, and to private and voluntary bodies which are carrying out public functions.

77. At present the Specific Duties on gender for Scotland are stronger than in England and Wales; for example, Scottish public authorities are required to produce an equal pay statement.

78. The Women's National Commission has argued, for example, that while some public bodies and central government departments have shown strong leadership, commitment has been inconsistent. See UK Women's National Commission (2007), 'Submission to the UN Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination'

79. Equal Opportunities Commission (2007) *Code of Practice for the Gender Equality Duty*, Manchester: EOC

could be addressed by the Duty. These include: fathers receiving greater support for their childcare responsibilities from public services and employers; separate provision to encourage men to increase their low take-up of primary healthcare services; and addressing men's under-representation in the caring professions, such as nursing or childcare.

In **Finland** all employers with more than 30 employees have been legally obliged to have a 'Gender Equality Plan' (GEP) for some years (similar arrangements exist in Sweden). The Plan should include a report on how women and men are distributed in different tasks and on wage differentials by gender. However, in a survey of the 100 largest companies in the early 2000s, one-third said they did not have a GEP. In 2005, the Equality Act was revised and there are now some sanctions, such as fines, whereas previously there were none.<sup>80</sup>

## Equalities Review

The Equalities Review was set up to analyse the causes of disadvantage, make recommendations on key policy priorities, and inform the modernisation of equality legislation. The final report<sup>81</sup> was published in 2007, and called for a range of steps towards equality, including: an agreed definition of equality and consensus on the benefits of equality; increased efforts to measure progress; targeted action on specific inequalities; and a simpler legal framework. Although the Foreword to the review criticises '*the complacency that consigns women and men to preordained roles in life*' and the main report highlights some key statistics on men and boys, the review contains no over-arching analysis of gender equality or masculinity issues.

## The Equality and Human Rights Commission

The shift towards an equalities agenda has been reinforced by the establishment in 2007 of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), replacing the former Equal Opportunities, Racial Equality, and Disability Rights Commissions and extending the remit to include three new strands of age, faith and sexual orientation. The EHRC, sponsored by the GEO within government, is the first organisation of its kind in Britain. It heralds a major shift in efforts to tackle inequality and human rights, seeking to prevent discrimination by addressing the causes that lie behind it, and encouraging systemic change rather than relying on legal remedies after the event. It also provides the opportunity to bring together the various equalities strands and help to address the circumstances of those who experience multiple disadvantages.

The EHRC has four strategic priorities for 2008-2009:<sup>82</sup> to analyse, define and target key equality and human rights challenges; to change policy and organisational practice to provide better public services alongside an efficient and dynamic economy; to engage, involve and empower the public, especially people from disadvantaged areas and communities; and to anticipate social change, develop new narratives and reach new audiences in ways that strengthen equality and human rights. Its core themes and programmes include narrowing the poverty gap and reducing social exclusion, ensuring care reform promotes equality and human rights, increasing social mobility among disadvantaged groups and strengthening community relations.

Ambitious though the vision and plans for the EHRC are, there have been some concerns that the specific focus on gender equality (and on other equality strands) may be diluted. In recent years, the

80. Hearn J., Piekkari R. (2005) *Gendered leaderships and leaderships on gender policy: National context, corporate structures, and chief Human Resources managers in transnational corporations*, Leadership, Vol. 1(4)

81. *Fairness and Freedom: The Final Report of the Equalities Review*, February 2007

82. Equality and Human Rights Commission (2008) *Bringing People Together*, Business Plan 2008/9

Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) had played an increasing role in exploring issues in relation to fathering, generating new research and stimulating public debate. The argument put forward in July 2008 by EHRC Chief Executive, Nicola Brewer, that the rights of fathers to leave provision should be improved, suggests that the EHRC does intend to build on this legacy (see section on 'Fatherhood', page 65).<sup>83</sup>

More recently, the EHRC has also made clear its desire to contribute to efforts to tackle violence against women. Specifically, it has stated that it will target over 100 local authorities with the threat of legal action over their failure to provide specialised services for women who have experienced violence. The Commission and the End Violence Against Women coalition have also called on the Government and other relevant public bodies to develop funding strategies for women's support services, and have highlighted a 'regional postcode lottery' which leaves many women without support.<sup>84</sup>

## Welsh Assembly

The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG)<sup>85</sup> has a statutory duty to '*make appropriate arrangements with a view to securing that its functions are exercised with due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people*'.<sup>86</sup> Gender mainstreaming approaches are currently being applied to policy development and service delivery; this involves, for instance, the development of gender-disaggregated statistics, gender budgeting,<sup>87</sup> gender impact assessment and research and evaluation of gender equality initiatives.<sup>88</sup> A Strategic Equality and Diversity Unit provides support, advice and guidance on mainstreaming equality into WAG's policies, strategies, programmes and practices. And a system of 'Equality Champions' ensures each department has a nominated Champion who has a seat on its management team.

Within the Welsh Assembly, an Equality of Opportunity Committee audits the work which both the WAG and the National Assembly for Wales have done to promote the principle of equality for all people, and to address discrimination against any person on grounds of race, sex or disability.

In April 2007, the general duty to promote equality of opportunity between men and women came into force in Wales. The duty has potentially far-reaching implications for the development of policy in Wales, emphasising the need for consultation, encouraging the use of impact assessments, and the use of gender budgeting.<sup>89</sup> The WAG has developed a Gender Equality Scheme which ran from 2007 to 2008; a Single Equality Scheme is now being established combining all the equality duties.

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83. Nicola Brewer's speech at the launch of 'Working Better' consultation, Immarsat Conference Centre, London, 14 July 2008

84. Coy M., Kelly L., Foord J.(2009) *Map of Gaps 2: the postcode lottery of Violence Against Women support services in Britain*, End Violence Against Women/Equality and Human Rights Commission, [www.mapofgaps.org](http://www.mapofgaps.org)

85. WAG has tightly defined powers under UK statute, however it has a £15 billion budget and powers in relation to key areas of social policy, in particular health, education, housing and social services. After May 2007, the WAG gained powers to develop primary legislation under the Government of Wales Act 2006.

86. Section 120 Government of Wales Act 1998

87. An audit method analysing the level of spending on public policy in relation to women and men respectively.

88. Chaney P., *The Substantive Representation of Women in Post-Devolution Wales: Challenges, Progress and Prospects*, Paper to the Political Studies Association Annual Conference, University of Bath, 12 April 2007

89. Chaney P.(ibid.)

## UK Government policy: an assessment

Government policy-making over the past decade has sought to address men and masculinity issues across a number of areas,<sup>90</sup> the most high-profile being fathering and boys' education.<sup>91</sup> These developments were initiated following a Ministerial Seminar in 1998 on 'Boys, young men and fathers',<sup>92</sup> led by the Home Office, which identified some key areas of concern.<sup>93</sup> Below, we highlight some key aspects of the Government's approach, drawing upon the more detailed analyses set out in sections 4-9 of this report.

In relation to the domestic sphere, there is evidence that, rather than seeking to achieve greater equality between men and women, the overriding aim of policy has been to invest in children and improve outcomes for them. Important though this aim is, this emphasis can result in mothers and fathers being treated solely as conduits for children's welfare, obscuring the parents' own needs and diverting policy attention and resources away from adults without children.<sup>94</sup>

Nevertheless, Labour has struck a positive rhetorical tone on involving fathers in the care of children, yet concrete policy measures to promote shared parenting have not gone far enough. For example, two weeks paternity leave was introduced in 2003, and there is a current commitment to implement 'Additional Paternity Leave' (APL) for fathers up to 26 weeks. But making unused leave entitlements transferable from the mother to the father, as APL does, is a poor substitute for a dedicated 'daddy month' (see section on 'Fatherhood', page 65).

Measures to reconcile work and caring responsibilities must be set within a context where paid work pressures have been intensifying. It is disappointing, therefore, that the Government has not ended its opt-out to the European Working Time Directive. Whilst other moves to widen flexible working arrangements are welcome, there is a role for Government, working with other key stakeholders, in ensuring that these are taken up more readily by men. This could help to retain jobs and provide flexibility for workers in riding out the current recession. Failure to pursue this action is likely to entrench existing inequalities and the endurance of the gender pay gap. Recent unemployment figures have shown increases in rates for both men and women, with job losses in sectors where men predominate (e.g. manufacturing and construction) alongside job losses in the retail and service sectors where more women than men work (see section on 'Work', page 45).

Tackling inequality, particularly based on social class, has been, and remains, an important theme for Labour's health policy – more important than gender. As the Deputy Leader of the party recently put it: '*class trumps gender when it comes to life expectancy*'.<sup>95</sup> But over the past two years, there have also been moves to tackle and improve men's health, especially following the introduction of the Gender Equality Duty. For example, policy-makers and practitioners are increasingly aware of men's reluctance to seek medical help and treatment, and of the importance of improving their access to information and services. As yet, however, the overall Government approach tends to be fragmentary, concentrating on some health issues (e.g. cancer, sexual health, suicide) but not others of comparable importance (e.g. cardiovascular disease, obesity, diabetes). There is, so far, less evidence of gender being 'mainstreamed' across health policy, although efforts to close this

90. Whilst boys and men have been explicitly addressed in social policy by previous governments, this has tended to be mainly or exclusively in the area of youth crime.

91. Scourfield J., Drakeford M. (2001) *New Labour and the Politics of Masculinity*, Working Paper 13, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University

92. Home Office (1998) *Boys, Young Men and Fathers, A Ministerial Seminar*. Seminar Report, London: Home Office Voluntary and Community Unit.

93. This work in Government built on previous interest when Labour was in opposition. See Estelle Morris M.P. (1996) *Closing the Gender Gap*, Labour Party consultation document

94. Featherstone B. (2009), *Contemporary Fathering: Theory, Policy and Practice*, Bristol: Policy Press

95. Harriet Harman MP, speech to Compass conference, 14 June 2008

gap are emerging in the Department of Health (e.g. the publication of a study on the different ways men and women access healthcare, and production of guidance for the NHS on developing a Gender Equality Scheme). Understanding among health professionals of how men's health connects to men's socialisation and their risk-taking behaviour is also underdeveloped; and, at the local level, men's health remains a largely marginal issue (see section on 'Health', page 83).

Where young men are concerned, the emphasis has been on getting more of them into work (e.g. through programmes such as the New Deal). While the New Deal has contributed to, and indeed accelerated, a fall in the numbers of long-term unemployed 18-24 year olds,<sup>96</sup> the economic circumstances of some young men – especially those facing multiple disadvantages – remain poor<sup>97</sup> (see section on 'Work', page 45).

In relation to the issue of men's violence, there has been a trend towards increasing social control and punishment (particularly of working-class men), through a range of measures including a massive growth in the use of incarceration. Despite the huge over-representation of men in the statistics on interpersonal and other forms of violence, there has, however, been less engagement in terms of policy with the gendered nature of violence (including pornography, prostitution and child sexual abuse). Insufficient attention has also been given to tackling the links between men's violence, increasing sexual stereotyping and objectification in the media and the growth of pornography and the sex industry. However, there is some acknowledgment of this within Government, and moves to address the issue. For example, ways of shifting the predominant culture and challenging male demand for sexual services (and/or criminalising their use of them) are currently being explored (see section on 'Violence', page 123). But overall, action is as yet unco-ordinated and lacks a coherent vision.

A particular focus of concern in relation to violence has been the rising death toll among young men as result of gun and knife crime. In 2007, the Home Office launched the Tackling Gangs Action Programme (TGAP), to help neighbourhoods in London, Liverpool, Birmingham and Manchester develop innovative approaches to dealing with gangs. Further measures were set out in the 2008 'Violent Crime Action Plan', and other initiatives have been established (e.g. a marketing campaign to tackle knife crime, a good practice guide for local agencies, and guidance for schools).<sup>98</sup> However, it has been argued that significant gaps in policy and practice remain (see 'Young men, gangs and violence', in 'Violence', page 123).<sup>99</sup>

Interest in bolstering boys' achievements in school and beyond has focused to some extent on the needs of boys from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. In 2006, the Government commissioned the independent 'REACH' report<sup>100</sup> on raising the attainment and achievement of black boys and young men. The report recommended, among other things, the introduction of a 'national role model programme', which the Government has supported in its response to the report. This reliance on theories of role modelling has been criticised as insufficient to explain and respond to the complexities of young men's identities, experiences and practices.<sup>101</sup>

Whilst attention has also focused in recent years on tackling the differences in attainment between boys and girls, in fact social class differences are far greater; research shows that, on average,

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96. Hasluck C., Green A.E. (2007) *What works for whom? A review of evidence and meta-analysis for the Department of Work and Pensions*, Institute for Employment Research for DWP, Research Report 407

97. Meadows P. (2001) *Young men on the margins of work: An overview*, YPS: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

98. For a more detailed discussion, see NCVCCO/NCVYS(2008) *Gang, Gun and Knife Crime: Seeking Solutions (Part 2)*, Speaking Out Briefing No 10

99. Firmin C. et al. (ibid.)

100. REACH (2007) *An independent report to Government on raising the aspirations and attainment of Black boys and young Black men*, London: Department for Communities and Local Government

101. Featherstone B. (ibid.)

children who are less able but better off overtake those who are poorer but more able, by age six. Government approaches to boys' education have centred on improving educational practice generally, and promoting some 'boy-friendly' teaching strategies (e.g. boys' literacy schemes, male mentoring, role modelling, greater use of IT). However, attempts to shift the prevailing culture of 'laddish' masculinity, sexism and anti-school peer group attitudes are less developed. Such strategies would involve, for example: placing exploration of identity, relationships and equality at the heart of sex education; focusing more on social and emotional aspects of education and learning; and teaching about gender equality and the damaging effects of inequality more generally (see section on 'Education', page 105).

Beyond specific issues such as those outlined above, perhaps the most noteworthy features of Labour's approach are the changes in institutional arrangements and mechanisms that it has introduced. The Gender Equality Duty (and associated Race and Disability Duties) in particular serve as useful policy 'hooks' and provide important methods for benchmarking progress. The proposals set out in the 2008 Equality Bill signal the desire to make further progress on these issues, and especially on the integration of the various equality strands.

The Equality Bill will introduce a single 'Equality Duty' which will *'require public bodies to consider the diverse needs and requirements of their workforce, and the communities they serve, when developing employment policies and planning services'*. It is envisaged that this will in time replace the existing duties in relation to gender, race and disability. This reflects a trend in public policy towards recognition of the interconnection between gender equality and other social divisions – what has been termed 'intersectionality'. Whilst there is a risk that the focus on gender equality may be diluted, this move will draw attention to the complex interplay of gender and masculinities with other equalities strands which we highlight in this report.

In addition, in June 2008, the establishment was announced of a new 'National Equality Panel', which will investigate the available evidence on the relationship between the existing equality 'strands' (gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity and religion), and other dimensions of equality such as class, tenure and geography, and employment, income and wealth. The panel will look at the evidence, and provide analysis for the development of policy around equality issues, by the end of 2009. One proposal, suggested by the Minister for Women and Equality, is to place a legal duty on public sector organisations to reduce inequality between socio-economic groups. Although it is unclear how such a duty would be implemented in practice, potentially it could have an important impact on the inequalities faced by men and women on low incomes.

## Future trends?

Despite some of the weaknesses in current government policy outlined above, Labour has led the way among political parties in putting gender equality – and to some extent, men and masculinities – more firmly on the political agenda. Given the possibility of a Conservative administration coming to power at the next election, we highlight below some elements of the Party's emerging approach to gender equality issues. Whilst there are signs of some reassessment, there are also suggestions of continuity with previous policies.

The Conservative leader, David Cameron MP, has accused the Government of presiding over a 'broken society', exacerbated by 'top down' policies.<sup>102</sup> Echoing long-standing themes, he has reaffirmed the Party's commitment to 'the family' and to marriage, and to supporting (and keeping together) married couples through the tax and benefits system. But at the same time, the Party

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102. See, for instance, David Cameron MP, 'Fixing our Broken Society', speech in Glasgow, 07/07/08

now plans to offer all parents 12 months' parental leave, to be shared by mother and father as they choose (including, interestingly, both step-parents and lesbian partners). It has also proposed to extend the right to request flexible working to all parents of children aged 18 or younger. This represents a considerable advance on the Party's previous scepticism towards family-friendly leave arrangements, and signals a more inclusive attitude to different family forms.<sup>103</sup>

In relation to young men, and in particular the growth in knife and gun crimes, the Leader of the Opposition has called for fathers to be compelled, through more state powers, to look after their children in order to tackle gang culture. Whilst Cameron acknowledges the impact of discrimination and economic disadvantage, he argues for the re-establishment of a greater sense of personal responsibility, backed by 'bottom up' solutions. However, it is not clear exactly what additional powers and policies he believes are necessary, and how these will have an impact upon the deep-rooted problems involved.

Setting this issue in a wider context, Chris Grayling MP, now Shadow Home Secretary, has recently argued<sup>104</sup> that many young men are '*alienated and drifting without a purpose in life*', lacking 'father figures' and secure employment, and without underpinning community structures. He recommends policies to promote positive male role models (both at home and in schools), bolster team sports, develop social entrepreneurs and combat family breakdown, worklessness and poor educational opportunity. But overall there is no fresh thinking in terms of encouraging men to develop more caring forms of masculinity; instead, what is emphasised is the need to shore up traditional social supports, and in effect, re-establish respect for (paternal) authority.

In relation to men's violence against women, a review of all aspects of policy has been undertaken, and the Conservative Party has stated that it will ensure long-term, stable funding for rape crisis centres.<sup>105</sup> More specifically, it has pledged to build 15 rape crisis centres across the UK; welcome though this is, such a programme appears insufficient in relation to the scale of need. It has also stated that it will make the 'teaching of consent' compulsory in the sex education curriculum to 'empower young people to say no'. There are fears, however, that in practice this move will place primary responsibility on young women to control young men's behaviour, and may, in some circumstances, jeopardise women's safety.<sup>106</sup> Other useful proposals include: ensuring all police recruits receive training in domestic violence, stalking, female genital mutilation, rape and forced marriage; and encouraging schools to tackle violence and bullying, and issuing clear guidance to teachers on specific forms of violence against women.<sup>107</sup>

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103. Recognition of the increasing diversity of family structures and less traditional public attitudes is long overdue; for example, only one in four (28 per cent) think married couples make better parents than unmarried ones, according to the latest British Social Attitudes report. See Duncan S., Phillips M. (2008) *New families? Tradition and change in modern relationships*, British Social Attitudes 24th report, National Centre for Social Research, SAGE

104. Chris Grayling MP, *The Jeremy Kyle Generation*, Speech at Demos, 14/2/08

105. David Cameron, *The need to end sexual violence against women*, Address to the Conservative Women's Organisation in London, 12/11/07

106. '*This advice presupposes that men who persist in making unwanted sexual advances are genuinely confused, and will be happy to have their confusion dispelled by a simple, firm 'no'. It does not allow for the possibility that men who behave in this way are not so much confused about women's wishes as indifferent to them. Confronting a violent and determined aggressor is not necessarily the safest option...'*. See Deborah Cameron (2007) *The Myth of Mars and Venus: Do men and women really speak different languages?*, Oxford: OUP

107. Conservative Party Strategy Paper (2008) *Ending Violence Against Women*

## Conclusion

There is emerging interest among politicians and policy-makers in men and masculinity issues; this reflects, to some extent, the development of relevant international, European and UK frameworks and mechanisms. But despite the helpful introduction of the Gender Equality Duty, existing approaches lack coherence and an in-depth understanding of this terrain.

Although the interest can be regarded positively, public positions are not drawing to any significant degree upon the findings of the extensive research base which exists. Indeed, it is striking how little connection there is between the available research and UK government policy, and how rarely men and boys are 'named' in official documents.<sup>108</sup> Instead, the analysis upon which policy recommendations are based tends to be limited.

Overall, however, there is insufficient analysis or discussion of the continuing dominance and enjoyment of positions of power and privilege by (white) men in the top echelons of business, the public sector and government itself. Politicians are, however, forced to tread carefully here. When the Deputy Prime Minister recently announced a set of relatively mild and non-compulsory proposals to allow employers to take positive action to address the under-representation of women and ethnic minorities in their workforces when deciding between equally qualified candidates,<sup>109</sup> the *Daily Express* misleadingly reported this as a 'Jobs Ban for White Men'.

What emerges from the brief outline of existing and proposed policy initiatives, above is a limited attempt to respond to much deeper shifts in the economy and society which are impacting upon men and gender relations. What is generally missing, however, is a clear recognition of the way that masculinities are constantly renegotiated by men and boys, and the part that these processes play in defining how men and boys see themselves and how they relate to others.

In practice, it appears that policy tends to be developed because 'something must be done about men and boys', resulting in parallel policies that fail to address sufficiently the relations between men and women, or between different groups of men. Often they appear to be based on essentialist notions of who men and boys are, and what they need. What is needed instead is closer attention to the existing critical scholarship, and improved understanding among policy-makers of the dynamic nature of 'masculinities' and of the relations between men and between men and women.

'As this recession bears down on thousands of communities and families we must again be open to reinventing ourselves. Many men will be forced to let go of their earlier identities and try something new – like the unemployed car worker in the West Midlands who explained on Newsnight last week that he was retraining to become a social worker. And many women may become the only family breadwinner for the first time. For many couples this will be unsettling and deeply disruptive to the settled patterns of life, work and marriage. A new flexibility in which men and women are supported in reinventing themselves will be vital in helping many thousands of families through this recession.'

Nick Clegg MP, leader of the Liberal Democrats, *The Times*, February 17, 2009

108. Pringle K., *United Kingdom*, in Pringle K., Hearn J. et al.(2006) *Men, Masculinities and Europe*, London: Whiting and Birch

109. *Harman: Equality essential for Britain: age discrimination to be banned*, Cabinet Office press release, 26 June 2008

## 4. Introduction to key sections

### Making the connections

There is a risk that the analysis of key themes in sections 5-9 of this report – work, fatherhood, health, education and violence – will be read as separate and discrete areas. We have sought to bring these perspectives together throughout the report.

It is essential to draw out these connections. For example, there is often a tendency to separate out policies on fatherhood (and other men's relations to children) from policies on violence. These areas need to be 'joined up'; there is no contradiction between promoting men's active involvement as carers and simultaneously emphasising the imperative of protecting children from men's violence.<sup>110</sup>

Fatherhood can also be linked to health in positive ways. According to the World Health Organisation,<sup>111</sup> fathers can, for example, give important psychological and emotional support to mothers during pregnancy and delivery, and fathers' participation in maternal and child health programmes can reduce maternal and child mortality during pregnancy and labour. Increased involvement in fatherhood and caring can also improve men's own health and well-being, as well as contributing significantly to their children's development.

Men's health is often affected by their relationship with their work – by the risks in particular occupations, by long working hours, by workplace restructuring, downsizing and redundancies or by stress and insecurity within the 'flexible' labour market. Their health is affected too by violence and abuse, either to the self or to others. Examples are the risk-taking and/or pleasure-seeking activities of some young men, through smoking, drug and alcohol abuse, gambling or unsafe sex.<sup>112</sup> In some cases, activities such as these contribute towards disability through illness and injury.<sup>113</sup>

Thematic areas such as these also connect to dominant ways of being male. Some men may display an unwillingness to take their own health problems seriously. Some may adhere to restrictive codes of masculinity – 'be tough, independent, competitive' – leading to overwork, emotional unresponsiveness, poor health, a desire to control others or a combination of all of these. These processes are linked to power relationships between men, and between men, women and children.

As we have identified earlier in this report, the experiences and perspectives of men are also shaped by various forms of inequality, including not only gender, but race, class, faith, sexual orientation, disability and income too. An emerging theme within the research literature is the significant interrelationships between these strands, and their impact on women, children and other men.<sup>114</sup> Again, we seek to link these dimensions as far as possible in the sections that follow.

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110. Hearn J., (2007) *The Problems Boys and Men Create, The Problems Boys and Men Experience*, in Shefer T., Ratele A., Strelbel N., Shabalala N., Buikema R. (eds.) *From Boys to Men: Social Constructions of Masculinity in Contemporary Society*, Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press & Human Science Research Council Press

111. World Health Organisation (2007) *Fatherhood and Health Outcomes in Europe*, Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe

112. Hearn J., Kolga V., *Health*, in Hearn J., Pringle K. (eds.) (2006) *European Perspectives on Men and Masculinities*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

113. Shakespeare T. (1999) *The sexual politics of disabled masculinity*, *Sexuality and Disability*, 17(1)

114. Hearn J., Pringle K. (eds.) (2006) *European Perspectives on Men and Masculinities*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

'There are discernible links between traditional definitions of masculinity, men's neglect of their health and propensity for violence and men's absence from childcare and domestic responsibilities... Research suggests that nurturing others leads to greater emotional literacy and a more intimate relationship to the self. The direct benefits to men in caring directly for children include physical health and longer life-expectancy, better mental health, more balanced and contented relationships with partners, and the pleasures of deep relationships with children. A new ethic of care can emerge which can be acknowledged and developed in public policy and celebrated as part of the construction of non-violent masculinities'.

Ferguson H., Hearn J., Holter O., Jalmert L., Kimmel M., Lang J., Morrell R. (2004) *Ending gender-based violence: A call for global action to involve men*, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)



## 5. Work

### **UN Commission on the Status of Women**

#### **Conclusions on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality (extract)**

**Forty-eighth session, 1-12 March 2004**

The Commission urges UN agencies, Governments, the private sector, NGOs, and other stakeholders, to:

‘adopt and implement legislation and/or policies to close the gap between women’s and men’s pay and promote reconciliation of occupational and family responsibilities, including through reduction of occupational segregation, introduction or expansion of parental leave, flexible working arrangements, such as voluntary part-time work, teleworking, and other home-based work’.

### **The Council of the European Union**

#### **Conclusions on men and gender equality (extract)**

**30 November and 1 December 2006**

The Council of the European Union:

- ‘urges the Commission and Member States to ensure equal career opportunities for both sexes, taking into account the dominance of men in decision-making positions, and to take measures aimed at encouraging boys and men to choose education and employment in female-dominated fields and vice-versa with a view to dismantling gender segregation in the labour market; in this context, invites Member States and the Commission to take concrete actions towards eliminating the gender pay gap.
- recognises the crucial role that the social partners and companies play in reconciliation policies, in promoting awareness-raising schemes in companies and the take-up of flexible work options, especially by men, including in male-dominated professions’.

## Introduction

This section is broken down into the following categories:

Labour market trends (page 46)

Men, work and organisations (page 47)

Occupational segregation (page 49)

Working hours (page 51)

Flexible working (page 52)

Work and health (page 53)

Young men and work (page 55)

Older men and work (page 57)

Men who are disabled (page 58)

Vulnerable workers (page 59)

Poverty (page 60)

Recommendations (page 62)

## Labour market trends

Waged work has long been seen as central in shaping and sustaining male identities,<sup>115</sup> and the ways that 'masculinities' are played out in different working environments are affected by wider shifts in the economy and labour market. (There are also complex interconnections with domestic unpaid work, which are addressed in more detail in the section on 'Fatherhood', page 65).

Economic restructuring since the 1970s has transformed the old patterns of standard 'Fordist' manufacturing in industrialised countries, and of lifetime attachment to a single employer and place of work. The associated processes of 'globalisation' have also accelerated economic interdependence and interaction between countries. Whilst the effects of these shifts vary in different geographical locations and for population groups, they have had a significant impact – and for some, a polarising effect – on workers and the wider population, and on gender relations.

Connell has argued<sup>116</sup> there is evidence of new dominant patterns of managerial masculinity ('transnational business masculinity') emerging among men with positions of power in global corporations. 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 these forms are not universal; they sit alongside more traditional patterns of management.<sup>117</sup> Other commentators have emphasised more the mediating effect of factors such as state responses, historical and institutional arrangements and cultural and religious values. They emphasise continuing diversity in men's management practices around the world, both between and within states.<sup>118</sup>

Global forces have also had an impact on groups of workers whose livelihoods have been increasingly affected by shifting flows of capital and the investment decisions of global corporations. In the UK, there has been a significant loss of unskilled 'male' manual work, in sectors such as manufacturing and mining, in areas and regions suffering industrial decline. This has, in particular, affected towns and cities in the north of England, South Wales, and Scotland. As a result, there was a large rise in the number of men of working age – especially older men – becoming 'economically inactive' (i.e. not employed, or recorded as unemployed) during the 1980s and 1990s.

Over the same period, there has also been a significant shift towards a service sector economy, with care and interpersonal skills – characteristics that are more commonly identified with women – at a premium. New organisational structures and employment practices (e.g. flexible working hours, zero hours contracts, homeworking), the introduction of information and communication technologies (e.g. teleworking) and new management approaches have fundamentally altered the nature of the UK labour market.<sup>119</sup>

A common feature of the 'new economy' is job insecurity, with workers increasingly offered short-term contracts rather than a 'job for life'. Whilst average job tenure for men in the top income quartile is 12 years, for those in the bottom income quartile it is seven years.<sup>120</sup> Some argue this fragmentation has corroded the identity of (male) workers and loosened ties to particular

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115. Morgan D.H.J. (1992) *Discovering Men: Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities 3*, London: Routledge; Connell R.W. (1995) *Masculinities*, Cambridge: Polity Press

116. Connell R.W. (1998) *Masculinities and Globalization, Men and Masculinities*, Vol. 1, No.1

117. Connell R.W., Wood J. (2005) *Globalization and Business Masculinities, Men and Masculinities*, Vol. 7, No.4

118. Pease B., Pringle K. (eds.) (2001) *A Man's World: Changing Men's Practices in a Globalized World*, London: Zed Books

119. McDowell, L. (2001) *Young Men Leaving School: white, working-class masculinity*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation/Youth Work Press

120. TUC (2008) *Hard Work, Hidden Lives: The Full Report of the Commission on Vulnerable Employment*, London: TUC

employers and neighbourhoods<sup>121</sup>. Research on men's work orientation<sup>122</sup> has suggested that some men (particularly those who are more family-orientated) see job insecurity either as a threat to their 'breadwinning' identity and their financial security, or as a turning point and opportunity for reappraisal. Other men (particularly those who are more career-orientated) can experience tensions at home, owing to the need either to relocate and/or negotiate their career moves with their partners.

Changes in the structure of the economy have been accompanied by a steady rise in the numbers of women in paid employment, and a decline in men's workforce participation. However, women's employment is often part-time (especially following the birth of a child) and men's full-time, reshaping the post-war sole male 'breadwinner' model to a 'one and a half' earner model. The trend over the past 20 years of an increasing number of jobs in the UK economy is expected to continue in the longer term, despite the impact of the current 'credit crunch'. But there is no consensus on whether any new jobs will be taken by men or women, and whether they will be high quality jobs or not.<sup>123</sup>

In the short term, recent unemployment data have shown consistent increases in the unemployment rate for women as well as men – with women in particular faring worse than in previous recessions. Although it is too early to know if these trends will be sustained, job losses in sectors with a greater concentration of male workers (for example construction and manufacturing) are mirrored by sectors with a higher concentration of female workers (for example business services and retail) where redundancies are also growing.<sup>124</sup>

## Men, work and organisations

Workplaces themselves may be more or less 'gendered' in the ways they are organised and structured, and this will significantly affect the shifting relations and dynamic positioning of men and women within them. Organisational structures, cultures and practices tend still to be based on an assumed norm of lifetime, full-time, continuous (male) employment. 'Masculine' values are also strongly embedded within the majority of organisations, with men exercising power in the workplace over women in a variety of ways (e.g. job segregation, sex discrimination, the gender pay gap and sexual harassment).<sup>125</sup>

These relations are increasingly complex. For instance, men from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities may be subordinate in the workplace to white female managers and supervisors. Gay men may be marginalised; in one recent survey in 21 public and private organisations, the discomfort and lack of support felt by gay participants at work was revealed by the unwillingness of many to identify their own workplace in the report.<sup>126</sup>

121. Sennett R. (1998) *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Characteristics of Work in the New Capitalism*, New York: W.W.Norton; Bauman Z.(1998) *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor*, Buckingham: Open University Press

122. Nolan J., *Job insecurity, gender and work orientation: an exploratory study of breadwinning and caregiving identity*, GeNet Working Paper No. 6, February 2005

123. Walby S. (2007) *Gender (in)equality and the future of work*, Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission

124. TUC (2009) *Women and Recession: how will the recession affect women at work?*, London: TUC. Rake K. (2009) *Are women bearing the burden of recession?*, London: Fawcett Society. Note that topline measures of unemployment and redundancy may underestimate the impact on women. Women are less likely to be entitled to redundancy pay which accrues only after two years of service, and women with employed partners are less likely to register as unemployed.

125. Collinson D.L., Hearn J.(2004) *Men and Masculinities in Work, Organisations and Management*, in Kimmel M., Hearn J., Connell R.W. (eds.) *The Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities*, Thousand Oaks, Ca: SAGE

126. Guasp A., Balfour J. (2008) *Peak Performance: Gay people and productivity*, London: Stonewall

Earlier research on men and masculinities in organisations tended to concentrate on manual workers, highlighting both their subordination vis-à-vis middle-class managers<sup>127</sup> and the often sexist nature of informal factory floor interaction between men.<sup>128</sup> One study has, for example, shown how male manual workers construct organisational identities which negate 'others' – including managers, office workers and women.<sup>129</sup>

The **Considerate Constructor's Scheme** is working to transform the sexist image of the building trade. The scheme is a voluntary code of practice that states that those signed up to it must ensure there is no lewd language or behaviour on site. There are more than 3,500 building sites adhering to the code – since its launch nine years ago, more than 18,000 construction workers have signed up.<sup>130</sup>

The literature on organisations and management has long drawn on the assumption that the subject is male, but not analysed this reality critically. In practice, men not only continue to dominate management positions (about 95 per cent of senior management in the UK is male); they benefit disproportionately from higher salaries and remuneration packages too.

More recent work has sought to explore the nature of managerial masculinities. It has, for instance, highlighted how managers often discriminate against interview candidates who are female and tend to appoint men like themselves – reinforcing the status quo. It has revealed how male managers frequently mismanage cases of sexuality and sexual harassment.<sup>131</sup> There has also been increasing emphasis on exploring 'peer scrutiny' among managers, and the standardisation of management practices.<sup>132</sup>

Many men are expected to show unswerving loyalty to their company, thereby distancing themselves, or being distanced, from caring responsibilities. Some are strongly motivated by the potential gains in status and rewards from upward progress. But others, especially working fathers, find the demands of paid work (e.g. long hours, tight deadlines, excessive time away from home) intense – particularly within ever larger transnational corporations. This can affect their health, and put additional strain on their (female) partners and on family relationships.

The **Diversity Champions** programme is a good practice forum in which employers can work with Stonewall, and each other, to promote lesbian, gay and bisexual equality in the workplace. In 2008, the programme is approaching 400 members.

Members benefit from access to Stonewall's benchmarking services and a dedicated client account manager. There is a good practice seminar series which delivers learning on relevant topics, such as sexual orientation monitoring. Access is also provided to the latest research, knowledge and advice on specific organisational initiatives.

Information from [www.stonewall.org.uk/workplace](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/workplace)

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127. An early example is Willis P. (1977) *Learning to Labour*, London: Saxon House

128. Ackroyd S., Thompson P. (1999) *Organisational Misbehaviour*, London: SAGE

129. Collinson D.L.(2000) 'Strategies of resistance: power, knowledge and subjectivity in the workplace', in Grint K. (ed.) *Work and Society: A Reader*, Cambridge: Polity

130. Drawn from Hanman N., 'Male feminists march on', *The Guardian*, 7 August 2006

131. Collinson D.L., Hearn J.(2004)(ibid.)

132. Connell R.W., Wood J. (ibid.)

## Occupational segregation

'Horizontal' occupational segregation involves men and women doing different jobs, often in different sectors. This is usually combined with vertical segregation, with men occupying more senior and better rewarded positions, and women undertaking more part-time and/or precarious work. Again, there are differences between men according to ethnicity; for example, white men are more likely to be managers or professionals than Bangladeshi, black African or Caribbean men, and less likely than Chinese or Indian men.<sup>133</sup>

Occupational segregation, together with differences in working-time arrangements and terms and conditions, are key structural factors sustaining an enduring 'gender pay gap'; in 2007, women earned 17 per cent less per hour than men in full-time work, and 36 per cent less in part-time work. In June 2008, the Government announced proposals to require public sector bodies (and the 30 per cent of private organisations that tender for public contracts) to reveal information on the pay of men and women in their organisations.<sup>134</sup>

Some occupations (e.g. manual labour, the armed services, firefighting, senior management) are routinely identified as 'men's jobs', whereas others (e.g. hairdressing, childcare) are more commonly regarded as 'women's jobs'. In response, the Government intends, as part of the package outlined in the previous paragraph, to extend positive action so that employers can take into account, when selecting between two equally qualified candidates, the under-representation of disadvantaged groups. Whereas this is more likely to affect women and people from ethnic minority groups, it could also affect men who are under-represented in particular occupations.

Although the gender division of labour in employment has proven remarkably resistant to change, it is not static, and there are examples of sectors where the makeup of the workforce has shifted over time. Clerical work, for instance, was initially defined as a respectable occupation for working-class or lower middle-class men, but became dominated by women over the course of the last century.<sup>135</sup>

Occupations are also often segregated between men from different ethnic groups. For instance, one in seven Pakistani men in employment is a taxi driver, cab driver or chauffeur, compared with one in 100 white British men. Over one-quarter of Bangladeshi men are chefs, cooks or waiters compared with one in 100 white British men.<sup>136</sup>

Whilst there is a significant body of research into the obstacles facing women seeking to enter male-dominated occupations, recent research has sought to explore the perspectives and experiences of men who make non-traditional career choices. Drawing on interviews with primary school teachers, flight crew, librarians and nurses, Simpson identifies a threefold typology of men with different motivations and career aspirations:<sup>137</sup> 'seekers' (those men who actively choose the 'female' occupation), 'finders' (those who find the occupation in the process of making general career decisions), and 'settlers' (men who had tried a variety of different, often 'masculine', jobs with limited levels of job satisfaction and who then entered their current 'female' occupation and settled). She concludes that such men tend to benefit from their minority status by being treated differently and/or experiencing faster career progression and better pay. But although these men feel comfortable working with women and enjoy service and care roles, they adopt a variety of strategies to re-establish their masculinity and avoid their identity being undermined by the 'feminine' nature of the work.

133. Annual Population Survey, January 2004 to December 2004, Office for National Statistics

134. Government Equalities Office, *Framework for a Fairer Future: The Equality Bill*, Cm 7431, June 2008

135. Morgan D.H.J. (ibid.)

136. Annual Population Survey, January 2004 to December 2004, Office for National Statistics

137. Simpson R. (2004) *Masculinity at Work: The Experiences of Men in Female Dominated Occupations*, Work Employment Society, no. 18

The extent of the change that is underway should not be exaggerated. For instance, in relation to the childcare and early-years sector, Rolfe highlights that men still form only two per cent of the workforce.<sup>138</sup> In recent years, government initiatives have sought to expand the workforce and increase the number of childcare places, but the sector has experienced difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. One reason for this is over-reliance on a small section of the labour force – predominantly young (white) women – however this is becoming unsustainable as they seek other opportunities. The recruitment of men is therefore increasingly regarded as a matter of necessity. But despite attempts to raise the profile of childcare as a career, and to advertise more widely, this has had little effect on the numbers of men in the profession. The establishment of the Children’s Workforce Development Council may lead to the improvement of training, career development and workforce mobility, but the low pay and low status of childcare work act as significant barriers to male recruitment. Another barrier is the evidence of abuse by male workers in childcare settings, and fears of accusations; in response, Pringle has sought to develop a model whereby the potentially positive contributions of men can be maximised, whilst the safety of women and children is protected.<sup>139</sup>

In seeking to reduce the gender segregation in the labour market it is important to consider the role of apprenticeships. Whilst there has been a significant increase in the overall number of apprenticeships available since 2000/2001, there are slightly more men undertaking apprenticeships than women; this has been recognised in reports by the Equal Opportunities Commission and the government-sponsored ‘Women and Work Commission’.<sup>140</sup> During 2006-2007, 54 per cent of people starting apprenticeships were men, and 46 per cent were women – but 70 per cent of advanced-level places were filled by men. Apprenticeships remain clearly segregated along gender lines,<sup>141</sup> and those taken up by men are overwhelmingly in male-dominated sectors which tend to be higher paid. Male apprentices dominate construction (99 per cent men), vehicle maintenance (99 per cent men) and engineering (97 per cent men). Conversely, three per cent of apprenticeships in children’s care, learning and development, and eight per cent in hairdressing go to men.<sup>142</sup> A government review in 2008<sup>143</sup> stated that positive action will be taken to assist under-represented learners, increased funding for more places would be made available, and pilot projects will be developed to ensure a ‘critical mass’ among those who are under-represented. However, it has been argued that these measures are insufficient to tackle the entrenched issues involved.<sup>144</sup>

‘However men deal with their working lives, they are likely to find the old demarcations between men and women far less clear cut. Men may be working alongside women in what were once traditionally masculine jobs; they may be taking up jobs which only women used to work in; they may be switching back and forth between different kinds of masculinity, even in the course of a single working day’.

Hockey J., Robinson V. (2007) *Being a Man Today: Are you up to it?*, University of Sheffield

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138. The highest proportion of men in the childcare workforce in Europe is eight per cent (Denmark).

139. Pringle K. (1998) *Men as Workers in Professional Child Care Settings*, in Owen C., Cameron C., Moss P. (eds.), *Men as Workers in Services for Young Children: Issues of a Mixed Gender Workforce*, London, Institute of Education

140. Equal Opportunities Commission (2006) *Free to choose: Tackling gender barriers to better jobs, One year on progress report*, EOC; Women and Work Commission (2006) *Shaping a Fairer Future*, London: Department for Communities and Local Government

141. They are also less frequently accessed by those from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, and those who are disabled.

142. Apprenticeship starts, 2006/07 figures, [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)

143. Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills/Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008) *World-class Apprenticeships: Unlocking Talent, Building Skills for All, The Government’s strategy for the future of Apprenticeships in England*

144. TUC (2008) *Still more (better paid) jobs for the boys: Apprenticeships and Gender Segregation*

## Working hours

Despite increasing emphasis on the importance of 'work-life' balance, the pressures of paid work are intensifying, owing to factors such as new work practices, the impact of new technology (e.g. email, internet) and declining trade union membership. In recent years working hours fell for men, but an increase in the hours worked by women means that longer hours are being worked in double-earner families. Data for the first quarter of 2008 indicate, however, that working hours are rising again, particularly for men, owing to the challenging economic climate.<sup>145</sup> Both men and women appear to be expected to work harder too, and reported levels of stress at work are increasing (particularly among professional and managerial groups). Among full-time workers, over 80 per cent of both men and women would like to spend more time with their families, and 69 per cent of men and 58 per cent of women say the demands of their job interfere with their family life (at least sometimes).<sup>146</sup>

There are considerable differences in the working hours of men and women, particularly in relation to part-time work. Forty per cent of the female workforce is employed part-time,<sup>147</sup> compared to less than ten per cent of male workers. Black and minority ethnic women are significantly less likely than white women to be working part-time, whereas the reverse is the case for black and minority ethnic men compared to white men.<sup>148</sup>

The arrival of children tends to have a polarising effect on men and women's working hours. Women frequently move to part-time work following the birth of the first child; just prior to the first birth, over 90 per cent of working women spend 31 or more hours a week at work, but a year after only 40 per cent are in full-time employment; this movement towards shorter hours continues over the next decade. For many mothers it also entails 'occupational downgrading', with a significant loss of status and pay.<sup>149</sup> In contrast, the proportion of men working full-time is slightly greater for those with children: 91 per cent of working men are employed full-time prior to children, while 96 per cent of working fathers with a pre-school child and 97 per cent of working fathers with a youngest child of school age are employed full-time.<sup>150</sup>

One in eight of the UK population is working more than the 48 hours per week stipulated by the Working Time Regulations. According to the TUC (Trades Union Congress) Commission on Vulnerable Employment,<sup>151</sup> there is evidence that many UK managers do not believe that they have any obligation to address working-time issues. A survey of workers' experiences of the Regulations<sup>152</sup> found widespread non-compliance: 44 per cent of those who had signed an opt-out from the Regulations had been told that it was a condition of their employment; 31 per cent of night workers had not been offered health assessments; and 50 per cent of those working long hours who had raised concerns about working-time, or knew that someone else in the workplace had raised them, said that the issue had not been resolved.

145. TUC (2008) *Return of the Long Hours Culture*, London: TUC

146. Crompton R., Lyonette C. (2007) *Are we all working too hard?: women, men, and changing attitudes to employment*, in *British Social Attitudes*, 23rd report, National Centre for Social Research, London: SAGE

147. Connolly C., Gregory M., *Moving Down: Women's Part-time Work and Occupational Change in Britain 1991-2001*, The Economic Journal, February 2008

148. TUC, *Ten Years After: Black workers in employment 1997-2007*, 14 April 2008

149. Connolly S., Gregory M. (2007) *Moving Down: Women's Part-time Work and Occupational Change in Britain 1991-2001*, Department of Economics, Discussion paper series No.359, Oxford: Oxford University

150. Paull G., *Children and Women's Hours of Work*, The Economic Journal, February 2008

151. TUC (2008) *Hard Work, Hidden Lives: The Full Report of the Commission on Vulnerable Employment*, London: TUC

152. DTI (2004) *A Survey of Workers' Experiences of the Working Time Regulations*, DTI Employment Relations Services No. 31. London: DTI

## Flexible working

'Another man asked his employer for flexible working and he said he would like his wife's employer's number so he could check if she had done all she could to reduce her hours first, before he accepted his'.

Elizabeth Gardiner, Working Families, presentation at seminar *Women and Men Working Together to Achieve Gender Equality*, Government Equalities Office, 3 December 2007

Under the 2002 Flexible Working (Eligibilities, Complaints and Remedies) Regulations and Flexible Working (Procedural Requirements) Regulations, workers with a child under the age of six (or 18 in the case of a disabled child) have a right to request flexible working arrangements<sup>153</sup> from their employers. The legislation was extended to carers of adults by the 2006 Work and Families Act. (For leave arrangements, see section on 'Fatherhood', page 65).

Nine out of ten requests (or a variant of them) are currently accepted by employers.<sup>154</sup> Most of these are from women, who are three and a half times more likely than men to make a request. However, men are nearly twice as likely to have their request refused (23 per cent versus 13 per cent).<sup>155</sup> Overall, 57 per cent of working women have some kind of flexible working arrangement, compared to 23 per cent of men.<sup>156</sup> There remain ingrained assumptions among employers that flexible work practices should be taken up by staff who are more junior, less career-orientated and/or parents of young children – and implicitly, that they should be taken up principally by women. Men who wish to work flexibly may feel that employers and colleagues will view this negatively, and that it will affect their career prospects.

An independent review by Imelda Walsh<sup>157</sup> for the Department for Work and Pensions, of flexible working in relation to parents of older children, concluded in May 2008 that the right to request flexible working should be extended to those with children up to the age of 16. This age was identified on the basis that it would allow parents to support their children up until GCSE level. If accepted, following consultation by the Government, this will open up this right to an additional 4.5 million parents (as well as the existing 3.6 million parents and 2.5 million carers).

The review comments that there is a tendency to assume that flexible working is more attractive to women because they tend to earn less, so any reduction in their hours will result in less of an effect on the household income than the male earner reducing his hours. However it argues that flexible working must be seen as an issue that affects men as well as women. If this is not more widely accepted, especially by men, there is a risk that flexible working will entrench inequalities between men and women in terms of status and rewards from work.

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153. These may include part-time working, job-sharing, flexitime, compressed working hours, staggered hours, annualised hours and working reduced hours for a limited period.

154. Hayward B., Fong B., Thornton A. (2007) *The Third Work-Life Balance Employer Survey*, Employment Relations Research Series No.86, London: Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform

155. Walsh I. (2008) *Flexible Working: A review of how to extend the right to request flexible working to parents of older children*, London: Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform

156. Equal Opportunities Commission (2006) *Facts about women and men in Great Britain*, London: EOC

157. Walsh I. (ibid.)

## Work and health

Roughly nine out of ten of the working age population in Britain report they are in good or fairly good health, and most people die after retirement. However 16 per cent of men and six per cent of women die during working age.<sup>158</sup> There is a particularly significant difference between the health status of men aged 16-64 who are in work or training and those who are not – the latter group being roughly five times worse off.<sup>159</sup> The association between low socio-economic status and poor health is also well-established. Among the unskilled – but only in this social class – men have significantly worse health status than women.<sup>160</sup> Disability and sickness continue to be important factors causing absence from work and economic inactivity, particularly for men.

European analysis<sup>161</sup> suggests men have a higher rate of accidents (even after adjustments are made for fewer hours worked by women); are more exposed to heavy lifting;<sup>162</sup> suffer more from noise or hearing loss (e.g. in industry); and experience more occupational cancers (e.g. from asbestos, pesticides, paint, nickel, hardwood dust). Women experience more upper-limb disorders (e.g. due to 'light' assembly-line work and data-entry work), suffer more allergies and asthma (e.g. from cleaning and sterilising agents, and dust) and skin diseases (e.g. through contact with cleaning agents or hairdressing chemicals), contract infectious diseases more often (e.g. in healthcare or work with children) and experience more violence from the public through greater contact, particularly in the service sector.<sup>163</sup>

In the UK, asbestos is the foremost cause of work-related fatalities, killing around 3,500 people per year; those at greatest risk worked in construction-related trades between 1950 and the 1970s.<sup>164</sup> There has also been a recent rise in the number of men diagnosed with the more severe form of pneumoconiosis (a lung disease caused by breathing in coal dust whilst working for long periods in the mines). This reflects the importance of occupational histories when assessing the health of men in later life.<sup>165</sup>

Both men and women report high levels of stress from their work. For men, this is often related to long hours and poor management;<sup>166</sup> for women factors include doing low status jobs, combining work and caring and experiencing discrimination and sexual harassment. Relationship problems can lead to lack of concentration, taking time off, inability to manage conflict and having to stop work altogether. Mental health problems are a particularly important cause of absence and worklessness, and often remain undiagnosed – or diagnosed only when severe.

158. Calculations based on 2006 life tables, Office for National Statistics, cited in Dame Carol Black, *Working for a healthier tomorrow: Review of the health of Britain's working age population*, 17 March 2008, London: The Stationery Office

159. Figures for England only.

160. Department of Health, Health Survey for England 2005, cited in Dame Carol Black, *Working for a healthier tomorrow: Review of the health of Britain's working age population*, 17 March 2008, London: The Stationery Office

161. European Agency for Health and Safety at Work (2003) *Gender issues in health and safety at work: a review*, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities

162. Women in cleaning and catering and care work also suffer injuries from lifting.

163. Men also experience high levels of violence in some sectors where they predominate, such as bus and taxi driving, and the police force.

164. O'Regan S., Tyers C., Hill D., Gordon-Dseagu V. (2007) *Taking Risks with Asbestos: what influences the behaviour of maintenance workers?* HSE Report RR558.

165. Granville G., Evandrou M. (2008) *Older Men, Work and Health*, London: Help the Aged/TAEN (The Age and Employment Network)

166. According to a survey by Experian in May 2006 (reported in the *Guardian* newspaper on 8 June 2006), more than one in three men relied on alcohol to switch off from job stress; 17 per cent have visited a doctor to discuss their exhaustion; 40 per cent of men have difficulty switching off from work, and 22 per cent said they suffered from depression because of job-related stress.

Labour Force Survey data for the UK show that in 2005-2006 the average days lost due to 'work-related illness' per worker were similar for men and women.<sup>167 168</sup> The highest rates of work-related illness for men were in the 55-74 age range. Over the years 2003-2006, the average incidence for 'non-fatal work-related injuries'<sup>169</sup> for men was 220,000 and for women an estimated 108,000. The rate for men was statistically significantly higher than for women (1.5 per cent compared to 0.85 per cent). The 25-34 year old age group carried the highest risk for males. In 2005-2006 men took an estimated 4.4 million days off work due to non-fatal work-related injuries, and women 1.7 million days. The average days lost per worker was statistically significantly higher for men (0.32 days) than women (0.19 days).<sup>170</sup> For 'fatal injuries', the overwhelming majority (95-98 per cent) are to men.

There are therefore significant differences in gender risks and health outcomes at work, linked in part to factors such as the 'intensification' of work, occupational segregation and mobility (or lack of it) and the design and organisation of work and workplaces.

Men also tend to be employed in higher-risk occupations (e.g. construction, transport, security, police force, prisons, fishing, agriculture and mining). But across Europe work-related accidents are falling and the rate of reduction is greater for men than women. It is suggested the reasons are a shift away from traditional high-risk manual jobs, improvements in the safety of workplaces where men work and safer working practices adopted by men themselves.<sup>171 172</sup>

It is important to highlight the connections between men's health at work and men's practices. For instance, men's risk-taking behaviour can affect the incidence of injury or the onset of addictions (e.g. alcohol, drugs). Men are often unwilling to seek medical assistance, and may experience problems in emotional communication. They may also be more likely to enact violence, either on themselves or others<sup>173</sup> (see section on 'Health', page 83).

A recent government-backed review of the health of Britain's working age population<sup>174</sup> (the 'Black' report) has highlighted the human, social and economic costs of impaired health and well-being in relation to working life. The review identifies an expanded role for occupational health, arguing that such services should not just assist those in work, but also those who are workless. Around seven per cent of the working age population are workless and receiving incapacity benefits because of long-term health conditions or disabilities, reflecting entrenched patterns of poverty and social exclusion. The report recommends, among other things, the development of a new 'Fit for Work' service to be piloted with those in early stages of sickness – and potentially extended to those on incapacity and other out-of-work benefits.

The Black report also acknowledges the potential importance of gender-sensitive approaches in enhancing the effectiveness of workplace health improvement initiatives. The evidence is that these can significantly improve men's knowledge of health, detect potentially serious conditions earlier and improve their health outcomes.<sup>175</sup>

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167. Health and Safety Executive (ibid.)

168. Health and Safety Executive, *Self-reported illness and work-related injuries in 2005/06*, National Statistics

169. Defined as workplace injuries as a result of a non-traffic accident, resulting in over three days absence from work.

170. Health and Safety Executive (ibid.)

171. European Agency for Health and Safety at Work (ibid.)

172. Health and Safety Executive, *Key Messages from the LFS for Injury Risks: Gender and Age, Job Tenure and Part-time Working*, 19/6/2000

173. Hearn J., Pringle K. (2006) *European Perspectives on Men and Masculinities*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Pringle K. et al. (2006) *Men and Masculinities in Europe*, Whiting and Birch

174. Dame Carol Black, *Working for a healthier tomorrow: Review of the health of Britain's working age population*, 17 March 2008, London: The Stationery Office

175. Men's Health Forum, 'Black marks for employers on health', press release, 18 March 2008

**Work Fit: a workplace-based lifestyle improvement programme** was developed jointly by the Men's Health Forum and BT and was launched for UK-based BT staff in 2005. Following an internal media and trade-union-backed campaign, prospective participants were invited to register for Work Fit. Participants received a series of tasks by email over a 16 week period, linked to supporting information on the BT intranet, together with a free pedometer, a tape measure (to check waist circumference), a specially-designed health information booklet and other written health information. They could also request personal support from a nurse by email, and about 400 people used this service over the course of the programme.

Some 16,000 men and women registered for Work Fit (about 20 per cent of the UK-based workforce), a much higher number than originally anticipated. The proportion of male participants varied from about 60-75 per cent depending on the age group, but middle-aged overweight men appear to have been particularly responsive. The proportion of male participants was broadly in line with the workforce generally. This level of male involvement was a significant achievement given men's general reluctance to engage with health issues, not least related to lifestyle change. Those who followed the programme significantly increased their physical activity levels, improved their diet and improved their chances of losing weight.

Information from [www.menshealthforum.org.uk](http://www.menshealthforum.org.uk)

## Young men and work

Young men – and particularly working-class young men – have long been regarded as a problem for society and have been the objects of public and political concern.<sup>176</sup> Attention has focused in recent years on issues of youth unemployment, violence, anti-social behaviour and educational failure, and the connections between these (see sections on 'Education', page 105, and 'Violence', page 123).

Young men's 'underachievement' is less severe than some have feared;<sup>177</sup> those who have stayed on in education have had access to a wide range of employment opportunities and are still successful in the labour market – and more so than young women.

Some young men drift between jobs that they do not regard as offering good career prospects. They often believe they are poorly prepared at school for the workplace. Careers advice and work experience may be regarded as of limited value, and young men frequently make a distinction between 'crap jobs' and 'career' jobs, viewing the former as temporary.<sup>178</sup>

Certain jobs tend to be ruled out by young men on the basis of the pay and skills involved. Many of these jobs would typically be done by women, suggesting that young men's choices draw upon long-standing perceptions which have consistently devalued the real level of skill of 'women's work' (both care work and work for pay). Within the context of the changing labour market, where interpersonal and communication skills and high standards of customer service – skills often associated with women – are frequently at a premium, it seems likely that marginalised young men's expectations in terms of status and pay will increasingly not be met.<sup>179</sup>

176. Pearson G. (1983) *Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears*, London: Macmillan

177. Stafford, B., Heaver C., Ashworth K., Bates C., Walker R., McKay S. and Trickey H. (1999) *Work and young men*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

178. Lloyd, T. (1999) *Young Men's Attitudes to Gender and Work*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

179. McDowell, L. (2001) *Young Men Leaving School: white, working-class masculinity*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation/ Youth Work Press

Wages are lower for young workers, and the earnings of young men relative to those in older age groups are now markedly lower than they were in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>180</sup> The National Minimum Wage (NMW) rate<sup>181</sup> for workers aged 22 and over is £5.73 an hour; for 18-21 year olds, £4.77; and for 16-17 year olds, £3.53. Workers aged under 22 – and in particular 16-17 year olds – can therefore be paid at relatively low levels. Those who are undertaking apprenticeships are not entitled to the NMW at all, even though in reality their responsibilities are frequently the same as those of employees.

The economic position of some young men has deteriorated over time. Those with a combination of personal, social, health and educational disadvantages – few qualifications, a history of offending behaviour, substance abuse, poor health and homelessness – experience particular difficulties and are very likely to find themselves unemployed.<sup>182</sup>

Young men, from all ethnic groups, with qualifications have better labour market outcomes than those with none. They are less likely to be unemployed, they earn more and have jobs at higher occupational levels. However, the effect of qualifications varies between groups and between areas. People of African origin, in particular, tend to gain less from their qualifications than other groups. Apart from those of Indian origin, young men from other minority ethnic groups earned less than similarly-qualified white men.<sup>183</sup>

Young workers – both male and female – are particularly vulnerable, especially in times of economic hardship, to falling recruitment, cuts in training schemes and increased competition for work. The opportunities available for relatively unskilled workers tend to be temporary, frequently requiring short-term work, sub-contracting or working for agencies, and workers often become trapped in precarious and exploitative work where it is difficult to avoid recurrent unemployment. Research highlights the barriers – low expectations and self-esteem, lack of qualifications and basic skills, lack of parental support – which prevent young men from moving from precarious positions into the more secure sectors of the labour market, and illustrates the ways in which they become trapped in cycles of unemployment and insecure work. This employment insecurity tends not to reflect negative attitudes on the part of the young men or necessarily a lack of skills; it is largely a consequence of the 'flexible' nature of the low-skilled employment available.<sup>184</sup>

A key element of the Government's 'welfare-to-work' approach since 1997 has been employment training programmes, in particular the 'New Deals'. Early evaluation of the 'New Deal for Young People', with young men making up over 70 per cent of entrants, has shown a reduction of 45,000 in long-term youth unemployment, with 100,000 young people per year leaving unemployment earlier than they would otherwise have done.<sup>185</sup> More recent Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) research indicates that the proportion of participants who leave the programme for jobs is 46 per cent – higher than initial figures. Since the programme was established '*not only have the numbers of long-term unemployed 18-24 year olds fallen but the rate of decrease has been around three times that of unemployment as a whole*'.<sup>186</sup>

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180. Meadows P. (2001) *Young men on the margins of work: An overview*, YPS: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

181. Rates from 1 October 2008

182. Meadows P. (ibid.)

183. Meadows P. (ibid.)

184. Furlong A., Cartmel F. (2004) *Vulnerable young men in fragile labour markets: Employment, unemployment and the search for long-term security*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

185. White M., Riley R. (2002) *Findings from the Macro Evaluation of the New Deal for Young People*, Department for Work and Pensions Research Report, 168

186. Hasluck C., Green A.E. (2007) *What works for whom? A review of evidence and meta-analysis for the Department of Work and Pensions*, Institute for Employment Research for DWP, Research Report, 407

Despite this success, training schemes are not a panacea. Programmes appear to have been more successful in rural areas, especially in the south of England, and less so in inner city areas. In northern cities in particular there is evidence of 'churning', with young people undertaking programmes and returning to unemployment.<sup>187</sup> There is also evidence of strong competition for places offering quality training, and that therefore lower-quality placements are more likely to be available to the less well-qualified. The linkage between lower-quality schemes and employment can be poor, with many subsequently entering occupations that are totally unrelated to their 'training.'<sup>188</sup>

Those already closest to labour market participation appear to have benefited most, and programmes have been less successful in engaging those facing multiple disadvantage. Individualised support from personal advisers is particularly important for those in marginalised groups, and depends on a considerable degree of local flexibility and the targeting of extra resources.

**A schools-based project for preparing young men for work:** the 'Into Work' project, carried out by Working With Men, aimed to develop an appropriate programme targeted at young men (aged 14 and 15). It consisted of school and workplace sessions on the following themes: interview and telephone experience; completion of application forms and CVs; exploration of training options on leaving school; where and how to look for jobs; being a man in the workforce; opportunities to discuss possible career options, incorporated during (and after) the sessions. There were three opportunities for half-day workplace visits (of the young men's choice) and a visit to the local college, Jobcentre and careers office. As a result of the programme, young men learnt about the workplace, felt more confident and developed workplace-related skills. Less predictably, the programme also helped to refocus them within school, and helped them to identify the importance of getting the examination results they needed for their career development.

Lloyd T. (2002) *Underachieving young men preparing for work: A report for practitioners*, YPS: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

## Older men and work

Participation in the labour market decreases for both men and women from around age 50, and is part-time for the majority who do work after the State Pension age. In 2004, 72 per cent of men aged 50-64 were in employment, compared with 18 per cent of men aged 65-69. Sickness, disability and injury is the reason given for not seeking work by more than half (58 per cent) of men aged 50-54.<sup>189</sup>

Older male workers are a diverse group. For instance, 80 per cent of white British men aged 40-64 were economically active compared to 66 per cent of Pakistani men and 58 per cent of Bangladeshi men of the same age, according to the 2001 Census. Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Chinese men are also more likely to be working part-time, or in temporary and casual jobs.<sup>190</sup>

In comparison with male workers aged 25-49, those aged 50+ are less likely to be in full-time employment (42 per cent compared with 68 per cent), more likely to be self-employed (18 per cent compared with 14 per cent) and three times more likely to report ill-health or disability.<sup>191</sup>

187. Sunley P., Martin R. (2002) *The Geography of Workfare: Local Labour Markets and the New Deal*, Economic and Social Research Council

188. Furlong A., Cartmel F. (ibid.)

189. Morgan R. (2005) *Older people and the labour market, Focus on Older People*, London: Department of Work and Pensions

190. Granville G., Evandrou M. (2008) *Older Men, Work and Health*, London: Help the Aged/TAEN (The Age and Employment Network)

191. Yeandle S. (2005) *Older Workers and Work/life Balance*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Over the last decade, rates of labour force participation among older men have increased, reversing the previous trend towards early retirement. This is in line with the current Government's aspiration to expand the pool of available labour and counter the impact of falling fertility rates.

The government's national strategy on ageing<sup>192</sup> aims to end the perception of older people as dependent, and to ensure that longer life is healthy and fulfilling and that older people are full participants in society. Key strands within the strategy involve raising employment rates, encouraging greater flexibility in working careers for those aged over 50, managing health conditions and combining work and family commitments. This is supported by the establishment in 2007 of a Public Sector Agreement target to tackle poverty and promote greater independence and well-being in later life. In relation to employment and training specifically, in 2006 the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations came into effect, overseen by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The regulations affect all workers, and their effectiveness in protecting older workers (e.g. from ageism in the workplace) has been questioned.

Research indicates the importance of transitions (e.g. retirement, health deterioration, bereavement, divorce) in the lives of older people, and the impact they have on their sense of self and independence.<sup>193</sup> For older men, retirement highlights an increasing contradiction between their self-perception as 'productive, and as contributors to society, and their current experience of being 'unproductive' and 'dependent'. It is often accompanied by a sharp decline in social networks and contact through work, making older men vulnerable to social isolation and marginalising them from practical support.<sup>194</sup>

There is also a risk that extending working lives and raising the conventional pension age may entrench existing inequalities and insecurities. For instance, pension provision is higher among professional men, whereas men from ethnic minority groups have been identified as 'under-pensioned'. Whilst decisions to retire are based on a range of factors, likely income in retirement is central; men in paid work with good occupational pension provision and long career histories inevitably have more choice and control over the decisions they make in relation to their futures.

## Men who are disabled

Difficulties encountered by some disabled men at work can be multiple due to working cultures and beliefs held generally within society. Men's common perception that they must live up to the standards expected of their gender – for example, that they cannot 'fail', must be 'strong' and 'tough'<sup>195</sup> – may appear to be at odds with the reality of a disabled male worker (who can be seen as 'weak'). Men in the workplace, whether workers or managers, tend to apply their own beliefs about masculinities to their colleagues (including any who are disabled) and make judgements about their perceived value or effectiveness within the office. This can reinforce stereotyping and create distance between colleagues. Often this may result in the harassment of an individual, especially when negative comments are seen to have an effect. The positive theme of the richness and value of diversity may be lost.

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192. Department for Work and Pensions (2005) *Opportunity Age: meeting the challenges of ageing in the 21st century*

193. Parry J., Vegeris S., Hudson M., Barnes H., Taylor R. (2004) *Independent living in later life*, Research Report 216, London: Department for Work and Pensions

194. Ruxton S. (2006) *Working With Older Men*, London: Age Concern

195. For an analysis of how this masculine 'ideal' has become established and maintained, see Segal L. (1990) *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men*, London: Virago Press

Segregation from a group may be greater when a colleague suffers from a mental illness and this is known to other workers. There is a great deal of uncertainty and misunderstanding around mental illnesses in the workplace, which can further undermine a disabled person's standing. A primary misconception appears to be that mental illness is about 'low intellect' rather than the fact that someone is simply ill.

Disabled men earn between 17 per cent and nine per cent less than non-disabled men; the gap for women is between 11 per cent and six per cent. Disabled people are two and a half times more likely to be out of work than a non-disabled person, are more likely to move from full-time to part-time work, and less likely to receive training. Disabled men aged 26-49 do least well in all these areas.<sup>196</sup> In the last 30 years, the employment prospects of disabled men with poor educational qualifications and no working partner have deteriorated more than any other population group. Whilst it has been suggested that this fall is due to disincentives in the benefit system, it may also be due to the increasing reluctance of firms to accommodate poorly-qualified workers with failing health or impaired capacities.<sup>197</sup>

## Vulnerable workers

The TUC's 'Commission on Vulnerable Employment'<sup>198</sup> estimates that around two million workers in the UK are in 'vulnerable employment', which it defines as precarious work that places people at risk of continuing poverty and injustice resulting from an imbalance of power in the employer-worker relationship. It argues that many of these workers experience great insecurity: without employment contracts, working through agencies or with reduced rights because of their immigration status. Some employers exploit gaps in the legal framework and the lack of effective enforcement of employment rights; others break the law, especially in low-paid sectors such as cleaning, hospitality, security and construction.

Whilst women are at particular risk of low pay and of working below their potential, 40 per cent of low paid workers are men. Some groups of men are especially vulnerable. Among men from black and minority ethnic communities, for instance, Bangladeshi and Pakistani men are most likely to be low paid; between 2001 – 2005, the former were paid 40 per cent less, and the latter 20 per cent less, than the average.<sup>199</sup> Black and ethnic minority men are also twice as likely to be working part-time as white men (18 per cent compared to nine per cent), although women are much more likely to be working part-time overall.<sup>200</sup>

Another vulnerable group is men who have migrated, for a range of reasons, to the UK. Over the past decade, migration to the UK has increased markedly – with a growing proportion from new EU Member States in Central and Eastern European countries. Migrants are a diverse group; whilst some are in highly paid, secure employment and are not especially vulnerable, others are commonly subjected to exploitation whilst working in sectors such as cleaning, hospitality, agriculture and food processing. Migrants now form approximately five to six per cent of the UK workforce. Whilst the stereotype is of the young male worker without dependents, the numbers of male and female migrants are roughly equal.

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196. Equalities Review (2007) *Fairness and Freedom: The Final Report of the Equalities Review*, [www.theequalitiesreview.org.uk](http://www.theequalitiesreview.org.uk)

197. Berthoud R. (2007) *Work-rich and work-poor: three decades of change*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, The Policy Press

198. TUC (2008) *Hard Work, Hidden Lives: The Full Report of the Commission on Vulnerable Employment*, London: TUC

199. Platt L. (2006) *Ethnicity and child poverty*, Ethnic Minority Employment Task Force

200. TUC (2008) *Ten Years After: Black Workers in Employment 1997-2007*, London: TUC

## Poverty

The proportion of men without a job has nearly trebled (from five per cent to 14 per cent) over the past 30 years.<sup>201 202</sup> Figures from 2004 show that black Caribbean, black African, Bangladeshi and mixed ethnic groups have the highest unemployment rates (between 13 and 14 per cent), around three times the rates for white men.<sup>203</sup>

At the end of the 1990s the group of 'economically inactive' men outnumbered the recorded unemployed by more than two-to-one, according to one study.<sup>204</sup> Among men aged 25-64, the main groups of men detached from full-time employment were (in descending order of size) the long-term sick or disabled, the long-term unemployed, the early retired and full-time carers. Among these categories, 98 per cent of the long-term sick/disabled were benefit claimants, with Incapacity Benefit the main form of support. A number of factors appear to have prompted this trend, including government encouragement – especially during the 1980s – for claimants to move off the unemployment register and onto disability and sickness benefits, and tighter approaches to staff selection among employers.<sup>205</sup> However, in the period 1997-2005, the percentage of men who were economically inactive, who gave long term sickness as a reason, declined from 43 per cent to 38 per cent.<sup>206 207</sup>

Traditional industrial areas – such as South Wales, North-East England, Merseyside, Clydeside and South Yorkshire – were most severely affected by large-scale job losses among men during the 1980s and 1990s, representing up to 30 per cent of the entire cohort of 25-64 year old men. Among older and some younger men, chronic ill-health and disability are widespread, some of it attributable to unhealthy and unsafe environments in previous employment.

In response to the restructuring of the economy, the Government has promoted 'flexible' labour markets, with individual (male) workers expected increasingly to take responsibility for looking after themselves and their families, rather than relying on the welfare state. Paid employment has been repeatedly endorsed as a means of financial support, a route out of poverty, and a source of personal well-being and self-respect.

The thrust of the Government's welfare reform programme has concentrated on two main strands. The first has been to 'make work pay' (e.g. through establishment of the National Minimum Wage [NMW] and tax credits). Whilst the introduction of the NMW has been widely accepted, its effect has been more limited than anticipated, partly because the rates have been relatively low and partly because enforcement mechanisms have been weak.<sup>208</sup>

Tax credits (together with benefits) have helped some groups – particularly lone parents – out of poverty by supplementing wages. However, *'low-paid men supporting families are highly likely to remain poor, and improvements in tax credits have not raised more of them above the poverty line'*.<sup>209</sup> Although less poor than men with children, the situation of single low-paid men has

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201. Berthoud R. (ibid.)

202. There are variations between different groups of men. For example, men with a partner have traditionally had very high employment rates, and this is still the case.

203. Annual Population Survey, January 2004 to December 2004, Office for National Statistics

204. Alcock, P., C. Beatty, S. Fothergill, R. MacMillan, S. Yeandle (eds.) (2003) *Work to Welfare: how men become detached from the labour market*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

205. Berthoud, R., (1998), *Disability benefits: A review of the issues and options for reform*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

206. Among women, during this same period a near-constant 20 per cent gave this reason

207. Labour Market Trends (2005) *Economic activity and inactivity: Economic inactivity by reason*. Table D.2.

208. The Government has recently introduced a range of measures designed to strengthen the enforcement regime.

209. Hirsh D., Millar J. (2004) *Labour's Welfare Reform: Progress to date, Foundations*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

worsened over time<sup>210</sup> – particularly as a result of the recent abolition of the 10p tax band (the impact of which has not been fully mitigated by the raising of personal tax allowances in May 2008). Whilst the effects on different low-income groups have been uneven, the cumulative impact of Labour's tax and benefit changes since 1997 has nevertheless been to increase the average incomes of the poorest tenth of the population by 12 per cent, and cut those of the richest tenth by six per cent.<sup>211</sup>

The second strand has centred on moving individuals from 'welfare to work' (e.g. through training schemes such as the New Deal<sup>212</sup>). There is evidence that the New Deal has had a positive impact on employment rates and the job-seeking capacities of individuals.<sup>213</sup> In practice, these programmes have focused largely on assisting men, who participate to a much greater extent than women in the New Deal for Young People and the New Deal for the Long-term Unemployed.<sup>214</sup>

In July 2008, a government Green Paper<sup>215</sup> announced proposals for a new package of 'tough' welfare reform measures. These include scrapping incapacity benefit by 2013 and abolishing income support, and creating a more streamlined system based on two working-age benefits – the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), for those who have a medical condition which prevents them from working, and Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA) for those who are able to work. Whilst those with severe disabilities will get more cash under ESA, other disabled people will be expected over time to return to work.

The conditions attached to receiving JSA will also be strengthened with a 'work for benefits' scheme for the long-term unemployed, under which they could be forced to take part in full-time activity such as community work. Concerns remain about the impact of increasing compulsion, which may be counter-productive – producing a truculent workforce, higher drop-out rates and inhibiting more constructive relationships with personal advisers. This emphasis on 'toughness' also seems very misguided in the context of massive job losses as a result of the economic recession.

The Government argues that other measures will offer greater support, in return for claimants demonstrating greater personal responsibility. For example, assistance to disabled workers and their employers will be increased, and maintenance payments from non-resident fathers will be fully 'disregarded' so that payments will not be taken into account when calculating how much out-of-work benefits a lone mother should get.

Overall, a tentative assessment of the Government's welfare reform measures since 1997 suggests that, as a result of the changes so far, women have benefited more from direct redistribution (via tax and benefit changes), whilst greater resources have been invested in men's human capital through training and retraining.<sup>216</sup>

210. Millar J., Gardiner K. (2004) *Low pay, household resources and poverty*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

211. Institute for Fiscal Studies, 'Abolition of the 10p starting rate', press release, 21 April 2008

212. These are: The New Deal for Young People, for those aged 18-24 and unemployed for at least six months; The New Deal for the Long-Term Unemployed, for those aged 25+; the New Deal for Lone Parents; the New Deal for Partners; the New Deal for Disabled People; and the New Deal for People Aged 50 and above.

213. Hirsh D., Millar J. (ibid.)

214. In contrast, the New Deal for Lone Parents has more women participating in it, because the bulk of lone parents tend to be women.

215. Department for Work and Pensions, *No-one written off: Reforming welfare to reward responsibility*, July 2008, Cm 7363

216. Ruxton S. (2002) *Men, Masculinities and Poverty in the UK*, Oxford: Oxfam

## Recommendations

**Employers in the public and private sectors should increase commitment to gender equality in the workplace.** This should include action to: increase the numbers of women at senior levels; limit excessive executive pay and bonuses; develop training on gender equality issues for all staff; and address all forms of violence, bullying and sexual harassment at work. The Gender Equality Duty provides a lever for action in relation to public authorities, and should be extended to include the private sector.

**Employers should tackle discrimination against gay staff at work** by introducing inclusive policies, establishing employee network groups, identifying senior lesbian and gay role models and by senior leaders expressing commitment to lesbian and gay employees.

**Schools, careers services and employers should take a more proactive approach to challenging gender stereotypes in employment and training choices.** They should encourage more young men to take up opportunities in non-traditional sectors and provide more men with access to training on the 'soft' skills now required in many workplaces. Promoting gender equality should be central to the Government's proposals for the creation of a National Apprenticeships Service.

**The European Working Time Directive sets a 48-hour maximum working week, but there is an opt-out for UK employees which should be ended.** Employers should also take positive measures to tackle the long hours culture, and there should be disincentives for employers to demand overtime work.

**In order to meet the priority of the Ministers for Women of supporting families to care for children and older and disabled relatives, male workers – and especially managers – must be made more aware of flexible working arrangements,** and strongly encouraged to take them up and to play a more active role in caring. The Government has a role in working with key stakeholders (e.g. employers, unions) to encourage and disseminate best practice, and to address men directly through social marketing campaigns.

**The Government should implement the recommendations of the Walsh review, extending the right to request flexible working arrangements to all parents with children up to age 16.** Particular efforts should be made to ensure that fathers are made aware of this entitlement and employers are encouraged to grant it. In the longer term, the right to request flexible working should be extended to all workers.

**Implementation of the recommendations of the Black report should include the development of work-based initiatives to engage men around the health issues they face, and to address the negative impact of some men's practices – e.g. risk-taking, addictions, violence – on their own health and that of others.** Workplace initiatives should also help address men's less effective use of other forms of health service. Many services traditionally delivered in NHS settings should be taken into the workplace (e.g. basic health checks, screening services, routine GP appointments).

**The National Minimum Wage for 16-17 year old men and women in work (including on apprenticeships) should be raised to the same level as 18-21 year olds.** In the longer term, the adult NMW rate should be extended to all young people.

**Greater support for older men should be focused by employers and service providers on trigger points such as the transition to retirement;** services should be accessible, easy to navigate, and should provide multiple points of access to a wider range of services. More information about services should be made available to older men, and marketed proactively at them.

**Employment rights awareness and legal advice should be improved, and there should be tighter regulation of sectors where risks are greatest for vulnerable workers.** The framework of legal protection should also be strengthened.<sup>217</sup>

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217. See the more detailed recommendations of the TUC Commission on Vulnerable Employment



## 6. Fatherhood

### **UN Commission on the Status of Women**

#### **Conclusions on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality (extract)**

**Forty-eighth session, 1-12 March 2004**

The Commission urges UN agencies, Governments, the private sector, NGOs, and other stakeholders, to:

- 'Promote understanding of the importance of fathers, mothers, legal guardians and other caregivers, to the well being of children and the promotion of gender equality and of the need to develop policies, programmes and school curricula that encourage and maximize their positive involvement in achieving gender equality...
- 'Create and improve training and education programmes to enhance awareness and knowledge among men and women on their roles as parents, legal guardians and caregivers and the importance of sharing family responsibilities, and include fathers as well as mothers in programmes that teach infant child care development...'

### **The Council of the European Union**

#### **Conclusions on men and gender equality (extract)**

**30 November and 1 December 2006**

The Council of the European Union:

- 'encourages the development, from early childcare and education, of pedagogic practices aimed at eliminating gender stereotypes, also paying attention to educational methods and tools that improve the capacity and potential of boys and men to care for themselves and others...'

## Introduction

This section is broken down into the following categories:

European trends (page 66)

Fathers, work and care in the UK (page 66)

The impact of fathers' involvement (page 68)

Diversity amongst fathers (page 70)

The legal and policy framework (page 72)

Leave arrangements (page 73)

Family separation (page 74)

Fathers on the birth certificate (page 76)

Reproductive technologies (page 77)

Service provision (page 78)

Recommendations (page 80)

## European trends

Since the 1970s, demographic changes across Europe – including declining fertility, ageing of the population, falling marriage rates, an increase in relationship breakdown and a growth in cohabitation – have resulted in a diversification of fathering models and networks.<sup>218</sup> There is a growing minority of households without resident fathers, but also evidence of increasing contact between non-resident fathers and their children. Many fathers have active relationships with children in different households and with different biological parents.<sup>219</sup>

The traditional division of labour between men (as ‘breadwinners’) and women (as ‘carers’) has also been strongly influenced by shifting employment patterns over recent decades, both in the UK and Europe. Such trends include the significant increase in women’s labour force participation, the decline in what have been regarded as ‘men’s jobs’ (e.g. in factories, mining, shipbuilding), the introduction of new technology and a growth in transnational migration (See section on ‘Work’, page 45).

From the 1990s onwards, there has been an increasing policy focus across Europe on fatherhood, including a rapid expansion of paternity and parental leave provision targeted at fathers (particularly in Nordic countries). Whilst there is also a greater cultural expectation that fathers will participate more actively in caring for children, and a growing understanding of the important roles fathers play in children’s well-being, there are still many social and economic barriers to greater direct caregiving by fathers – and substantial numbers of men and women retain more traditional attitudes to gendered childcare roles. Although findings from a cross-European network suggest that increase in actual direct childcare by men has been modest in many countries,<sup>220</sup> there is evidence that change has been more extensive in the UK.

For the future, the continuing pay gap between men and women is likely to impede moves to greater sharing of caring responsibilities, but there are signs that young people increasingly endorse more egalitarian attitudes involving less polarised gender roles.<sup>221</sup> Alongside this trend, growing cultural and religious diversity will generate a rich mix of fathering models, and a contrasting emphasis on the importance of male elders.<sup>222</sup>

## Fathers, work and care in the UK

Being an economic provider is one way in which fathers demonstrate ‘care’ for children, and breadwinning is still seen by many as an important part of their identity. This commitment to financial provision is combined with a growing interest in being ‘involved’ at home. According to the latest British Social Attitudes report,<sup>223</sup> in 1989 one-third of men (32 per cent) agreed that ‘a man’s job is to earn money; a woman’s job is to look after the home and family’, but two decades later this proportion has nearly halved to 17 per cent.<sup>224</sup>

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218. There are differences between countries. For example, in northern Europe, marriage appears to be less popular than in southern or eastern European countries; whereas cohabitation is more popular.

219. O’Brien M. (2004) *Social Science and Public Policy Perspectives on Fatherhood in the European Union*, in Lamb M.E. (ed.), *The Role of the Father in Child Development*, Fourth Edition, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons

220. Hearn J., Pringle K. (2006) *European Perspectives on Men and Masculinities*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Pringle K. et al. (2006) *Men and Masculinities in Europe*, Whiting and Birch

221. Scott J., Brown M., Alwin D. (1998) *Partner, parent, worker: Family and gender roles*, in Jowell R., Curtice J., Park A., Brook J., Thomson K., Bryson C. (eds.) *British and European social attitudes: How Britain differs*, Aldershot: Ashgate

222. O’Brien M. (ibid.)

223. Crompton R., Lyonette C. (2008) *Who does the housework? The division of labour within the home*, British Social Attitudes, 24th report, National Centre for Social Research, SAGE

224. It is of course hard to disentangle what men and women say, what they believe, and what they do in practice, and these issues are often conflated in the fatherhood literature.

In practice, fathers can find these discourses hard to reconcile. On becoming parents, couples tend to adjust their working arrangements, with many women shifting to part-time (and lower paid) work. Meanwhile, fathers in Britain work long hours, and longer hours than non-fathers,<sup>225</sup> reflecting their generally higher incomes and a stronger emphasis than for mothers on their role as 'providers' – 91 per cent of working men are employed full-time prior to having children, while 96-97 per cent of working fathers with a pre-school child or a youngest child of school age are full-time.<sup>226</sup> They also work much longer hours than their EU counterparts; nearly two-fifths of British fathers are regularly engaged in paid employment for more than 48 hours per week (the EU Working Time Directive maximum), and around one in eight work over 60 hours.<sup>227</sup>

Fathers' involvement in caring for children under five years old in the UK has risen from less than 15 minutes a day in the mid-1970s to two hours by the late 1990s during the week, and more at the weekend.<sup>228</sup> Studies consistently show that fathers, both resident and non-resident, are spending more time with their children, albeit still at a lower level than mothers. In dual full-time earner couples, men spend about 75 per cent of the time that women do on childcare and other activities with dependent children.<sup>229 230</sup> It is often argued, with some justification, that fathers tend to participate more in education and play rather than routine physical care,<sup>231</sup> however the trend is also towards greater convergence in what mothers and fathers do.<sup>232</sup> Nevertheless, fathers' involvement in housework remains relatively low.<sup>233 234</sup>

Surveys have found a narrowing gap in the time spent by fathers and mothers in supporting the family (either through paid employment, childcare or housework). But whilst the experience of these parenting activities varies (e.g. in terms of time and satisfaction), paid employment generally retains a higher status.<sup>235</sup>

Although the vast majority of men look forward to an involved parenting role, the reality of caring for a baby can challenge their sense of being able to control their lives,<sup>236</sup> and can leave them feeling isolated and undervalued – as can also be the experience of new mothers. For many fathers (and mothers), the period around the birth of a child can be a difficult transition,<sup>237</sup> and fathers are

225. However fatherhood status is not a good predictor of the number of hours worked; in fact, hours of work are more closely related to age, form of economic activity, occupation, earnings, and partner's working time. See Dermott E. (2006) *The Effect of Fatherhood on Men's Patterns of Employment*, Swindon: ESRC

226. The changes for women are dramatic, and go in the opposite direction. Eighty-five per cent of working women are in full-time employment before having children, but once they become mothers only one-third of those who have pre-school children and work are employed full-time. See Paull G., *Children and Women's Hours of Work*, *The Economic Journal*, February 2008

227. O'Brien R., Shemilt I. (2003) *Working Fathers: Earning and Caring*, London: Equal Opportunities Commission

228. O'Brien R., Shemilt I. (ibid.)

229. O'Brien M. (2005) *Shared caring: bringing fathers into the frame*, Working Paper Series No. 18, Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission

230. Note that most studies showing an increase in fathers' involvement are based on couples, and leave out non-resident fathers.

231. Pleck J. H. (1997) *Parental involvement: levels, sources and consequences* in Lamb M.E. (ed.) *The role of the father in child development*, New York: Wiley

232. Sayer L., Bianchi S.M. and Robinson J. P. (2004) *Are parents Investing less in children?: Trends in mothers' and fathers' time with children*, *American Journal of Sociology*

233. For example, one recent study found that nearly eight in ten people (77 per cent) with partners say that the woman usually or always does the laundry, a similar proportion to that found in 1994 (81 per cent). Men and women also disagree when it comes to saying how much of the housework they do. Two-thirds of women (68 per cent) say that in their relationship they usually or always do the cleaning – but only 54 per cent of men say this of their partner. See Crompton R., Lyonette C. (2008) *Who does the housework? The division of labour within the home*, British Social Attitudes, 24th report, National Centre for Social Research, SAGE

234. O'Brien M. (2005) (ibid.)

235. O'Brien M. (2005) (ibid.)

236. Lupton D., Barclay L. (1997) *Constructing Fatherhood: Discourses and Experiences*, London: SAGE

237. This is evidenced by the particular risk of domestic violence during this period. See Taylor D., What he did seems inhuman, *Guardian*, 2 April 2008

particularly ill-prepared.<sup>238</sup> Antenatal and parenting education tends to stress the importance of the link between mother and child, and mothers are encouraged to seek out information, which is widely available and targeted primarily towards them. Conversely, fathers are more ignorant than mothers about the services that may be available to them. Many fathers follow the mother's lead in relation to the birth – and this may set the tone for parenting responsibilities and practices into the future.<sup>239</sup>

## The impact of fathers' involvement

'Father-child relationships – be they positive, negative or lacking – have profound and wide ranging impacts on children that last a lifetime, particularly for children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds.'

Department for Education and Skills (2007) 'Every Parent Matters'

Recent studies assessing the impact of father-involvement in the early years on later child outcomes confirm the importance of early paternal investment in caring across a wide range of outcomes. For example, in dual-earner families where mothers work full-time in the first year of children's lives, increased father involvement can protect child welfare.<sup>240</sup> High levels of father support for mothers can also promote breastfeeding.<sup>241</sup>

Whereas earlier research tended to focus on mothers, data from the recently available Millennium Cohort Study,<sup>242</sup> with a large sample of fathers, show that children were more likely to have developmental problems if their father had: not used their employer's flexible working options; allowed the mother to do all the home-based childcare instead of sharing; taken only annual or sick leave around the time of the birth, compared with a mixture of paternity and annual leave; or taken no leave around the time of the birth. There is also some evidence that father-involvement which is supportive and affectionate is related to positive educational outcomes for children.<sup>243</sup>

Despite the specific positive outcomes identified above, father-child relationships are part of a wider web of family and social relationships. Lewis and Lamb therefore conclude<sup>244</sup> that '*all family relationships are highly interrelated and it is difficult to single out individual relationships as unique determinants of child development*'. For them, rather than suggesting that fathers 'make some magical contribution', '*the quality of father-child relationships is simply a marker of the quality of all the relationships within families...*'. The same, of course, is likely to be the case where mothers' influence is deemed positive.

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238. Kearney J., Mansson S-A., Plantin L., Pringle K., Quaid S. (2000) *Fatherhood and masculinities: A comparative study of ideals and realities of fatherhood and masculinity in Britain and Sweden*, Sunderland, England: University of Sunderland, Centre for Social Research and Practice

239. Fletcher R., Silberberg S., Galloway D. *New Fathers' Postbirth Views of Antenatal Classes: Satisfaction, Benefits, and Knowledge of Family Services* Journal of Perinatal Education, Volume 13, Number 3, Summer 2004

240. Gregg P., Washbrook, E. (2003) *The effects of early maternal employment on child development in the UK*. University of Bristol: CMPO Working Paper Series

241. Scott, J.A., Landers, J., Hughes, R., Binns, C.W. (2001) *Factors associated with the initiation and duration of breast feeding amongst two populations of Australian women*, Journal of Paediatrics & Child Health, 37, 254-261

242. Dex S., Ward K. (ibid.)

243. Goldman R. (2005) *Fathers' Involvement in their Children's Education*, London: National Family and Parenting Institute

244. Lewis C., Lamb M. (2007) *Understanding Fatherhood: a review of recent research*, Lancaster University, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

There has also been a significant change in fathers' accounts of being a father. The notion of father as 'breadwinner' continues to underpin male identity; however there is evidence that many fathers have expanded their understanding of the economic provider role to encompass 'caring' (e.g. as a protector/playmate for children).<sup>245</sup> This can create 'role strain', especially for those fathers who work long hours – and especially for those in dual-earner families. Whilst many men express joy and elation on becoming a father, sustaining this enjoyment depends on the extent to which they can successfully integrate their 'provider' and 'involved father' roles. For some, the financial dependency of the family upon them, and working long hours or away from home, can leave them dissatisfied; they feel they are missing out, vulnerable to and fearful of criticism for being a 'bad father' and engaged for long periods of time in activities that are insufficiently valued.<sup>246</sup>

Fathers may need more support to develop their relationships with their children. Research amongst boys<sup>247</sup> in particular reveals a high level of disappointment with their fathers. In one study, most regarded their mothers as *'more sensitive and emotionally closer to them than their fathers who were seen to be more jokey, but also more distant and detached.'* Many children wish to see more of their fathers, and this is especially the case in relation to non-resident parents.<sup>248</sup> Mothers are more likely to be seen as a source of help and emotional support.<sup>249</sup>

A common public perception is that children, especially boys, need fathers as 'male role models' if they are to become appropriately masculine, and that father absence is almost invariably harmful.<sup>250</sup> But fathers' identities and contributions are hugely diverse, and the research on child outcomes indicates that children benefit in similar ways from specific behaviours by their fathers and mothers. This suggests that there is no one identikit model of fatherhood or masculinity that is uniquely beneficial to boys (or indeed to girls), nor do children need different things from their fathers and mothers. However, there remains a lack of clarity in popular discourse about what qualities men should model, and how, perhaps reflecting the absence of any popular consensus about men's and fathers' roles with children.<sup>251</sup>

What is clearer is that positive parenting by the mother or the father (and ideally both, sharing the tasks and the stresses) makes more difference to children's outcomes than the simple presence of the father per se.<sup>252</sup> Positive father and mother involvement or care includes common factors such as *'warm, responsive and sensitive interaction; monitoring and guiding behaviour to set limits; spending time to listen and talk about the child's concerns; encouraging age appropriate independent action in the home and neighbourhood; caring for the child's physical welfare.'*<sup>253</sup>

Much of the literature outlined above presents an encouraging picture of increasingly involved fathers having a positive impact on child development. Nevertheless, it is also true that the behaviour of some fathers presents serious risks to mothers and children. A major NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) study of child maltreatment,<sup>254</sup> based on the views

245. Featherstone B., *Contemporary Fathering: Theory, Policy and Practice*, Bristol: Policy Press (forthcoming)

246. Henwood, K.L., Procter, J. (2003). 'The 'good father': Reading men's accounts of paternal involvement during the transition to first time fatherhood, *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 42(3)

247. Frosh S., Phoenix A., Pattman R. (2002) *Young Masculinities*, Basingstoke: Palgrave

248. Dunn J., Deater-Deckard K. (2001) *Children's views of their changing families*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

249. Frosh S., Phoenix A., Pattman R. (ibid.)

250. A similar, but slightly more developed, academic perspective is that of 'generative fathering', which focuses on the strengths of fathers' relationships with sons, however this concept suffers from the same problems as the more 'public' notion of "positive male role models." See, for example, Hawkins A.J., Dollahite D.C. (eds.) *Generative fathering: Beyond deficit perspectives*, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE

251. Cameron C., Moss P., Owen C. (1999) *Men in the Nursery: gender and caring work*, London: SAGE

252. Flood M. (2003) *Fatherhood and Fatherlessness*, The Australia Institute

253. O'Brien M. (2005) (ibid.).

254. Cawson P. et al, (ibid.)

of young adults, found fathers were consistently less likely to be seen as offering closeness, support and good role models than were mothers. Moreover, 20 per cent of interviewees were sometimes really afraid of their fathers and seven per cent were sometimes really afraid of their mothers (i.e. almost three times less).<sup>255</sup>

It is sometimes argued that mothers and fathers are equally likely to maltreat their children (through physical or emotional abuse, or neglect). But given that women are much more likely to be involved in the day-to-day care of children, the percentage of incidents involving men is disproportionate.<sup>256</sup> Moreover, fathers are more likely than mothers to inflict severe punishment. In addition, over 90 per cent of all child sexual abuse is perpetrated by known males – particularly brothers – and approximately one-third of this involves physical force.<sup>257</sup>

## Diversity amongst fathers

As a result of the factors outlined above (See 'European trends'), fatherhood is an increasingly complex and dynamic experience. For example:

Ten per cent of all families in the UK are stepfamilies and increasing numbers of children live with **stepfathers**.<sup>258</sup> Over 80 per cent of stepfamilies consist of the biological mother and a stepfather – and seven times as many resident step-parents are male than female. Legal definitions of fathering continue to stress the importance of biological links between men and children,<sup>259</sup> and specific support for stepfathers with the issues they face (e.g. negotiating a new role, conflicting loyalties, discipline) is minimal.

The numbers of **lone fathers** has increased threefold since 1970, to 178,000,<sup>260</sup> but they are still only 10 per cent of lone parents overall. In practice, lone fathers often seem to rely heavily (as do lone mothers) on relatives – particularly female relatives – for assistance.<sup>261</sup>

**Birth fathers** whose children have been placed for adoption have been insufficiently researched; one study challenges conventional assumptions, and shows that '*men's absence from the adoption process is not necessarily a matter of choice or an indication of a lack of concern for their child*'.<sup>262</sup> Birth fathers lack a legal right to any involvement in adoption proceedings when they do not have 'parental responsibility'.

Many **grandfathers** are actively engaged with grandchildren, and – like grandmothers – feel a strong emotional closeness with them. Grandparents, particularly grandmothers, play a key role as a source of childcare and practical support. Grandfathers are less likely to see grandchildren frequently if they are not living with their wife.<sup>263</sup>

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255. Figures here include stepfathers and stepmothers

256. For example, the influential NSPCC prevalence study found that, for the 25 per cent of the whole sample who experienced physical violence during childhood, the person responsible was most often the mother (49 per cent) or father (40 per cent). See Cawson P., Wattam C., Brooker S., Kelly G. (2000) *Child Maltreatment in the United Kingdom: A study of the prevalence of child abuse and neglect*, London: NSPCC and Cawson P. (2002) *Child Maltreatment in the Family: the experiences of a national sample of young people*, London: NSPCC

257. May-Chahal C. (2006) *Gender and Child Maltreatment: The Evidence Base*, *Social Work & Society*, Volume 4, Issue 1

258. The composition of stepfamilies varies significantly according to factors such as the age and number of children, social class and ethnic background. Stepfamilies also tend to be larger than biological families, and family incomes lower.

259. Lewis, C. (2000) *A Man's Place in the Home: Fathers and Families in the UK*, Foundations 440, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

260. Office for National Statistics (2005) *Focus on families*, ONS.

261. Barker, R.W. (1994) *Lone Fathers and Masculinities*, Aldershot: Avebury

262. Clapton G. (2003) *Birth Fathers and their Adoption Experiences*, London: Jessica Kingsley

263. Clarke L., Roberts C. (2003) *Grandparenthood: Its Meaning and its Contribution to Older People's Lives*, Research Findings 22, ESRC

The impact of fathers' different identities is also becoming of increasing interest to researchers and policy-makers, as the experience of fatherhood is cross-cut by issues of age, race, class, disability, faith and sexual orientation. Below we highlight some key aspects:

**Young fathers**, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are most at risk of becoming disengaged from their parenting responsibilities;<sup>264</sup> they are often characterised as 'irresponsible' or 'feckless'<sup>265</sup> and viewed with distrust and excluded by service providers.<sup>266</sup> However, many voice a desire for information, advice and inclusion.<sup>267</sup>

The limited research with **black and minority ethnic fathers** in the UK has tended to focus narrowly on the effects of 'father absence' among African Caribbean fathers; however there is evidence of non-resident fathers contributing in other ways to their children's lives.<sup>268</sup> Recent work indicates British-Punjabi fathers express a strong desire to provide for the family.<sup>269</sup> Fathers from some South-Asian communities are more likely to be unemployed or self-employed, highlighting the importance of understanding the relationship between ethnicity and social class. Although no research has yet been done, it is likely that fatherhood in Islamic families will be a focus for future research.

There are a small but increasing number of **gay fathers**, with fostering and adoption services and support groups emerging.<sup>270</sup>

There is currently little research literature on **fathers of children with disabilities or chronic illness**. Whilst fathers and mothers share many of the same experiences and responses to being a parent of a disabled child, there are some differences,<sup>271</sup> and relationships tend to be more 'gendered' than in other families. Fathers tend to be less involved with their disabled than their non-disabled children, partly because they tend to be more involved in physical activities.<sup>272</sup> There are significant barriers for disabled children and their parents in accessing services, including lack of skilled staff and equipment, and negative attitudes. In relation to **fathers who are disabled**, even less research is available; they tend to be invisible to service providers, and at disproportionate risk of social exclusion.<sup>273</sup>

264. Quinton D., Pollock S., Golding J. (2002) *The Transition to Fatherhood in Young Men*, ESRC: Trust for the Study of Adolescence; Dennison C. (2004) *Teenage pregnancy: an overview of the research evidence*, NHS: Health Development Agency.

265. Some young single fathers may experience praise by virtue of being a lone male parent undertaking an unusual role, but this is very much a minority experience. See Hirst J., Formby E., Owen J. University of Sheffield (2006) *Pathways into Parenthood: Reflections from three generations of teenage mothers and fathers*, Sheffield Hallam University

266. Ashley C., Featherstone B., Roskill C., Ryan M., White S. (2006) *Fathers Matter: Research findings on fathers and their involvement with social care services*, London: Family Rights Group

267. Quinton D., Pollock S., Golding J. (ibid.)

268. Phoenix A., Husain F. (2007) *Parenting and Ethnicity*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

269. Warin J. Solomon Y., Lewis C., Langford W. (1999) *Fathers, Work and Family Life*, London: Family Policy Studies Centre

270. Mallon G. (2004) *Gay Men Choosing Parenthood*, New York: Columbia University Press

271. Harrison J., Henderson M., Leonard R. (2007) *Different Dads: fathers' stories of parenting disabled children*, London: Jessica Kingsley

272. SCIE (2005) Research briefing 18: *Being a father to a child with disabilities: issues and what helps*, London: Social Care Institute for Excellence.

273. Kilkey M. (2007) *Disabled Fathers: Identifying a research agenda*, Working Papers in Social Sciences and Policy No. 20, University of Hull

## The legal and policy framework

'Nothing can ever rival or match the joy of becoming a father, and knowing what I can pass on to my children only adds to that'.<sup>274</sup>

Prime Minister, Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP

In the main, the policy of the Labour Government has tended to stress the need to take account of and support the positive impact that fathers can have on their children's lives, and in sympathy with arguments about the need to remove institutional barriers to them spending more time with their children and to support fathers' as well as mothers' parenting roles.<sup>275 276</sup> At the same time, the 'Respect' agenda has emphasised the importance of holding irresponsible parents to account; in line with this approach, there has been a continuing focus on the avoidance by some fathers of their responsibilities (e.g. in relation to child support). However, there has been less attention paid to the need to offer support to non-resident parents.

Whilst there are signs of a new approach, there are therefore also elements of continuity with the stance of previous Conservative administrations, which were largely preoccupied with restoring the economic obligations of fathers (e.g. through the setting up of the Child Support Agency). Current Conservative Party thinking appears to reflect the 'Social Justice Commission' report,<sup>277</sup> which argues that 'dadlessness' exacerbates children's underachievement, and that supporting marriage more strongly is essential. But recently a new strand has emerged, with the Leader of the Opposition voicing support for significant improvements to parental leave, and for this to be available for step-parents and lesbian partners.<sup>278</sup>

Over the last five years in particular, there has been increasing governmental emphasis on including fathers in policy and service delivery. However, the approach has not been coherent between or within departments, and local delivery has moved far more slowly than national policy frameworks.<sup>279</sup> Nevertheless, overall there has been a welcome trend to name explicitly 'fathers' and 'mothers' in key documents, moving away from framing policy in terms of 'parents', which often obscures the gendered implications of such policy.

The most positive promotion of father involvement is in the document 'Aiming High for Children',<sup>280</sup> the Government's response to the review on children and young people (as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review). This argues that: both fathers and mothers have the right to support from government to enable them to meet their responsibilities; services tend to be mother-focused and do not yet fully recognise the key support role of fathers; and funding through Children's Centres will increase so they can reach out to disadvantaged parents – and fathers in particular.

This agenda properly emphasises the importance of supporting fathers and mothers, and encouraging fathers to devote more time and priority to caring and housework. However, rhetoric

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274. Quoted in Brown S., McNeil G. (2008) *Dads: A Celebration of Fatherhood from Britain's Finest and Funniest*, Ebury Press

275. Williams, F. (1998) *Troubled masculinities in social policy discourses: fatherhood*, in *Men, Gender Divisions and Welfare*, in Popay, J., Hearn, J. and Edwards, J. (eds.), London: Routledge

276. Williams, F. (ibid.)

277. Social Justice Policy Group (2006) *Breakdown Britain: Interim report on the state of the nation*

278. Mulholland H., Family-friendly moves could challenge Labour, *the Guardian*, 15 March 2008

279. The Treasury/DfES policy document 'Every Child Matters' argued in 2003 that 'We should recognise the vital role played by fathers as well as mothers'. The DfES report *Every Parent Matters* (2007) also states that: 'Irrespective of the degree of involvement they have in the care of their children, fathers should be offered routinely the support and opportunities they need to play their parental role effectively'

280. HM Treasury/DfES (2007) *Aiming High for Children*

and policy measures to strengthen fathers' involvement can cause tensions – either for those mothers who see their primary role as looking after children and running the home, or for some fathers who may be resistant to efforts to involve them at home – and service providers need to be sensitive to these tensions in their work with parents.

Promoting more 'involved' fatherhood means acknowledging and working with the significant issue of men's violence to women and children, routinely encountered in the child protection caseloads of front-line staff such as the police and social workers.<sup>281 282</sup> This suggests the importance of policy and practice engaging more actively and more often with fathers when they are abusive (as well as when they are not), and greater joining up between the agenda of different government departments in relation to fatherhood and to violence against women and children.

Below we highlight some key policy areas:

### Leave arrangements

'With regard to the impact of family responsibilities, the most pressing need is to encourage men to take up parental leave and flexible working, and to make sure that when they wish to share the day-to-day care of their children with their partners, they are not penalised for doing so – there would be little point in transferring the disadvantage from women to men'.

Equality and Human Rights Commission, Submission on the Sixth Periodic Report of the UK to the UN Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), June 2008

#### Significant changes were introduced in leave policy in April 2003:

Fathers have been entitled to two weeks paternity leave, paid at a partial wage replacement rate. A 2005 survey reported increased leave-taking by fathers; nearly 80 per cent of fathers who took time off took paid paternity leave, sometimes in combination with other forms of leave.<sup>283</sup>

Fathers and mothers have had rights to take up to 13 weeks unpaid parental leave each during the first five years of their child's life, or 18 weeks for parents of children with a disability. Take-up has been very low, both for mothers and fathers – in 2005, eight per cent of fathers had taken some parental leave within 17 months of their child's birth, three-quarters for less than a week.<sup>284</sup>

Parents with children under age six (or with dependent children with a disability under age 18) have had new rights to request flexible working arrangements. Employers are now under an obligation to consider these requests and can only refuse where there is a clear business ground for doing so. In 2005, 47 per cent of mothers worked flexitime compared to just 17 per cent in 2002, and almost triple (11 per cent to 31 per cent) the number of new fathers worked flexibly.<sup>285</sup> However, fathers are less likely to be granted a request to work flexibly than mothers.

Parents also have the right to take time off work to deal with an emergency involving someone who depends on them. Both fathers and mothers take unpaid leave to look after children (e.g. when a child is ill) but the uptake is lower for fathers.<sup>286</sup>

281. Hearn J. (1999) *The Violences of Men*, London: SAGE

282. Scourfield J. (2006) *The challenge of engaging fathers in the child protection process*, in *Critical Social Policy* Vol 26 (2)

283. Smeaton D., Marsh A. (2006) *Maternity and Paternity Rights and Benefits: Survey of Parents 2005*. Employment Relations Research Series No. 50. Department of Trade and Industry

284. Smeaton D., Marsh A. (ibid.)

285. Smeaton D., Marsh A. (ibid.)

286. O'Brien R., Shemilt I. (ibid.)

In practice, fathers in higher occupational groups are more likely to have access to longer paternity leave, to have their statutory pay entitlement topped up by their employer, and to have greater access to flexible working. In contrast, fathers in lower-paid manual occupations (and Pakistani and Bangladeshi fathers) are more likely to use part-time working and special shifts; such working arrangements may not be a positive choice, but instead reflect their limited employment opportunities and concentration in certain types of work.<sup>287</sup>

The Government is in the process of extending leave provision to fathers, giving them the right to take up to 26 weeks Additional Paternity Leave (APL). But this is unpaid (and is therefore highly unlikely to be taken up by substantial numbers of fathers) and can only be taken in the first year of the child's life. It also depends on the mother having the entitlement in the first place, and will be conditional on her not using her full entitlement to Maternity Leave (which at 52 weeks is the longest period in Europe).

The Chief Executive of the Equality and Human Rights Commission has recently argued<sup>288</sup> there is a risk that the current approach to leave entitlements – and in particular the widening gap between the leave available to mothers and fathers – is entrenching the stereotype that it is women who do the caring, and undermining moves towards shared care (e.g. by failing to provide a workable choice for families who want the father to spend more time with the child).

Unfortunately, the notion of additional (well-remunerated) parental leave that could be used only by the father, along the lines of some Nordic schemes – has been rejected. Yet in Sweden, for example, the only leave policy initiative which has had any real impact on fathers has been these 'daddy months' (there are two now); not many men take much parental leave *except* for these months.

## Family separation

Separation often occurs in a climate of animosity, and presents problems for both resident parents (usually mothers) and non-resident parents (usually fathers) in adjusting to new roles and responsibilities. Whilst governmental responses have tended to focus on the legal system, there is a need to recognise and engage with the (gendered) psychological dimensions and complexity of these issues, whether in relation to the process of separation itself or the scale of depression which separation causes for resident and non-resident parents.<sup>289</sup> It is important to broaden the debate, from the narrow issue of legal rights and the enforcement of payments, towards improving support for relationships between both parents and their children before, during and after the emotional traumas of relationship breakdown.

It has been estimated that there are around two million non-resident fathers in the UK.<sup>290</sup> The nature and extent of the contact between non-resident fathers and their children varies and shifts over time. In the Millennium Cohort Study,<sup>291</sup> for example, 64 per cent of non-resident fathers were still in contact and involved with their nine to ten month old child. Overall, approximately 36 per cent of non-resident fathers paid maintenance for their nine to ten month old child, but where the father had more contact, he was also far more likely to pay maintenance. By age three, just under one-third of non-resident but involved fathers had drifted away from their earlier involvement. In contrast, some of those fathers who were described as having little or no interest when the child was aged nine to ten months (36 per cent), were said to be interested or very interested in their three year old child.

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287. EOC (2007) *Fathers and the Modern Family*

288. Nicola Brewer's speech at the launch of 'Working Better' consultation, Immarsat Conference Centre, London, 14 July 2008

289. Collier R., Sheldon S. (2008) *Fragmenting Fatherhood: A Socio-Legal Study*, Oxford: Hart Publications

290. Bradshaw J., Stimson C., Skinner C., Williams J. (1999) *Absent fathers?*, London: Routledge

291. Dex S., Ward K. (ibid.)

In recent years, ‘fathers’ rights’ groups have increasingly argued that fathers are the ‘new victims’ of family law systems, which have moved ‘too far’ in favour of mothers.<sup>292</sup> There is little doubt that politicians and policy-makers have taken notice of the growing ‘father’s rights’ movement, and that the movement has influenced the broader cultural context and increased the pressure for reform. Under the 2006 Children and Adoption Act, there is a responsibility on the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) to enforce contact orders,<sup>293</sup> if necessary by imposing penalties such as community service on resident parents. However, the Government has rejected the central demand of fathers’ rights groups for the introduction of a legal presumption to contact and shared responsibility. This refusal is supported by child welfare organisations, who have argued that a legal presumption prioritises the rights of adults and sidelines the views and best interests of children.<sup>294</sup>

Despite the claim that family courts favour women, in practice a pro-contact philosophy is increasingly common, both here and in many Western countries.<sup>295</sup> Indeed, judicial statistics show a low number of applications for contact are refused by the courts – less than one per cent, a figure that appears to be reducing over time. Whilst some argue this trend is enhancing child welfare by recognising the importance to children of sustained and substantial contact with both parents after separation, others believe it also gives cause for concern in the context of what is known about the extent of domestic violence.<sup>296</sup> Government guidelines do emphasise the need to take account of these risks in considering contact applications, but there is evidence of some children being put at risk through court decisions to order contact. Violence to mothers and children can not only occur when a father is resident, but can continue after they have left violent homes, and has a damaging effect on children who witness it. Figures from the 2001 British Crime Survey show that for more than one-third of women experiencing domestic violence (37 per cent), the abuse continued in one form or another, including stalking, after leaving the relationship.<sup>297</sup> There is also evidence of considerable overlap between men who are violent to their partners and who are also violent (physically and/or sexually) to their children<sup>298</sup> (see section on ‘Violence’, page 123).

Another source of huge tension has been child support arrangements. Prompted by the failure of the Child Support Agency and reflecting shifts in the social and legal climate (e.g. increasing public debate around parenting, responsibilities and rights, and childhood), in 2006 the Government proposed a new system. This will encourage parents to make their own arrangements, rather than apply a state-defined formula. Whilst this may work well for the small number of amicable separations, there are fears that in many cases lone parent mothers will get inadequate advice and support, and will feel pressurised into accepting inadequate financial support. Enforcement mechanisms against non-resident non-payers (usually fathers) will also be strengthened to include,

292. There is, however, considerable diversity between these groups. See for example Collier R., Sheldon S.(ibid.) and Featherstone B. (2009), *Contemporary Fathering: Theory, Policy and Practice*, Bristol: Policy Press

293. Although the impact of fathers’ rights groups has been limited, it could be argued that the contact provisions in Part 1 of the Children and Adoption Act 2006 (e.g. around enforcement) were a direct result of the reframing by Fathers4Justice of the debates/interventions by some judges.

294. See for example, Smart C., May V., Wade A., Furniss C., *Residence and Contact Disputes in Court: Research Report 6/2003*, Department for Constitutional Affairs and Smart C. (2004) *Equal Shares: Rights for Fathers or Recognition for Children*, Critical Social Policy, vol. 24(4). For further analysis of arguments in relation to the legal presumption, see Flood M. (2003) *Fatherhood and Fatherlessness*, The Australia Institute

295. Hunt J., Roberts C. (2004) *Child Contact with Non-Resident Parents*, Oxford: Family Policy Briefing 3, University of Oxford

296. Harrison C. (2006) *Damned if you do and damned if you don’t? The contradictions between public and private law*, in Humphreys C., Stanley N. (eds.), *Domestic Violence and Child Protection: Directions for Good Practice*, London: Jessica Kingsley

297. Of the female victims who had seen the perpetrator because of their children since they had split up, 29 per cent had been threatened, 13 per cent had been abused in some way, two per cent had had their children threatened, and in one per cent of cases the perpetrator had hurt the children. See Walby S., Allen J. (2004) *Domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking: findings from the British Crime Survey*, Home Office Research Study 276, London: Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate

298. Hester, M. (2006) *Making An Impact, children and domestic violence: a reader*, 2nd edition, Jessica Kingsley

for example, powers to take away passports or confiscate driving licences; some fathers' groups argue that such measures will undermine earnings and inhibit ability to pay maintenance.<sup>299</sup>

There is evidence that non-resident fathers on low incomes are often unable to afford appropriate accommodation post-separation in order to maintain contact with their child, or are pushed into poverty by funding second families. It is also important to recognise the continuing evidence that 'parents with care' (usually mothers) are parenting on low incomes too – and currently two-thirds of non-resident fathers pay no maintenance at all. Robust enforcement of child support, as part of the child poverty strategy, should sit alongside better provision for non-resident parents to develop and sustain their relationships with their children.

In contrast to the UK system, interest is rising in the more rounded approach of the Australian model, under which the formula for payments is based on a rational calculation of children's needs, and also offers support for many of the problems separated families face in terms of housing, work, benefits and relationships. The Australian model also involves the setting of a network of 'family relationship centres' and a national service to help fathers stay connected with their children.<sup>300</sup>

### Fathers on the birth certificate

If a child is born to an unmarried mother, the birth certificate can include the name of the father – and give him legal 'Parental Responsibility' with the mother – if he either attends the birth registration<sup>301</sup> or submits a form declaring he is the father. Both methods require the mother's agreement. If parents are married, then both names are added to the certificate automatically. At present around seven per cent of births are sole registered in the mother's name – 17 per cent of births among the unmarried.

In 2007, a Green Paper proposed to replace current arrangements with a system of automatic legal joint birth registration (with some exemptions). A research study commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions<sup>302</sup> argued that a legislative approach could be problematic,<sup>303</sup> and that non-legislative measures (including, for example, enhanced information, advice and support about birth registration) should be preferred.

However, the subsequent White Paper in June 2008 confirmed that legal changes would be introduced to make joint birth requirement a legal requirement for all unmarried parents, unless this is decided by the registrar to be '*impossible, impracticable, or unreasonable*'. Alongside this, the Paper sets out a series of non-legislative measures to support joint birth registration, and gives mothers a right to insist that the father registers on the birth certificate. It also gives a father a new right to insist that he is registered. There is no proposal for any sanctions against either parent for not identifying the father.

Opinion is divided as to the merits of some of the Government's proposals. There is a broad measure of agreement about the non-legislative proposals. For instance, the Family and Parenting Institute (FPI) strongly supports increasing the availability of information to help parents understand the implications of registering a birth jointly, and their responsibilities. The Fatherhood Institute (FI) argues that engaging with fathers around the birth is the 'golden opportunity moment' for intervention with them, and that these proposals may have a substantial knock-on effect in terms of fathers' engagement with services – and in their children's lives. The FI believes that the non-legislative proposals will impact significantly on culture and practice in maternity and teenage

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299. Robins J., 'DIY child support deals will hurt lone parents, warn campaigners', *The Observer*, 2 March 2008

300. Information from presentation by Professor Patrick Parkinson on child support in Australia, IPPR, 11/01/08

301. A change that was introduced in 2003.

302. Graham G., Creegan C., Bernard M., Mowlam A., McKay S. (2007) *Sole and joint birth registration: Exploring the circumstances, motivations and choices of unmarried parents*, Department for Work and Pensions, Research Report No. 463

303. Among the reasons given are that: for some mothers, sole registration is seen as being in the child's best interests; and a legislative approach would not be practical or appropriate, and would often result in the need for exemptions.

pregnancy services towards engaging with fathers in the antenatal period. The Institute supports the government proposal that, once every unmarried father is subject to a legally-enforceable duty to register his name on his baby's birth certificate, all these services must have a conversation with the mother about this fact, and must seek to engage with the father.

However, there is no consensus about the proposed legislative changes. Some organisations have argued that there is no compelling evidence for compulsory registration, and are concerned about the impact of legal intervention. For example, the FPI suggests that if a mother claims the father is abusive or violent and therefore seeks an exemption, and the father goes to court, it could put undue pressure on the mother when she is caring for a newborn baby and recovering from the birth.<sup>304</sup> Registrars themselves have also raised concerns about changes to their role and relationship with clients, moving them from being trusted recorders of facts to being investigators – and giving them power over decisions for which they feel ill-prepared. However, the FI argues that there would be sufficient safeguards in place. The new measures include provision for registrars to permit sole registration, and for a professional to advocate for this on the mother's behalf.<sup>305</sup> It believes the new legislation should prompt official intervention to minimise risk to the mother and child, and to change the father's behaviour, where necessary.

## Reproductive technologies

'While it was once entirely normative to treat paternity as a matter of pragmatics rather than biological truth, it is now almost impossible to keep secrets about biological paternity; those who seek to do so are increasingly identified as being outside appropriate moral boundaries'.

Smart C. (2007) *Personal Life*, Cambridge: Polity Press

For most of the twentieth century there was a preference for keeping family 'irregularities' secret, which has now been reversed to some extent.<sup>306</sup> It was felt for long periods that it was in the child's best interests for the husband simply to claim paternity, and indeed it was made lawful for husbands to register their legal paternity after the introduction of the Human Fertilization and Embryology Act (1990). The parents of children born through heterologous artificial insemination (AID) were also actively discouraged from telling their offspring about the nature of their conception. As late as the 1990s, the English courts were making decisions about paternity disputes which meant that the children could not undergo blood tests unless mothers were willing to expose their children to the possible knowledge that the man they thought was their father was in fact not biologically related to them.

Ideas about keeping paternity secret have changed, with increasing emphasis not only on the child's legal right to know the truth, but also on the belief that it is a psychological need. Fathers have become increasingly interested in establishing paternity, partly because proof can ease doubts, but also because it can provide relief from child support obligations.

In 2005, amendments to the Human and Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2005 allowed adult children of gamete donors access to identifying information about their donor; Donovan<sup>307</sup> suggests this reflects a shift in social trends in favour of the importance of genetic fathers. Diduck has also

304. National Family and Parenting Institute (2007) *Joint birth registration: promoting parental responsibility*, Green Paper response

305. This is similar to safeguards in child support legislation in many jurisdictions, where resident parents have been generally expected to provide the names of their children's other parent – unless their own or their children's safety would be compromised.

306. Smart C. (2007) *Personal Life*, Cambridge: Polity Press

307. Donovan C. (2006) *Genetics, Fathers and Families: Exploring the implications of changing the law in favour of identifying sperm donors*, *Social and Legal Studies*, 15(4)

308. Diduck A. (2007) 'If only we can use the appropriate terms to use the issue will be solved': *Law, identity and parenthood*, *Child and Family Law Quarterly*, 19(4)

noted<sup>308</sup> that knowledge of one's genetic origins is said to be not only in the child's best interests but also their right under Article 7 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 and Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights 1950.

As far as genetic truths are concerned, the law and family policies have shifted to accommodate the new trend with remarkable speed. The encouragement of contact is one example. The practice of step-parent adoption has fallen out of favour (a new stepfather could adopt his wife's child by a previous marriage, thus legally excluding the biological father). Now the idea of multiple parents is common, with more than two adults able to apply for 'parental responsibility'. Smart notes both the possibilities, but also the vulnerabilities, this can create for all concerned trying to manage the complex relationships in these 'new' families.

Academic opinions vary on the increasing 'fragmentation' of fatherhood. This trend opens up new possibilities. For example, separating 'fatherhood' (the status of being a father) from 'fathering' (the practice of being a father) can be viewed optimistically,<sup>309</sup> emphasising what fathers, of all kinds, do rather than who they are. However, there are also dilemmas. In particular, the concern with genetic 'truth' can be restrictive,<sup>310</sup> re-emphasising the primacy of biological paternity over other forms.

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill aroused great controversy in 2008. A key issue has been the provision that that IVF clinics no longer need to consider 'the need for a father' so formalising the right of lesbian couples to have test-tube babies.

## Service provision

'...much more can be done to release the potential improvements in outcomes for children through better engagement between fathers and services for children and families. This requires a culture change – from maternity services to early years, and from health visitors to schools – changing the way that they work to ensure that services reach and support fathers as well as mothers'.

HM Treasury/Department for Education and Skills (2007) 'Aiming High for Children'

A common criticism of services working with children and families is that staff spend most of their time working with mothers, and fathers and other male carers tend not to be engaged with<sup>311</sup> (especially if they lack legal 'parental responsibility' and/or are non-resident). On the one hand, it is argued that workers see women as ultimately responsible for caring for and protecting children, in a way that men are simply not expected to be. On the other, that fathers are denied effective support for their parenting role, and meaningful involvement in major decisions about their children, by not being engaged enough in statutory processes.<sup>312 313</sup> There is also sometimes a lack of confidence in children's services to engage with both mothers and fathers when they are in conflict.

It is important to recognise and respond to some of the tensions greater involvement of fathers in services may cause; for example, an increased male presence in what were formerly female-dominated services is likely to have significant implications for women and children – particularly those who have experienced violence from men. There are also issues for female workers in such

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309. Sheldon, S (2005) *Reproductive Technologies and the Legal Determination of Fatherhood*, *Feminist Legal Studies*, 13

310. Diduck A. (ibid.)

311. For a discussion of this in relation to child protection and domestic violence, see Farmer, E. (2006) *Using Research to Develop Child Protection and Child Care Practice*, in Humphreys C. and Stanley N.(eds.)(2006) *Domestic Violence and Child Protection*, London: Jessica Kingsley

312. Scourfield J. (2006) *The challenge of engaging fathers in the child protection process*, *Critical Social Policy*, Volume 26(2)

313. Ashley C., Featherstone B., Roskill C., Ryan M., White S. (ibid.)

settings.<sup>314</sup> And on the basis of the evidence from various caring professions that male workers are often promoted much more quickly than women with comparable skills, increasing the numbers of men in such professions may well mainly result in more male managers and not many more front-line male practitioners.

The 2007 Children's Plan<sup>315</sup> argues there is a '*need for public services to engage with both father and mother except where there is a clear risk to the child to do so*'. In line with this approach, a range of mainstream health,<sup>316 317</sup> education and child welfare services<sup>318</sup> are being encouraged to engage more actively with fathers, and various publications have emerged<sup>319</sup> on how to do this. But there are other services that engage with men as adults, but do not address them as fathers (e.g. mental health services, job centres and employment training provision).

One positive new parenting initiative ('Think Family'<sup>320</sup>) attempts to 'join up' local services more coherently in support of families 'at risk', based on the principles of a 'whole family' approach, the tailoring of support to particular needs and the building of family strengths and resilience.<sup>312</sup> This approach has the potential to support the parenting of disadvantaged fathers, and to tackle the factors that can lead them to be violent. The newly expanded role for Family Intervention Partnerships (which work holistically with families with serious social and family problems) also has great potential to expand effective and robust engagement with fathers in disadvantaged families.

The new Child Health Promotion Programme (2008) also emphasises the importance of maternity and child health services '*working routinely with both mothers and fathers (whether they are living together or not)*'. It requires that fathers and expectant fathers '*should be routinely invited to participate in child health reviews, and should have their needs assessed*'.

A recent development in working with violent men has been that of engaging with men simultaneously as perpetrators and fathers. This has been controversial as perpetrator and fathers' projects often have different emphases – the former prioritising control, the latter support.<sup>322</sup>

314. Featherstone B., Rivett M., Scourfield J. (2007) *Working with Men in Health and Social Care*, London: SAGE

315. Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007) *The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures*, Cm 7280

316. For example, The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (DoH, 2004) '*supports a cultural shift in all service provision, to include fathers in all aspects of children's well-being*'.

317. *Teenage parents: Next Steps* (DCSF, 2007) emphasises the need to develop a positive approach that assumes that young fathers being involved during the pregnancy and birth period is beneficial for the mother and child.

318. One of the performance indicators for Children's Centres is that they address the issue of how far they are reaching the most excluded fathers. See the Sure Start Children's Centre Practice Guidance and Planning and Performance Management Guidance (DCSF, 2006)

319. Bartlett D., Burgess A. (2005) *Working with Fathers: Six Steps Guide*, London: Fathers Direct; Fatherhood Institute (2007) *Toolkit for Father-Inclusive practice*; Lloyd T. (2001) *What Works with Fathers?*, London: Working With Men

320. Social Exclusion Unit (2008) *Think Family: Improving the life chances of families at risk*, London: Cabinet Office

321. In practice, the initiative commits £16m to the establishment of a series of 'Family Pathfinder' projects to test and develop the 'think family' model and generate and share evidence of what works on the ground. It also embeds early intervention and prevention within the existing system of support and extends tailored family services to reach a wider range of vulnerable families (e.g. through Family Nurse Partnerships and Family Intervention Projects).

322. Featherstone B., Peckover S. (2007) *Letting Men Get Away with It?*, *Critical Social Policy* 27(2)

**North Solihull Children's Centres Network:** in North Solihull, Action for Children increased the number of fathers and male carers reached through its network of Children's Centres, and improved the service offered to fathers by a combination of three strands of development activity:

- promoting awareness of Children's Centre services in partnership with the Campaign for Learning to 'put dads in the picture' – free family photos for fathers and male carers out shopping, and information-sharing about available services;
- working with fathers and male carers to make existing services more father friendly;
- increasing the recruitment and the capacity of workers to respond through training and local networking.

As part of the Early Learning Partnerships Project, funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), the aim was to widen father's participation in service delivery, increase their take-up of Children's Centre services to have a positive impact on their parenting skills and ability to help their young children learn and develop. To date, the project has engaged with over 500 fathers and male carers. Each activity, group, trip and mini project was developed and managed by fathers and male carers. The project has also disseminated best practice to professionals locally and nationally. The work North Solihull has been undertaking with fathers has been evaluated by the University of Oxford.

#### **Working with Pakistani Fathers and Children**

At Bradford YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association), the (female) Parenting Project Worker involves fathers successfully in courses for the parents of young offenders but also works regularly with Asian dads in schools and community settings. To reach the Asian dads, she worked closely with a community leader, who encouraged some dads to come. They were mainly from one area in Pakistan, about the same age and worked together. They started with just an hour's workshop and an activity, something they 'wouldn't normally feel comfortable with': bowling, swimming, taking their kids to the cinema. Gradually the fathers took ownership, with the facilitators becoming the 'invited guests'. Four pilot sessions proceeded into a full eight-week 'Dads and Lads' course (although adapted to 'Dads and Kids' as girls were involved), then to a follow-on course, then snowballed into other courses with other fathers. Some were found via Learning Mentors at a local primary school, who identified boys with behaviour concerns (including lack of self-confidence) and contacted their dads.

Eight courses, reaching more than 100 fathers, have now been held. Had funding not been so scarce, there would have been more, as there's no shortage of interested fathers. One has trained as a 'Dads and Lads' facilitator; others deliver some workshop elements – the beginnings of capacity building and community cohesion. This autumn, fathers from one mosque, worried about local lads' progress, obtained their own funding – and approached YMCA Bradford to run a course for them.

## Recommendations

**The Government should implement concrete measures to encourage men to share parenting and other care responsibilities with women,** by developing leave entitlements and encouraging men to take them up, creating financial incentives for caring work by men, and establishing information and awareness-raising initiatives, as recommended by the EU Council of Ministers.<sup>323</sup>

**The Department for Children, Schools and Families should take a lead role in developing a cross-departmental strategy to support men's positive and active involvement in their children's lives,** in order to implement the strong policy framework provided by the Children's Plan and 'Every Parent Matters'.

323. Council of the European Union, Conclusions on Men and Gender Equality, 30 November and 1 December 2006

**The Government's plans to introduce Additional Paternity Leave should be implemented as rapidly as possible so that parents can choose which of them takes leave to look after their baby.** However, without remuneration at above income support level, this is likely to have very limited impact. The most effective policy for increasing fathers' engagement would be the introduction of a number of months of paid leave that can only be used by fathers – based on successful models for 'daddy months' in Scandinavia.

**Statutory paternity pay should be increased substantially to enable lower-paid dads in particular to take time off.** Entitlement to paternity pay should be extended to self-employed fathers, and made more flexible in its operation.

**Easily accessible relationship support should be made available to all families,** at whatever stage, and in whatever format, for those who want help to deal with relationship problems or to pre-empt them. This includes couple and family counselling.

**In relation to child support, the formula for payments should be based on a rational calculation of children's needs.** In addition, the Government should explore the lack of availability of suitable affordable housing where non-resident fathers can have their children to stay, and of sufficient 'contact centres' where they can meet with their children in a supportive environment.

**Central government should increase efforts to bring about a culture change in children's services.** These should include: detailed written guidance for local commissioners of children's services, and for operational managers and staff; an adequately resourced national promotion strategy; the piloting of approaches to developing father-inclusive children's services in a small sample of local authorities; and central funding to support local implementation.

**Training for all those working with children and families should equip them better to engage with women and men around their relationships,** changing roles and responsibilities and commitments to children – and in particular to address the tensions and strains in intimate relationships.

**Strategies for the children's workforce (and for those working with parents) should be developed to create a workforce capable of delivering father-inclusive services.** This would include amending relevant professional training and in-service training, and occupational standards.

**Antenatal, child welfare, education and health services should engage with fathers actively and routinely (whether abusive or not) and support them to fulfil their responsibilities,** whilst recognising the continuing importance of safety issues for mothers and children. Public service providers should use the Gender Equality Duty as a positive tool to design services around fathers' and mothers' diverse needs. Inspection and assessment processes should evaluate the effectiveness of local services in supporting father-child relationships. Local authorities should be required to publish data on how they are engaging with fathers, including those in socially-excluded groups.

**The issue of men's violence to women and children need to be addressed in all policies and programmes on fatherhood,** and in particular in relation to fathers' contact with children after divorce or separation. Whilst there is evidence that some perpetrator programmes are effective in achieving behaviour change among some (but not all) men,<sup>324</sup> there is a need for more programmes – and further evaluation of such programmes – that seek to address violent men as fathers.

**The Department for Children, Schools and Families should establish a research programme to improve understanding of fatherhood issues.** Research priorities should include: how fathers engage with social care services; understudied groups (e.g. stepfathers, non-resident fathers, fathers from black and minority ethnic or faith backgrounds, fathers of disabled children); the impact of fathers' involvement on outcomes for children in vulnerable families; children witnessing fathers' violence; and children's perspectives on fatherhood.

324. Gondolf E. (2002) *Batterer Intervention Systems*, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE



## 7. Health

### **World Health Organisation**

#### **Strategy for integrating gender analysis and actions into the work of WHO (extract), 2007**

‘In order to ensure that women and men of all ages have equal access to opportunities for achieving their full health potential and health equity, the health sector needs to recognize that they differ in terms of both sex and gender. Because of social (gender) and biological (sex) differences, women and men face different health risks, experience different responses from health systems, and their health-seeking behaviour, and health outcomes differ.

‘In many societies, women have less access to health information, care, services and resources to protect their health. Gender norms also affect men’s health by assigning them roles that promote risk-taking behaviour and cause them to neglect their health. Furthermore, gender interacts with race and other social stratifications, resulting in unequal benefits among various social groups and between women and men’.

### **The Council of the European Union**

#### **Conclusions on men and gender equality (extract)**

**30 November and 1 December 2006**

The Council of the European Union:

‘stresses that the recognition of the gender dimension in health is an essential part of EU health policies and that health promotion projects and services should be tailored, as appropriate, to women’s or men’s needs’.

### **Council of Europe**

#### **Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)1 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the inclusion of gender differences in health policy**

The governments of Member States should:

- ‘in the context of protection of human rights, make gender one of the priority areas of action in health through policies and strategies which address the specific health needs of men and women and that incorporate gender mainstreaming;
- ‘promote gender equality in each sector and function of the health system including actions related to health care, health promotion and disease prevention in an equitable manner;
- ‘consider issues related to the improvement of access and quality of health services as these relate to the specific and differing needs and situations of men and women;
- ‘develop and disseminate gender sensitive knowledge that allows evidence-based interventions through systematic collection of appropriate sex-disaggregated data, promotion of relevant research studies and gender analysis;
- ‘promote gender awareness and competency in the health sector and ensure balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process; establish monitoring and evaluation frameworks on progress on gender mainstreaming in health policies’.

## Introduction

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## Men, masculinities and health

If the health of men and boys is measured against the World Health Organisation's classic definition of health – *'a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'*<sup>325</sup> – it is immediately apparent that they are not doing well in many key respects. The most obvious and compelling problem with men's health is their life expectancy; average UK male life expectancy at birth, although steadily rising, still lags behind female life expectancy by four years.

Highlighting differences between men and women should not, however, obscure important variations between groups of men in terms of social class, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity and other demographic characteristics as well as geographic location. Comparisons between men and women must be used primarily as a basis for identifying outcomes that may be susceptible to improvement, and not to imply that the health of the sex that is 'doing better' requires no further improvement. It is very clear that there are major issues facing women's health – as well as men's – that need to be tackled. It must also be remembered that men often contribute directly to women's health problems, notably through violence and abuse.

Men's health problems are directly related to the social construction of masculinities. Boys and men are still socialised to be tough and strong, to appear in control and to take risks.<sup>326</sup> Many men neglect their health, and for some men – especially younger men – their 'masculinity' is characterised

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325. Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organization as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York, 19-22 June, 1946; signed on 22 July 1946 by the representatives of 61 States (Official Records of the World Health Organization, no. 2, p. 100) and entered into force on 7 April 1948.

326. Doyal L., *Sex, gender and health: the need for a new approach*, BMJ 2001;323:1061-3.

327. Hearn J., *Men and Gender Equality Policy*, in Varanka J. et al (eds) (2006) *Men and Gender Equality: Towards Progressive Policies*, Conference Report, Helsinki: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

328. Patriarchy is a key analytical concept in feminist research and has been defined as *'the systematic domination of women by men and men by other men'*. See Chapman J. *The feminist approach*, in Marsh D, Stoker G, (eds.) (1995) *Theories and methods in political science*. London: Macmillan

by risk taking, an ignorance of their bodies and reluctance to seek medical intervention for suspected health problems.<sup>327</sup> It has been argued that patriarchy<sup>328</sup> not only harms women, but harms men's own health too; one study of 51 countries has suggested that there is a significant association between countries' levels of patriarchy (as indicated by female homicide rates) and men's higher mortality.<sup>329</sup>

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. Men expect their bodies to be capable of doing 'manly' things and not to be weak or vulnerable.<sup>330</sup> Many perceive health care as a 'fix-it' cure and use analogies such as going to the plumber to fix a leaking tap or a garage to get the car repaired. They often believe that their role is to 'tough out' illness for as long as possible rather than admit to what feels like a 'weakness'.

There are, without doubt, biological factors associated with specific men's health problems, such as disorders of the reproductive system (e.g. testicular cancer and prostate disease) and, to some extent, cardiovascular disease (linked to the absence in men of oestrogen, which has a protective effect). Black African and black Caribbean men have a much higher risk of developing prostate cancer, almost certainly for genetic reasons.<sup>331</sup> Biology also affects where men tend to store excess body fat – around their waists contributing to a higher risk of obesity-related diseases (this is a particular problem for South-Asian men<sup>332</sup>) – and the onset of baldness.<sup>333</sup>

It is clear, however, that it is the behaviour of men and boys that has a bigger impact than their biology on their health. If men's health problems were simply a result of biology, then there would be far fewer differences in key health outcomes – such as life expectancy – between men and women around the world. As it is, there is a four-year difference in life expectancy at birth between men and women in Sweden (men, 79 years; women, 83 years) and a 13-year difference in Russia (men, 59 years; women, 72 years).<sup>334</sup> Much of the difference in Russia is attributable to alcohol misuse by men as well as workplace and road traffic accidents, violence, smoking and a poor diet.<sup>335</sup> More positively, the extent of the impact of psychosocial factors on men's health means it is amenable to improvement through social and other policy measures.<sup>336</sup>

Masculinities almost certainly also impact on the way in which the health system views men. The Department of Health and the National Health Service are organisations which, at the highest levels, have historically been controlled mostly by men, but they have until very recently tended to ignore men's health issues. In so far as men have been considered, they have generally been viewed negatively.<sup>337</sup> Male risk-taking behaviour, and men's apparent unwillingness to take better care of their own health, led many to assume that any attempt to improve men's health was largely futile. Men in general have also often been seen as unreliable, irresponsible and difficult to work with. In particular, young men and black men have been seen as aggressive, and gay men have been held responsible for their sexual health problems. From this perspective, it is easy to believe that the finite resources that exist for healthcare should be allocated elsewhere.

329. Stanistreet D., Bamba C., Scott-Samuel A., *Is patriarchy the source of men's higher mortality?*, *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 2005;59:873-876

330. White A. (2001) *How men respond to illness*, *Men's Health Journal* 1(1):18-19

331. Ben-Shlomo Y. et al., *The Risk of Prostate Cancer amongst Black men in the United Kingdom: The PROCESS Cohort Study*, *European Urology* 2008; 53: 99-105

332. Dixit J., *Communicating the risks of obesity to South Asian men*, in White A. and Pettifer M. (eds.) (2007) *Hazardous Waist: Tackling male weight problems*, Oxford: Radcliffe

333. There is some evidence that the impact of hair loss is not insignificant for some men, affecting their self-esteem and even being a factor in depression) See M. Alfonso et al., *The psychosocial impact of hair loss among men: a multinational European study*, *Current Medical Research and Opinion* 2005 Nov, 21(11):1829-36

334. WHO data, <http://www.who.int/countries/en/> (accessed 19 May 2008)

335. McKee M. and Shkolnikov V., *Understanding the toll of premature death among men in eastern Europe*, *BMJ* 2001, 323:1051-5

336. White A., *Men's health – what's it all about*, in Conrad D. and White A. (eds) (2007) *Men's Health: How to do it*, Oxford: Radcliffe

337. Men's Health Forum (2002) *Getting It Sorted: A New Policy for Men's Health*. A consultative document, London: MHF

It has, moreover, been observed that the nature of medical training – described by one author, himself a doctor, as ‘the force-feeding of coping, survival, omnipotence, leadership and medical arrogance’ – leads to consultations with male patients that are less than conducive to dealing with issues such as sexuality and personal relationships.<sup>338</sup> Men receive significantly less of a doctor’s time in medical encounters than women and men are provided with fewer and briefer explanations. Although men are more likely to take risks with their health, they receive less advice about them.

## The policy context

### The emergence of men’s health as an issue

Historically, there has been little interest in what is now understood by the term ‘men’s health’.<sup>339</sup> Until the 1990s, it was an issue almost completely overlooked by government, health policy-makers and practitioners, the media and, not least, by men themselves. Although there were, from the late-1960s onwards, significant and much-needed developments in women’s health, pushed by an energetic grassroots women’s movement, there was not only no comparable pressure to address men’s health but also no awareness that an understanding of gender could contribute to an improvement in men’s health as well as women’s.

By the late-1990s, however, much had changed. The Labour Government elected in 1997 was committed to tackling health inequalities, and acknowledged that health was influenced by a range of social determinants as well as the behaviour of individuals. While the focus of attention was social class – and, to a lesser extent, ethnicity – brief references to gender as a health determinant began to appear in national policy documents as one of the issues requiring attention. Men’s health specifically was rarely mentioned in policy but, less formally, some ministers and officials at the Department of Health began to acknowledge that it was a problem.

At a more popular level, interest in men’s health issues was generated by the publication of an increasing number of glossy ‘middle-shelf’ men’s magazines, notably *Men’s Health* (launched in 1995). Like the other men’s magazines, it was aimed mainly at a young professional consumer, but its coverage of a broad range of health and fitness issues is likely to have increased awareness of men’s health more widely in the media, as well as among its readership.

The impact of these magazines has, nevertheless, been double-edged. As well as helping to ‘normalise’ health as an issue for men, they have simultaneously contributed to male anxieties about body image and ‘performance’, including at work and sexually. For example, one study of over 160 men aged 18-36 who were exposed to so-called ‘lads’ mags’ suggested that, especially for single men, such exposure could increase preoccupation with attaining an ‘ideal’ male body.<sup>340</sup> The health coverage in men’s magazines has also often sat uneasily alongside a celebration of dangerous risk-taking (especially in relation to alcohol consumption) and a view of women and women’s bodies that is both sexualised and misogynistic.

Viagra became available on the NHS, albeit on a restricted basis, in 1999. This generated enormous media coverage of a major and exclusively men’s health condition – erectile dysfunction – and, in turn, discussion of related issues, such as men’s relationships with women, depression, heart disease, diabetes, and men’s general reluctance to seek help from the doctors and other healthcare practitioners.

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338. Banks I., *No man’s land: men, illness, and the NHS*, *BMJ* 2001, 323:1058-60

339. See *Getting It Sorted* for the MHF’s definition of men’s health.

340. D. Giles and J. Close, ‘Exposure to “lad magazines” and drive for muscularity in dating and non-dating young men’, *Personality and Individual Differences* 2008:44(7), 1610-1616

But men's health – or a comprehensive approach to gender and health – continued to be largely overlooked by government and the NHS well into the early 2000s. For instance, the various National Service Frameworks, which provide guidance on tackling major disease areas, did not acknowledge gender in any meaningful way, and neither did the various policy reports on tackling health inequalities. The Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) – a reward and incentive programme for GPs introduced in 2004 – also did nothing to encourage them to take account of gender in general or men's health in particular. QOF points (and therefore money) were linked to GPs achieving a target in relation to a range of specified conditions; however, these targets took – and still take – no account of gender differences, whether in terms of incidence or outcomes.

However, there were a few exceptions to this generally 'gender-insensitive' approach. The most significant of these was the Department of Health's 'Women's Mental Health Strategy' (2003) which very comprehensively highlighted the importance of gender in health policy and practice. This document not only defined gender and described its significance – it is '*fundamental to our sense of who we are, the roles we adopt, the way in which we experience and perceive others and in which they perceive us*' – it also stated that '*one aspect of ensuring that service planning and delivery is sensitive to gender is to recognise when there is a need for gender specific or single-sex services*'.<sup>341</sup>

Support for this sort of 'gender-sensitive' approach was expressed by many UK health organisations attending the first UK Gender and Health Summit held at the King's Fund in November 2003.<sup>342</sup> In the same month, the Equal Opportunities Commission published the report 'Promoting Gender Equality in Health'<sup>343</sup> which also made a strong case for 'gender mainstreaming' throughout health services.

There was also recognition of the need to improve men's health in two specific policy areas. The national suicide prevention policy focused attention on the need to tackle the problem in young men.<sup>344</sup> Published in 2002, this was the first Department of Health policy report to mention men in any significant detail. Men were highlighted too in the Department's policy for the development of pharmacy services, published in 2005. This noted that men under-use pharmacies, and that access might be improved '*if they are perceived to be more men friendly*'.<sup>345</sup>

Finally, medical training began, belatedly, to address men's health. In 2006, the Royal College of General Practitioners launched a new interactive short course, Men's Health in General Practice, to help GPs, practice nurses and other primary care professionals expand their knowledge and understanding of men's health needs and improve their consultation techniques. The Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education (CPPE), which is funded by the Department of Health to provide continuing education for pharmacists in England, is currently preparing a similar educational programme.

## The Gender Equality Duty and health

Men's health did not begin to shift more into focus at the national health policy level until the passage of the Equality Act 2006. The legislation effectively seeks to 'mainstream' gender in policy and service delivery, through the creation of a duty on public bodies to promote gender equality. The impact of the 'Gender Equality Duty' (see 'Men, boys and policy', page 34) on men's health, as well as women's, could potentially be enormous. The Men's Health Forum (MHF) has highlighted the types of issues the Duty requires the NHS to tackle; these include men's access to GP services, men's under-use of smoking-cessation and weight-management programmes, the lack of health information targeted at men and, above all, their lower life expectancy.

341. Department of Health (2003) *Mainstreaming Gender and Women's Mental Health: Implementation Guidance*, London: DH

342. O'Sullivan J.(ed.) (2005) *Improving the Health of Men and Women*, London: EOC, King's Fund, Women's Health, MHF, DH, EMHDF

343. Doyal L., Payne S., Cameron A. (2003) *Promoting gender equality in health*, School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol, Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission

344. Department of Health (2002) *National Suicide Prevention Strategy for England*, DH, London

345. Department of Health (2005) *Choosing health through pharmacy: A programme for pharmaceutical public health 2005–2015*, London: DH

In recognition of the need to pay more attention to men's health, the Department of Health consulted the MHF on its guidance to the NHS on the new legislation. The published guidance included this significant statement:<sup>346</sup>

*'It is vitally important that NHS organisations consider the different needs of women and men when developing policies and delivering services to the public.... [Gender] is a major factor in health care because of the vast differences in susceptibility to different conditions between men and women, and because of the different ways in which men and women access health services. Analysis of available data is necessary to discover who is using the service, and the levels of satisfaction of different services by men and women. Information may also highlight the fact that, for instance, disabled women, or men from a particular ethnic group, are dissatisfied with a particular aspect of a service, or do not use it. In this case, an organisation would need to analyse the reasons for this, and take steps to remedy the situation.*

*'For instance, men in general do not access primary health care as often as women; they tend to wait until symptoms are serious or can no longer be ignored. This leads to late diagnosis, and poor health, and in the long run costs the health service more money. NHS organisations may consider methods of targeting men to encourage them to use primary health care services. For example where GP surgeries run regular clinics for women's health problems, similar clinics could be run for men, with a targeted leaflet drop to male patients outlining the advantages of regular health checks and early diagnosis of problems.*

*'When developing health related programmes and activities, NHS organisations should consider the different ways in which men and women think about health, and how other factors, such as age, can affect these views...'*

The MHF researched the impact of the Gender Equality Duty in its first few months of operation. It focused on the Gender Equality Schemes (GESs) developed by Primary Care Trusts (PCTs). PCTs are central NHS organisations. They assess local health needs, manage the range of primary care services (GPs, dentists, optometrists, pharmacists), commission secondary care services and control 80 per cent of the NHS budget. Their GESs should have been published by the end of April 2007 and they are required to set out how the requirements of the Gender Equality Duty will be met.

This research was completed in late July 2007 and showed that compliance with the new legislation was surprisingly and disappointingly poor. Over one-third of the 152 PCTs in England had failed to publish a GES at all. Of those that did, most failed to comply with the majority of requirements for a GES, as specified in the official code of practice. The emphasis of most GESs was also on internal administration and process, not on how to achieve equitable outcomes between men and women.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) responded to the MHF's findings by conducting its own enquiry into compliance by PCTs. The EHRC found that, by early March 2008, 27 PCTs were non-compliant in that they had not published a GES; it also concurred with the MHF's view that the vast majority of published schemes were inadequate in many key respects.

These findings serve to highlight a longstanding problem with men's health activity at the local level – it has overwhelmingly been patchy, short-term and inadequately funded. It has almost always been generated by the enthusiasm of an individual or a small group of practitioners and rarely part of a PCT's or other organisation's strategic programme of work. This has also meant that initiatives, even where they appear to have been successful, tend to have been poorly evaluated (or not even evaluated at all) and not written-up in health or other journals. The largest men's health project in

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346. Department of Health (2001) *Creating a Gender Equality Scheme: A Practical Guide for the NHS*, London: DH

England – Bradford Health of Men, which was set up in 2002 as a Healthy Living Centre with a £1m five-year grant from the New Opportunities Fund and additional funding from local PCTs – is now winding down, without any assurances that the knowledge and expertise that it has succeeded in generating will become integrated into local policy and practice.

At a national level, however, more progress has been made. Since the introduction of the Gender Equality Duty there have been a number of significant government initiatives:

The Department of Health published a research study in 2008 by the Men's Health Forum and the School of Policy Studies at Bristol University into gender differences in access to health services – particularly in relation to cardiovascular disease, overweight and obesity, mental health, alcohol misuse, cancer and sexual health.<sup>347</sup>

The Department of Health has produced specific guidance for the NHS on creating a Gender Equality Scheme.<sup>348</sup>

The National Chlamydia Screening Programme has published a men's strategy (2007) which aims to drive up the numbers of young men tested for this sexually transmitted infection.<sup>349</sup>

The Government has announced an intention to introduce a national screening programme for men in their 60s at risk of abdominal aortic aneurysms. This is a condition overwhelmingly affecting men, in which – if undiagnosed and untreated – the aorta swells and eventually bursts; unsurprisingly, there is a very high mortality rate.

The Department of Health has established a National Cancer Equality Initiative Advisory Group whose members represent a wide range of equality issues (including men's health).

In 2008, the Department of Health appointed a senior-level gender equality 'champion', to help ensure that gender equality issues are mainstreamed in the Department's work.

In April 2009, the Men's Health Forum will become one of a small number of third-sector Department of Health Strategic Partner organisations. This is potentially of major significance for the profile of gender and health inequality issues at a national and local level.

**It is unrealistic to expect that one piece of legislation will, at a stroke, transform health policy and services. Moreover, the Gender Equality Duty was introduced at a time when PCTs were undergoing a major structural reorganisation, when many parts of the NHS were in financial crisis despite the huge increase in public spending on health in recent years, and when staff morale was in many parts of the NHS very low.**

While progress is likely to be slow, the new legislation does provide a major new tool to use in efforts to tackle men's health problems as well as women's. The health service can no longer ignore men's health or treat it simply as if it is an 'interesting' or even 'ethical' thing to do; it must now be addressed because there is a clear legal requirement to do so.

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347. Wilkins D., Payne S., Granville G., Branney P. (2008) *The Gender and Access to Health Services Study*, Final Report, Men's Health Forum/University of Bristol, London: Department of Health

348. Department of Health (2007) *Creating a Gender Equality Scheme: A practical guide for the NHS*

349. National Chlamydia Screening Programme, *Men too...* (Health Protection Agency; London, 2007)

### Men's Health Policy in Australia, New Zealand, Ireland and USA

The Australian Federal Government has recently announced that it will develop the country's first-ever national men's health policy.<sup>350</sup> The announcement focused on men's lower life expectancy (4.8 years); the much higher suicide rate in men; the high level of disease related to injuries; HIV/AIDS mortality; and the especially poor health of Indigenous men (average life expectancy, 59 years). There will also be a campaign to encourage men to see their GP for preventive health checks.

In New Zealand, the Government has launched a NZ\$3m programme to run over the next year promoting greater awareness of men's health.<sup>351</sup> The funding will go into initiatives aimed at encouraging men to be more aware of their health and to access healthcare. Workplace clinics and improved health information are part of the package.

The Irish Government launched its national 'Policy for men's health and health promotion' in early 2009. This stems from a commitment made in the national Health Strategy, published in 2001.<sup>352</sup> A broad-based steering group was tasked with developing the policy; it has looked at evidence of best practice both nationally and internationally and consulted widely. **However, the Irish Government has stated that it currently has no resources with which to implement any of the report's recommendations.**

In the USA, the Men's Health Network and other groups have been lobbying Congress for the past 15 years to create a Federal Office of Men's Health.<sup>353</sup> In every congressional session since 2000, House and Senate members have unsuccessfully introduced legislation ('The Men's Health Act') to establish such an Office. It would be responsible for developing strategies, co-ordinating awareness and outreach activities, recommending public policies and taking other actions that would encourage men to engage in positive health behaviours.

## The main problems with men's health

### Life expectancy and mortality

Life expectancy at birth in the UK now stands at 77 years for males, compared to 81 years for females.<sup>354</sup> 'Healthy life expectancy' follows a similar pattern: males can expect to live 62.3 years free from a limiting long-standing illness or a disability, and females 63.9 years.<sup>355</sup>

There are wide variations in life expectancy amongst different groups of men, especially by social class. In the period 2002-2005, males in the professional class (1) had a life expectancy at birth of 80 years compared to 72.7 years for men in the manual unskilled class (5).<sup>356</sup> Although life expectancy for men in all social groups has improved over the past 30 years, the relative difference has remained broadly unchanged.

350. See [www.health.gov.au/menshealthpolicy](http://www.health.gov.au/menshealthpolicy) for more information (accessed 6 July 2008)

351. See <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/3+million+funding+new+men+per+cent2+per+cent80+per+cent99s+health+programme> (accessed 29 July 2008)

352. Department of Health and Children (2001) *Quality and Fairness: A Health System for You*. Health Strategy, Dublin: The Stationery Office

353. Feinberg S., Lewis H.A. (2008) *Men's Health: A Report on Gender, Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities in Cambridge*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge Public Health Department

354. See <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/nugget.asp?ID=168> (accessed 29 July 2008)

355. Office for National Statistics (2008) *Social Trends 38*, Basingstoke: National Statistics

356. See <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=8460> (accessed 4 August 2008)

Social class variations can also be highlighted by comparing the data for different geographic areas: life expectancy for men in relatively-deprived central Glasgow is just 70.5 years,<sup>357</sup> for example, compared to 82 years in affluent Kensington and Chelsea in London.<sup>358</sup> There can also be wide variations in life expectancy within just a few kilometres: within the London borough of Camden, life expectancy at birth for males ranges from 70 years in St Pancras ward to 84 years in Hampstead ward.<sup>359</sup>

These social inequalities are also reflected in mortality rates. Although rates for men aged 25-64 have fallen in all social class groups since 1930, they have fallen disproportionately more in the better-off groups. In fact, mortality rates are similar today in unskilled groups to those for professional groups in 1930. By contrast, mortality rates in professional groups have fallen substantially, and are now almost three times lower than for unskilled groups.<sup>360</sup>

There are also likely to be inequalities in life expectancy related to ethnicity, but the evidence is inconclusive because ethnicity is not recorded on death certificates. However, there is compelling evidence that male Gypsies and Travellers have particularly high mortality rates, with one study suggesting that average life expectancy may be as low as 48 years.<sup>361</sup>

Canadian research has suggested that gay men have a lower life expectancy than heterosexual men, but the evidence is very limited and may in any case have changed now that HIV/AIDS mortality in gay men has declined.<sup>362</sup> A review of the health inequalities experienced by lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people in the UK does not mention life expectancy directly, but does comment that *'the health of many LGB people is affected by social exclusion, starting in youth and continuing through adulthood, resulting in a negative, cumulative effect across the life-course... people who are socially integrated live longer, whereas socially isolated people are at risk of earlier death.'*<sup>363</sup>

There is evidence that married men have lower mortality rates than unmarried, divorced or widowed men, although this is a complex issue to analyse.<sup>364</sup> A range of factors may be involved. For example, it may be that marriage protects individuals by generally providing them with healthier lifestyles, but it may also be the case that healthy people are more likely to marry or remarry than those with health problems. For married men, the more positive outcomes are likely to be linked to the care provided by their spouses; research shows that older men who live without women are likely to lack the protective support experienced by partnered men.<sup>365</sup> The suicide rate is known to be much lower among married men and there is also data suggesting that, after the age structure of the population has been taken into account, men who are married or cohabiting are most likely to report 'good' general health.<sup>366</sup> Bereaved men are at greater risk of death than women, particularly during the first 12 months following bereavement. Suicide rates and depression are also significantly higher in bereaved men.<sup>367</sup>

357. See <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/statistics/council-areas-map/glasgow-city.html> (accessed 29 July 2008)

358. Mayor of London (2008) *Living Well in London: The Mayor's Draft Health Inequalities Strategy for London*, London: Greater London Authority

359. Ibid.

360. West Midlands Public Health Observatory data. See <http://www.wmpho.org.uk/phlearn/pdf/MPHMM8.pdf> (accessed 29 July 2008)

361. Tavares M. (2001) *Gypsies and Travellers in Leeds: Making a Difference. An Exploratory Study on the Health Needs of Gypsies and Travellers*, Leeds: Travellers Health Partnership

362. Hogg R.S. et al., *Gay life expectancy revisited*, *Journal of Epidemiology* 2001;30:1499

363. Scott S.D. et al. (2004) *Sexual Exclusion, Homophobia and health inequalities: A review of health inequalities and social exclusion experienced by lesbian, gay and bisexual people*, London: UK Gay Men's Health Network

364. Government Actuary's Department data, accessed at [http://www.gad.gov.uk/Demography\\_Data/Marital\\_status\\_projections/2003/mortality\\_assumptions.asp](http://www.gad.gov.uk/Demography_Data/Marital_status_projections/2003/mortality_assumptions.asp) (18 June 2008)

365. Davidson K., Daly T., Arber S. (2003) *Exploring the worlds of older men*, in Arber S., Davidson K., Ginn J., *Gender and Ageing: changing roles and relationships*, Maidenhead: OUP/McGraw Hill

366. Matheson J., Summerfield C. (eds.) (2001) *Social Focus on Men*, London: The Stationery Office

367. Allen J. (2008) *Older People and Wellbeing*, London: IPPR

## Circulatory diseases

Circulatory diseases (which include heart disease and stroke) are the most common cause of death among males in the UK. In 2006, age-standardised death rates for circulatory diseases were 2,462 per million for males and 1,559 per million for females;<sup>368</sup> however, death rates have declined significantly over the past 30 years, particularly among men (down from 6,936 per million males in 1971). Nevertheless, men have higher coronary heart disease (CHD) mortality rates compared with women in all age groups, and men on average develop CHD 10 to 15 years before women.<sup>369</sup> In all age groups, there are more male deaths due to CHD, with the widest gap in the ages 45-54, where there are 4.5 times as many male deaths as female.<sup>370</sup> The risk of heart disease is particularly high among working-class men.<sup>371</sup> Men and women often experience different symptoms for CHD, with the 'typical' symptoms being more often experienced by men. This may mean that women are less likely to recognise symptoms in themselves, and tend to seek help at a later stage. South-Asian men living in the UK (Indians, Bangladeshis, Pakistanis and Sri Lankans) have a higher premature death rate from CHD than the general male population.<sup>372</sup> Data from the early 1990s show that the death rate for men in these groups was 46 per cent higher than average. Premature death rates from CHD for men born in the Caribbean and West Africa were much lower than average – around half the average rate for men.

Men born in South Asia also have a premature death rate from stroke which, in the 1990s, was 55 per cent higher than average for men. For those born in West Africa and the Caribbean, premature death rates for stroke were even higher. For men born in West Africa, the rate was nearly three times higher; for men born in the Caribbean, it was 68 per cent higher.

Despite these differences, there is very little national policy that takes gender differences into account.<sup>373</sup>

## Cancer

Cancer is the second most common cause of death among males in the UK. In 2006, death rates for males were 2,201 per million and for females, 1,569 per million.<sup>374</sup> The incidence of prostate cancer among men and breast cancer among women has risen considerably over the past ten years, and these are the most commonly diagnosed cancers for men and women respectively. For the ten commonest cancers which affect both men and women (excluding breast cancer, which is rare in men), age-standardised mortality rates are in every case higher in men.<sup>375</sup> The biggest difference in mortality between men and women is for bladder cancer, for which male age-standardised rates are three times higher.

In the past, there has been little consideration of the need for gender sensitivity in cancer services, but the NHS *Cancer Reform Strategy* (Department of Health, 2007) has highlighted the need for a better understanding of the issue: *'the reasons for the differences in mortality rates between men and women are not fully understood. In some cancers, such as lung cancer and oesophageal cancer, differences in smoking prevalence play a large part. In some other cancers, it may be due to later presentation by men. In melanoma for example, the incidence is higher in women, possibly because*

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368. Office for National Statistics (2008) Social Trends 38, Basingstoke: National Statistics

369. Fodor J., Tzerovska R. (2004) *Coronary heart disease: is gender important?*, Journal of Men's Health and Gender, 1(1):32-37

370. See <http://www.heartstats.org/datapage.asp?id=713> (accessed 29 July 2008)

371. White C. et al. (2008), *Social inequalities in male mortality for selected causes of death by the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification, England and Wales, 2001-3*, Health Services Quarterly 38:19-32

372. See <http://www.heartstats.org/datapage.asp?id=737> (accessed 29 July 2008)

373. Wilkins D., Payne S., Granville G., Branney P. (2008) *The Gender and Access to Health Services Study, Final Report*, Men's Health Forum/University of Bristol, London: Department of Health

374. Office for National Statistics (2008) Social Trends 38 Basingstoke: National Statistics

375. NHS (2007) *Cancer Reform Strategy*, London: Department of Health

*of the greater over exposure to sunlight, but death rates are higher in men, perhaps due to presentation at a more advanced stage.*' The Strategy suggests that research is needed in this area.

Survival varies by type of cancer and, for each cancer, by a number of factors including sex, age and socio-economic status. Black African and black Caribbean men are three times more likely than white men to develop prostate cancer,<sup>376</sup> and men with this cancer generally report a significantly worse experience of their care than patients with other common cancers.<sup>377</sup>

For the majority of cancers, a higher proportion of women than men survive for at least five years after diagnosis.<sup>378</sup> An analysis of data for patients diagnosed with cancer in 2000-2002 found that the relative survival rate for men was 47 per cent compared to 56 per cent for women.<sup>379</sup> The rates for England specifically were 45 per cent for men and 53 per cent for women; for Scotland, where outcomes were worst out of all the UK countries, the five-year relative survival rates for men and women were 40 per cent and 48 per cent respectively.

## Weight/obesity

Men are more likely than women to be overweight.<sup>380</sup> Women and men are currently equally likely to be obese; however, there is good evidence that, by 2015, 36 per cent of men are likely to be obese compared with 28 per cent of women. By 2025, only 13 per cent of men will have healthy body mass index (BMI) compared with around one-quarter of women.<sup>381</sup> Being overweight or obese creates a much higher risk of developing a wide range of diseases, not least cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

Self-perception of weight is also important. Research shows that women are more likely to report themselves as overweight, even when they are not, and to think that they are heavier than they are; men on the other hand are likely to think themselves lighter than they really are, even when overweight. Women also describe their ideal weight in terms of a lower BMI than men's perceptions of ideal weight, and men are less concerned with being overweight. A NOP survey, for example, found 42 per cent of men compared with 27 per cent of women reported that being overweight 'wouldn't bother me at all'.<sup>382</sup>

There are no gender-specific national targets in relation to overweight and obesity, and very little consideration of gender in the relevant national strategies.<sup>383</sup>

## Mental health

Sex differences in susceptibility to common mental health problems like depression are the subject of considerable debate. Although more women are diagnosed with depression, this may be because men are much less likely to seek help for the condition, or even because there may be a different symptomatology for men that is not yet widely understood by healthcare professionals.<sup>384</sup> In any

376. Ben-Shlomo Y. et al., op cit.

377. House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts (2006) Department of Health: *Tackling cancer: improving the patient journey* Nineteenth Report of Session 2005-6, London: The Stationery Office

378. National Statistics Online, Cancer statistics, 18 December 2007

379. Verdecchia A. (2007) 'Recent cancer survival in Europe: a 2000-02 period analysis of EURO-CARE-4 data' 8(9):784-96.

380. Office for National Statistics (2008) *Social Trends 38*, Basingstoke: National Statistics

381. McPherson K. et al. (2007) *Tackling Obesities: Future Choices – Modelling Future Trends in Obesity and the Impact on Health*. 2nd Edition, London: Department of Innovation Universities and Skills

382. Men's Health Forum (2005) *Hazardous Waist? Tackling the epidemic of excess weight in men*, London: MHF

383. Wilkins D., Payne S., Granville G., Branney P. (2008) *The Gender and Access to Health Services Study, Final Report*, Men's Health Forum/University of Bristol, London: Department of Health

384. See Kilmartin C., *Depression in men: communication, diagnosis and therapy*, Journal of Men's Health and Gender, Lancet Oncology 2005.62 Winkler D., Edda P., Kasper S., *Gender-specific symptoms of depression and anger attacks*, Journal of Men's Health and Gender 2006

event, an examination of some of the broader indicators of mental distress – such as the misuse of drugs and alcohol or ‘going missing’ – suggests that many men who may have no formal diagnosis of a mental health problem may nevertheless be struggling to cope.<sup>385</sup>

There is a clear difference in the suicide rates between men and women.<sup>386</sup> Until 1988, men aged 65 and over had the highest suicide rates; in 1986 the suicide rate among this group peaked at 26.3 per 100,000 population and then fell, to 13.0 per 100,000 in 2006. In contrast, suicide rates for younger men rose over the period, in particular for those aged 25-44, for whom the suicide rate almost doubled from 13.6 per 100,000 in 1971 to a peak of 26.9 per 100,000 in 1998. The suicide rate among men in this age group has since declined, but in 2006 remained the highest of all age groups and of both sexes, at 21.3 per 100,000. In 2006, the age-standardised rate for all men aged 15 and over in the UK was 17.4 per 100,000, three times that of women, at 5.3 per 100,000.

Recent evidence strongly suggests that suicide is also closely linked to income and social class – the higher the level of deprivation, the higher the suicide rate.<sup>387</sup> Data for England and Wales from 1999-2003 show the suicide rate for men aged over 15 in the most deprived areas was more than twice the rate of those in the least deprived areas.<sup>388</sup> There is evidence that young gay men in particular are more likely than heterosexual young men to attempt suicide and probably also to die. Homophobic bullying appears to be a significant factor.<sup>389</sup>

Men from African and Caribbean backgrounds are over-represented in mental health services.<sup>390</sup> They tend to come to the attention of services via the police and the criminal justice system, and are more likely to experience controlling responses from services. Black men are often unaware of sources of help, and fear that contact with services will lead to a loss of status. Black males find themselves in situations that place them at greater risk of mental health problems, such as exclusion from schools, social deprivation, crime and drug cultures and racial victimisation. Racism is clearly an important explanation for the poor mental health of this group.

Research studies of ethnicity and mental illness have tended to focus on treatment rates, mainly in clinical settings.<sup>391</sup> These studies show that black and minority ethnic men are more likely to receive a diagnosis of mental illness than their white British counterparts. However, the patterns of ethnic inequality are diverse. For example, African Caribbean men and, in particular, black British-born men are more likely to be given a diagnosis of schizophrenia than the general population. Men from Indian and Chinese ethnic groups, on the other hand, are less likely to be admitted to mental health services.

## Sexual and reproductive health

Men’s sexual and reproductive health is poor and in many ways becoming poorer. Prostate disease (both benign and malignant) is becoming more common: up to 2.5 million men in the UK are now believed to be affected by Benign Prostatic Hypertrophy (BPH) and this number is expected to increase by 50 per cent by 2025;<sup>392</sup> prostate cancer represents one-quarter of all new cases of cancer diagnosed in men (35,000 new cases were diagnosed in 2004).<sup>393</sup> Many men are unaware

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385. Men’s Health Forum (2006) *Mind Your Head: Men, boys and mental well-being*, London: MHF

386. Office for National Statistics (2008) *Social Trends 38*, Basingstoke: National Statistics

387. Platt S. et al. (2007) *The Epidemiology of Suicide in Scotland 1989-2004: An examination of temporal trends and risk factors at national and local levels*, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive

388. Office for National Statistics (2008) *Social Trends 38*, Basingstoke: National Statistics

389. Scott S.D. (ibid.)

390. Keating F. (2007) *African and Caribbean men and mental health*, London: Race Equality Foundation

391. See [http://www.menshealthforum.org.uk/userpage1.cfm?item\\_id=2168](http://www.menshealthforum.org.uk/userpage1.cfm?item_id=2168) (accessed 29 July 2008)

392. McNicholas T. (1999) *Management of Symptomatic BPH in the UK: Who Is Treated and How?*, *European Urology* 36: 33-39

393. See <http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/cancerstats/types/prostate/incidence/?a=5441> (accessed 29 July 2008)

of the symptoms of prostate disease (often believing that 'waterworks' problems are a consequence of old age rather than an underlying condition), and as a result suffer unnecessarily by not seeking medical advice.<sup>394</sup> The incidence of testicular cancer is also steadily rising<sup>395</sup> and this may be linked to a variety of other reproductive health problems that are also becoming more common in males, including infertility, undescended testicles and hypospadias (a congenital condition where the urethra does not open at the tip of the penis).<sup>396</sup>

With the exception of gonorrhoea, incidence rates of all sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are rising, with the increase being greater in women than men.<sup>397</sup> There were over 224,000 new diagnoses of STIs in men at Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) clinics in the UK in 2006, up from about 137,000 in 1997. Although the infection rates are rising for both heterosexual and gay/bisexual men, the Health Protection Agency reports particularly high levels of infections in men who have sex with men (MSM).<sup>398</sup> In 2006, there were an estimated 2,700 new HIV diagnoses in MSM and an estimated 5.4 per cent of MSM aged 15-44 are infected with HIV.

The estimated number of adults (aged 15-59) living with HIV (both diagnosed and undiagnosed) in the UK was 69,400 in 2006. Of these, 30,100 (43 per cent) were MSM and 14,700 (21 per cent) were heterosexual men. Of the heterosexual men, 8,900 (61 per cent) were African-born and 5,800 (39 per cent) were non-African-born.

The incidence among MSM of most STIs increased still further in 2006, so that, over the previous five years, gonorrhoea diagnoses increased by 25 per cent, genital warts by 21 per cent and genital herpes by 15 per cent. Following a 117 per cent increase between 2002 and 2006, infectious syphilis incidence in MSM stayed high in 2006, and most cases were in the non-HIV-infected.

The rising rates of STIs highlight the failure of sexual health promotion and treatment services to work effectively with men, especially MSM. The Gay Men's Health Network has identified gaps relating to HIV education in schools and to tackling the issues that impact on the ability to adopt healthy behaviours, such as accessible health resources, personal skills and motivation.<sup>399</sup>

According to a large, recent Office of National Statistics survey of contraception and sexual health,<sup>400</sup> more than half of men (57 per cent) reported making no changes to their behaviour as a result of what they had heard about HIV/AIDS and other STIs. However, 39 per cent of men said they had increased their use of condoms. Seven per cent said they had fewer 'one-night stands' and just three per cent had a test for STIs when they changed partners.

Sexual dysfunctions (such as erectile problems and premature ejaculation) continue to affect large numbers of men. Some 2.3 million men in the UK are believed to be affected by erectile dysfunction alone. It is a distressing condition in its own right, damaging self-esteem, causing anxiety and depression and affecting relationships. It can also be an indicator of underlying (and often undiagnosed) health problems such as diabetes or cardiovascular disease. Indeed, there is emerging evidence that erectile dysfunction can 'predict' many cases of cardiovascular disease,<sup>401</sup> creating a 'window' of perhaps three years during which time accurate diagnosis and treatment can only be helpful.

394. NHS (2004) *Making Progress on Prostate Cancer*, London: Department of Health

395. See <http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/cancerstats/types/testis/incidence/> (accessed 29 July 2008)

396. Aschim E. L. et al. (2004) *Risk factors for hypospadias in Norwegian boys – association with testicular dysgenesis syndrome?*, *International Journal of Andrology* 27(4):213-221

397. Wilkins D., Payne S., Granville G., Branney P. (2008) *The Gender and Access to Health Services Study, Final Report*, Men's Health Forum/University of Bristol, London: Department of Health

398. Health Protection Agency (2007) *Testing Times, HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Infections in the United Kingdom*, London: HPA

399. Scott S.D. (ibid.)

400. Lader D. (2007) *Contraception and Sexual Health 2006/7*, Omnibus Survey Report No 33, Newport: ONS

401. Solomon H. et al., *Erectile dysfunction and the cardiovascular patient: endothelial dysfunction is the common denominator*, *Heart*, March 2003, 89(3): 251-253

Despite greatly increased levels of public frankness about sex in recent decades, men are often unable to obtain the information they require in order to improve their sexual and reproductive health. Many men frequently delay seeking help when symptoms appear and struggle to achieve sexual fulfilment and the sense of well-being that can derive from rewarding sexual relationships.

Recent research published by Brook suggests that young men generally feel under-informed about where to go for sexual health services and advice.<sup>402</sup> They are almost certainly less knowledgeable than their female peers; only around half of all young men aged 11-15 years are aware of their local sexual health services compared to three-quarters of women of the same age. As many as one-third say they did not visit a clinic before having sex for the first time because they did not know where it was.

Young men also seem either to be unclear about what sexual health services can provide, or to have a limited view. A belief that services are set up primarily to treat illness and provide contraception is widespread, meaning that young men do not see them as potential providers of advice or support. Many young men still appear to believe ‘the umbrella myth’ – that they will be subject to an examination in which a small umbrella-shaped device is inserted in their urethra, opened and withdrawn – and this deters them from seeking help.

The Brook report comments that data on ethnicity are not very robust and, although some individual services achieve a high representation of young men from ethnic minorities, the specific issues which relate to the use of sexual health services by young men from black and ethnic minorities are not well understood.

‘Gender is considered frequently in sexual health policy in the sense that many services are for one sex or the other, but there is less consideration of the link between gender and help-seeking behaviour. The National Chlamydia Screening Programme has pioneered a strategy for increasing the take-up of services by men – currently the only strategy of its kind in any area of health provision’.

Wilkins D., Payne S., Granville G., Branney P. (2008) *The Gender and Access to Health Services Study, Final Report*, Men’s Health Forum/University of Bristol, London: Department of Health

## Risk-taking behaviours

An important part of the explanation for men’s poor health is the risks many take with their health. Risk-taking is closely linked to men’s sense of what it means to be male and what helps to differentiate men from women. For example, drinking is regarded by many young men as an important element of their social lives and a measure of masculinity. In one study, young men’s comments included ‘you’ve got to be a lad’ and they emphasised the importance of ‘keeping pace’ with their peers when drinking.<sup>403</sup>

Men, especially young men, are far more likely than women to drink heavily. In 2006, 40 per cent of men and 33 per cent of women in Great Britain reported exceeding the recommended amount of alcohol on at least one day during the previous week.<sup>404</sup> Although binge drinking among young women is increasing at a faster rate, men aged 25-44 were the most likely to binge drink (defined as the consumption of twice the recommended daily amount). In 2006, 31 per cent had done so on at least one day in the previous week compared with seven per cent of men aged 65 and over.

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402. Brook (2007) *Boys, young men and sexual health services: a summary of a review of the academic literature*, Accessed at: [http://www.brook.org.uk/uploads/File/lit per cent20review per cent20briefing per cent20final.doc](http://www.brook.org.uk/uploads/File/lit%20per%20cent20review%20per%20briefing%20final.doc) (13 March 2008)

403. Harnett R. et al (2000) *Alcohol in transition: Towards a model of young men’s drinking styles*, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 3, 61–77

404. Office for National Statistics (2008) *Social Trends 38*, Basingstoke: National Statistics

Death rates from alcohol-related causes are much higher among men than women, and the gap between the sexes has widened in recent years. In 2006, the male death rate was 18.3 per 100,000, more than twice the rate of 8.8 per 100,000 for women. The alcohol-related death rates among men increased in all age groups between 1991 and 2006, and in 2006 were highest among those aged 55-74, at 44.6 per 100,000. The alcohol-related death rate for men living in the five per cent most-deprived areas was more than five times higher than the rate for those living in the five per cent least-deprived areas.

According to the 'Gender Access in Health Services' report:<sup>405</sup> *'Policy tends to see the consequences of unsafe drinking as different for men and women; men become violent or take unwise risks, women may become more vulnerable to abuse or attack. It is possible that women feel more stigmatised by alcohol-related problems and this may influence their response to services – at the same time, women are more likely to use some services than men, despite men's greater level of problems.'* It concludes that national alcohol policy takes little account of the differences between men and women.

Men are also more likely to smoke cigarettes, albeit by a much smaller margin.<sup>406</sup> There is some evidence that gay men are more likely than heterosexual men to smoke, drink alcohol and misuse drugs, but further research is needed in this area.<sup>407</sup> Women's diets tend to be healthier than those of men – women consume more fruit and vegetables and less red meat, fat and salt than men – although the differences are not especially large and, overall, the diet of both sexes falls short of nutritional guidelines.<sup>408</sup>

Men are much more likely to be injured or killed by an accident, especially on the roads. In Great Britain in 2006, three times as many male road-users as female were killed and twice as many seriously injured.<sup>409</sup> Male casualties made up 58 per cent of all casualties but 76 per cent of those killed. The sex differences in traffic accidents can only partly be explained by the fact that men are more likely to drive cars and to drive longer distances. There is evidence that men are more likely to drive dangerously and aggressively.<sup>410</sup> Male drivers under 30 years old have the highest incidence of failing a breath test after being involved in a personal injury road accident. The failure rate for women was only about one-third of that for male drivers, a difference that cannot be accounted for by the slightly lower rates of testing for female drivers.

## Use of health services

Men are much less likely than women to use primary health care services. Overall, men in Great Britain visit their GP four times a year compared to six times for women. The difference in usage is most marked for the 16-44 age group – women of this age are twice as likely to use services as men. According to National Statistics analysis, the higher consultation rates by females is evident in all age groups except pre-school children, and is distributed across a wide range of illnesses in addition to the obvious needs of women to consult for contraceptive and pregnancy care.<sup>411</sup> There is a similar pattern for dental check-ups: women are much more likely than men to seek regular dental check-ups, and younger men are one of the groups least likely to seek regular check-ups.<sup>412</sup>

405. Wilkins D., Payne S., Granville G., Branney P. (2008) *The Gender and Access to Health Services Study, Final Report*, Men's Health Forum/University of Bristol, London: Department of Health

406. Office for National Statistics (Ibid.)

407. Scott S.D. et al., (ibid.)

408. See <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/ndns5full.pdf> (accessed 15 May 2008).

409. Department for Transport et al. (2007) *Road Casualties: Great Britain 2006*, London: The Stationary Office

410. The Social Issues Research Centre (2004) 'Sex differences in driving and insurance risk: An analysis of the social and psychological differences between men and women that are relevant to their driving behaviour', Oxford: SIRC

411. Bajekal M. et al. (2006) *Focus on Health*, Basingstoke: National Statistics/Palgrave Macmillan

412. National Statistics (2000) *Adult Dental Health Survey: Oral Health in the United Kingdom 1998*, London: The Stationary Office

Men who are economically inactive are more likely to consult their GP than those who are working, with 19 per cent of men in this group having consulted their GP in the last two weeks compared with eight per cent of those in employment.<sup>413</sup> There are also important differences in access by black and minority ethnic men. Black Caribbean men had a higher consultation rate, and Bangladeshi men were twice as likely to have contact with a GP, than men in the general population. This increased with age, with the highest consultation rate (seven per year) found in Bangladeshi men over 75 years.

Many men appear to have more negative attitudes towards emotional expression, and this helps to explain their under-use of mental health services.<sup>414</sup> This is partly a result of their perceptions of their own role – but it also reflects many men's experience that being emotionally expressive and/or displaying vulnerability may often not be well received by others. Gender differences in help-seeking behaviour in relation to mental health problems start early, with male teenagers reporting less understanding of mental health, more stigma associated with mental illness and less willingness to use mental health services. A survey of people aged 14-16 found that only 52 per cent of boys talked to their friends about their feelings more than once a month, compared to 82 per cent of girls.<sup>415</sup>

A relatively small proportion of men visit family planning clinics: in 2006-2007, about 1.1 million women attended compared to 117,000 men.<sup>416</sup> There is also evidence that men, especially young men, generally do not use community pharmacies as a source of advice and information about health.<sup>417</sup>

Men are much less likely to take part in mainstream health improvement programmes. Despite the high levels of weight problems in men, in the recent 'Counterweight' GP-based project in the UK only one-quarter of participants were male, while the pilot of one programme delivered in partnership with a commercial slimming organisation had a participation rate by men of 12 per cent.<sup>418</sup> Similarly, the vast majority of those signing up to a community pharmacy initiative to deliver weight-management services were women, with just 15 per cent of users being men. There are also clear and similar sex differences in participation in NHS smoking cessation programmes as well as the Expert Patient Programme and cancer support groups.

There is good evidence too that men make much less use than women of community-based services generally. Older men, for example, typically do not feel that organisations run specifically for their age group are appropriate for their needs, except perhaps as a last resort.<sup>419</sup> They tend to avoid organisations where the membership (and staffing) are dominated by women, and consider that attendance at a day centre suggests that they have 'given up'. Another significant barrier is ineffective referral policies; where older men are referred, whether by social services, GPs or PCT staff, they are more likely to attend.<sup>420</sup>

Men's lower usage of primary care services is reflected in a range of qualitative work that strongly suggests that men are frequently reluctant to seek help until they are in pain or convinced that they have a serious problem. One large study of men aged 25-35 found that men generally preferred to keep their health worries to themselves, and delayed going to the doctor for as long as possible.<sup>421</sup>

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413. Bajekal M. et al.(ibid.)

414. Branney P. and White A. (2008), *Big boys don't cry: depression and men*, *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment* (14)256-262

415. See <http://www.samaritans.org/pdf/F1EmotionalHealth.pdf> (accessed 4 August 2008)

416. See <http://www.ic.nhs.uk/statistics-and-data-collections/health-and-lifestyles/contraception/nhs-contraceptive-services-england:-2006-07> (accessed 29 July 2008)

417. PAGB and Reader's Digest (2005) *A Picture of Health: a survey of the nation's approach to everyday health and well-being*, London: PAGB & Readers Digest; Pawson R., Tilley N. (1997) *Realistic Evaluation*, London: SAGE; Community Pharmacy Research Consortium (1999) *The Public's Use of Pharmacies as a Primary Health Care Resource*, London: Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain

418. Men's Health Forum (2005) *Hazardous Waist? Tackling the epidemic of excess weight in men*, London: MHF

419. Davidson K., Arber S., 'Older men's health: a life course issue', *Men's Health Journal* 2003(2), 3:72-75

420. Ruxton S. (2006) *Working with Older Men*, London: Age Concern

421. Sharpe S., 'Attitudes and beliefs of men and their health', *Men's Health Journal* 2002(1), 4:118-120

The most frequent reasons given included that they did not want to waste the doctor's time, they were deterred by GP appointments systems, and that work or family responsibilities meant they had no time to deal with minor illnesses. Many men also considered it 'wussy' to talk about health problems and felt embarrassed to see a doctor about 'below the belt' problems.

For younger men especially, lack of familiarity with the health system may also be a factor. Young women tend to use health services routinely – for contraception, cervical cancer screening (after the age of 25), pregnancy, childbirth and their children's health – whereas men are not expected to use most services until they are actually ill.

Full-time working and long working hours have also been an important barrier for many men.<sup>422</sup> It is practically difficult for a man to attend a health service which is open only or mostly during the 'normal' working day if he is at work at the same time. Many men will, of course, have started work, or be commuting to it, during the critical morning 'window' when appointments can be made with a GP (see section on 'Work', page 45). There is also evidence that men may be deterred by a perception that primary care services are aimed mainly at women and children and feel like 'feminised' spaces.

Recent Danish research has examined the potential impact of men's lower contact rate with GPs and suggests that, because men present later than women with severe symptoms, it may be linked to higher hospitalisation and mortality rates.<sup>423</sup> This finding is consistent with UK and Europe-wide data on malignant melanoma which shows (as stated above) that while women are more likely to develop this type of cancer, men are more likely to die from it. The most plausible explanation is that men tend to present when the cancer is more advanced and therefore harder to treat. However, the reasons for men's apparently poor use of health services – and the consequences of this for health outcomes – are not yet well-understood and this area requires further investigation and research.

The UK Government has recently pushed GPs into extending their opening hours and this may make it easier for men to access services. There is also an intention to create different points of access to primary care, including sports centres/stadia, pharmacies and walk-in centres, and to explore the potential for delivering more health services via workplaces; again, these developments, if implemented effectively, have the potential to improve male access (see section on 'Work', page 45). It would also be useful to consider the potential role of other 'non-health' agencies that men may be in contact with, for example in the fields of criminal justice, housing, social care and post-school education, as well as those offering general advice. These services could, at the very least, provide their male users with information on health and refer them into the health system where appropriate.

'Evidence shows that men are less likely to access primary care networks than women. In order to ensure that services and information are reaching men, consideration could be given to providing information through workplaces, pubs, clubs and shops popular with men.

'Consideration should be given to tailoring appointment times so that both men and women can access the service easily. For instance, a surgery that only offers appointments between 9 and 5 would make it very difficult for those who work full time (men are more than twice as likely to be in full time work).'

Department of Health (2007) *Creating a Gender Equality Scheme: A Practical Guide for the NHS*

422. See [http://www.menshealthforum.org.uk/userpage1.cfm?item\\_id=1731](http://www.menshealthforum.org.uk/userpage1.cfm?item_id=1731) (accessed 29 July 2008)

423. Juel K., Christensen K., *Are men seeking medical advice too late? Contacts to general practitioners and hospital admissions in Denmark 2005*, *Journal of Public Health* 2008 30(1):111-3

## Health information

Health information has, until recently, largely been provided to patients and the public on a 'one-size-fits-all' basis. Some 60,000 organisations are believed to be producing healthcare information but only a handful has produced health information aimed specifically at men. Even fewer have produced information for men on issues that are not sex-specific, such as prostate cancer, or on sexual health for gay men. The vast majority of health information does not therefore take account of the different ways in which men think about their bodies and health issues. Against this background, it is perhaps unsurprising that there is evidence of significant differences in the health literacy of men and women.<sup>424</sup>

However, there have been some recent developments which suggest that male-targeted health information could have a positive impact. The Men's Health Forum (MHF) runs a health information website ([www.malehealth.co.uk](http://www.malehealth.co.uk)) specifically aimed at men. The site now receives over 140,000 'unique visitors' (i.e. different visitors) a month and the average 'stickiness' (i.e. length of visit) exceeds five minutes, a significant length of time in cyberspace. It is difficult to measure the site's impact, but surveys of visitors suggest they are more likely to make lifestyle changes and to visit a doctor if necessary. In addition, the MHF has developed health information in the format of car repair and computer maintenance manuals and these have been well-received by health professionals as well as male 'consumers'.

The NHS has recently begun to develop a more gendered approach to health information: for example, the NHS's 'Choices' website ([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)) now guides visitors to separate sections designed specifically for men and women, and there have been occasional magazines targeted at a male audience (*Fit* for young men and *Prime* for men aged over 40).

The development of health information that is targeted at men in general – and at specific groups of men in particular (e.g. older men, younger men, gay/bisexual men, black and minority ethnic men) – would be in line with recent national policy developments on a more patient-centred health system and current government interest in 'social marketing' approaches to health. However, there is currently no strategic approach in this area.

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424. See, for example, von Wagner C. et al., *Functional health literacy and health-promoting behaviour in a national sample of British adults*, *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 2007, 61:1086-1090. This found that men were twice as likely as women to have inadequate health literacy. See also, National Center for Educational Statistics (2006) *The Health Literacy of America's Adults: Results From the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy*

### **'Knowsley Pitstop'**

In 2003, Knowsley Primary Care Trust and Knowsley Council decided to take a social marketing approach to improving men's health, targeting older men, initially aged 50-65 years, as it is at this age that the early signs of long-term or life threatening conditions commonly begin to emerge and may be more effectively tackled through treatment, management and/or lifestyle change if identified early.

Focus-group work revealed that men of this age are interested in their health, but that a special effort to engage with them and remove barriers is necessary and that any campaign should be hard-hitting, humorous and not blaming of men. A two-pronged approach was taken to raising awareness ('Endangered Species – It's never too late to get healthier') and calling men to action ('Don't ignore the warning signs – Get a FREE health check').

Humorous, risqué 'road signs' got the message noticed; there was advertising on buses and local radio as well as in local newspapers. Community networks, such as social club stewards, were of critical importance. A 'Knowsley Man' health information booklet was produced in partnership with the Men's Health Forum, and a Pitstop 'web portal' to the Forum's website [www.malehealth.co.uk](http://www.malehealth.co.uk) was established.

Beer mats, urinal and toilet cubicle posters, stickers, pens, stress toys and car air-fresheners targeted 50 – 65 year olds on their own 'turf' – in pubs, social clubs and bookmakers. Humour was used to break down men's 'internal barriers' and to help get men discussing health. A comedy play toured local venues. An ex-Everton FC captain fronted the PR.

At the health checks, information was given in parking ticket, driving licence and AA-card style formats. Point-of-sale boards and Pitstop uniforms for staff were also developed. Checks included a lifestyle questionnaire, blood pressure, lung function, body mass index and others.

Follow-up research in June 2005 showed that awareness of men's health campaigns had increased and 57 per cent of local men were now aware that male life expectancy is shorter than female. Over 3,000 local men had health checks and 85 per cent of the men who were followed up after a health check reported lifestyle changes. Follow-up work continued with GPs and pharmacists to improve core services for men.

**Good practice: international experience**

The World Health Organisation has analysed data from 58 evaluation studies of interventions with men and boys in a range of health and health-related issues, including sexual and reproductive health, fatherhood, gender-based violence and programmes engaging men in improving maternal and child health.<sup>425</sup> Of the 58 studies, 24 (41 per cent) were from North America with smaller numbers from Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, and Asia and the Pacific.

The review found that well-designed programmes with men and boys showed compelling evidence of changes in behaviour and attitudes. Overall, 29 per cent of the 58 programmes were assessed as effective in leading to changes in attitudes or behaviour using the definition previously cited, 38 per cent as promising and 33 per cent as unclear. Programmes rated as being 'gender-transformative' had a higher rate of effectiveness. These were programmes with men and boys that included deliberate discussions of gender and masculinity and made clear efforts to transform gender norms.

Integrated programmes and programmes within community outreach, mobilization and mass-media campaigns also showed more effectiveness in producing behaviour change. This highlights the importance of reaching beyond the individual level to the social context – including relationships, social institutions, gatekeepers and community leaders.

The report concluded: *'In sum the behaviour and attitudes of men and boys that have often been considered unchangeable can be changed and lead to better health outcomes for men, their partners, their families and their children'.*

However, the report also observed that relatively few programmes with men and boys go beyond the pilot stage or a short-term timeframe.

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425. Barker G., et al. (2007) *Engaging men and boys in changing gender-based inequity in health: Evidence from programme interventions*, Geneva: World Health Organisation/Instituto Promundo

## Recommendations

**A range of actions are needed to improve men's health. It is important, however, that these are taken within the context of achieving gender equality.** This should help to ensure that there are also parallel improvements in women's health and that the two sexes are not pitched against each other in a competition for resources.

**Health policy and practice needs to take greater account of the differences between men (e.g. in relation to class, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability) in order to tackle men's health problems effectively.** To facilitate this, there is a clear need for further research in this field as well as more consistent and more widespread professional training on gender and health issues.

**Although the Department of Health has made significant steps towards addressing men's health issues in national policy, there is still an inconsistent approach across policy areas and gender is not yet fully integrated into the Department's work on health inequalities.** All national health policy must specifically address men's health within the context of the Gender Equality Duty (except where obviously inappropriate).

**Key national policy areas which are in particular need of review to take the issues facing men more fully into account include mental health, and cardiovascular disease and obesity, building on the findings of the 'Gender and Access to Health Services' study.<sup>426</sup>**

**Local implementation of the Gender Equality Duty has been poor to date. Primary Care Trusts in particular appear to have a limited understanding of gender and health issues and how to take effective action.** Local health organisations require greater levels of support as well as a tougher regulatory regime to ensure compliance. PCT Gender Equality Schemes must include specific objectives in relation to improved services for men and/or improved health outcomes for men.

**Action is needed to improve men's use of primary health services.** This requires long-term initiatives – such as improved health education in schools – as well as more immediate changes to the opening hours, location, marketing and ambience of services. A national strategy is needed to help achieve this. The Quality Outcomes Framework should be reviewed to take account of gender differences.

**There is a clear need for a much greater variety of male-targeted health information (using all appropriate media).** The Department of Health, the NHS and other statutory organisations must make a strategic commitment to achieve this, underpinned by more research and evaluation.

**The NHS needs to find more imaginative ways of consulting men about its policies and services; this is a requirement of the Gender Equality Duty.**

**There must be a strategic commitment by the Department of Health, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE), Strategic Health Authorities, PCTs and others to address men's health and gender in data collection and analysis, research and the evidence-base for public health improvement.**

**There needs to be more integrated policy and practice between health and non-health sector (e.g. workplaces, trade unions, sports stadia, prisons, faith organisations) in order to engage a much wider group of men.**

426. Wilkins D., Payne S., Granville G., Branney P. (2008) *The Gender and Access to Health Services Study, Final Report*, Men's Health Forum/University of Bristol, London: Department of Health



## 8. Education

### **UN Commission on the Status of Women**

#### **Conclusions on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality (extract), Forty-eighth session 1-12 March 2004**

The Commission urges UN agencies, Governments, the private sector, NGOs and other stakeholders, to:

- 'Develop and implement programmes for pre-schools, schools, community centers, youth organisations, sport clubs and centres, and other groups dealing with children and youth, including training for teachers, social workers and other professionals who deal with children to foster positive attitudes and behaviours on gender equality;
- 'Promote critical reviews of school curricula, textbooks and other information education and communication materials at all levels in order to recommend ways to strengthen the promotion of gender equality that involves the engagement of boys as well as girls...'

### **The Council of the European Union**

#### **Conclusions on men and gender equality (extract) 30 November and 1 December 2006**

The Council of the European Union:

- 'encourages the development, from early childcare and education, of pedagogic practices aimed at eliminating gender stereotypes, also paying attention to educational methods and tools that improve the capacity and potential of boys and men to care for themselves and others...'
- 'encourages the Member States to pay attention to the promotion of gender equality, as well as how men relate to it, through debate and information on gender stereotypes and the relations between men and women, especially with regard to young people'.

## Introduction

This section is broken down into the following categories:

International and European context (page 106)

Boys and 'achievement' (page 107)

The quality of boys' educational experiences (page 109)

Addressing boys' needs within the current educational climate (page 110)

A positive framework for engaging with boys' education (page 111)

The legal and policy framework (page 112)

- Specific policy issues (page 115)
  - Bullying (page 115)
  - Sex and relationships education (page 116)
  - Raising boys' achievement (page 117)
  - The numbers of male teachers (page 118)
  - The school curriculum (page 118)
  - Extra-curricular activities (including sport) (page 120)
  - Fathers' involvement in schools (page 120)
- Recommendations (page 121)

## International and European context

'One powerful force for change is the education system, which can influence gender equality in both positive and negative ways. Schools can be important sites for positive learning about gender equality and can facilitate a shift towards a culture based on gender equality. Gender sensitive curricula, classroom discussions on gender equality, teacher education that promotes positive role models, and sensitization of school administrators and parents are critical in promoting greater contribution of men and boys to gender equality. School environments can, however, also contribute to perpetuating gender stereotypes through biases in school curricula and materials as well as teachers' attitudes and behaviour'.<sup>427</sup>

Former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan

A range of UN reports have argued in recent years that 'gender mainstreaming' must be at the heart of any educational policy development and implementation. They refer both to the need for gender equality in education to be a goal and to *'the importance of boys and men being actively involved in making this happen'*.<sup>428</sup> It is noted that *'one powerful force for improving gender relations is the education system: schools can be important sites for positive learning about, and can facilitate a shift towards a culture based on, gender equality'*.<sup>429</sup> The focus is on gender equality in education but there is recognition that this will necessarily involve addressing and changing some aspects of the ways in which most boys and men currently feel, think and act. This dual approach – stressing gender equality while being sensitive to the ways in which gender can limit and condition life for boys/men (and girls/women) – informs the analysis and recommendations in this section.

A 'gender mainstreaming' framework makes it possible to address seriously boys' and men's needs whilst maintaining an overall focus on gender equality. In this way, it helps to guard against any approach that seeks to improve education for boys/men, but may undermine the education of girls/women. In most non-OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries, educational projects are, necessarily, aimed at improving the access of girls and women to educational opportunities. Yet there are examples (e.g. in the Caribbean)<sup>430</sup> where this approach has encouraged initiatives to address boys' educational experience and achievement. This framework

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427. Report of the Secretary General, *The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality*, Commission on the Status of Women, 48th session, New York: 1-12 March 2004

428. For example, see Connell R.W., *The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality*, United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, Expert Group meeting, Brasilia, Brazil, 21-24 October 2003, EGM/Men-Boys-GE/2003/BP.1

429. Report of the Secretary General, *The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality*, Commission on the Status of Women, 48th session, New York: 1-12 March 2004

430. In *Gender Mainstreaming in Education: A Reference manual for Governments and other stakeholders* (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1999) reference is made to how this approach has fostered work in The Caribbean on the problem of boys 'underachieving' at school

would enable other important work to be done, for instance, to support boys and young men in developing better emotional literacy and less rigid gender identities. It also fits well with initiatives to engage fathers more effectively in their children's education, which have started to emerge in schools and family learning projects (see section on 'Fatherhood', page 65).<sup>431</sup>

There appears to be a fair degree of consistency in terms of the, narrowly defined, 'educational levels' of girls and boys across European countries. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has attempted to assess and standardise measures of educational achievement of 15 year olds across countries in the OECD. On examining the European data, a pattern familiar to educationalists in the UK is apparent: girls do significantly better in reading; boys do as well or better than girls in Maths and there is no significant difference in Science.<sup>432</sup>

At European level, the Council of Europe has recently produced a series of recommendations to the governments of Member States on mainstreaming gender in education.<sup>433</sup> This document proposes that a gender perspective, aimed at encouraging gender equality, be incorporated into every aspect of education: from legislation through to teacher training; from curriculum design through to school governance and organisation. It presents a comprehensive outline of how gender equality in education should be addressed for the benefit of boys and men, girls and women. These recommendations are fairly sophisticated, thorough and highly relevant to education in England and Wales; they could be used as 'a guide for action' and detailed strategies developed to implement their recommendations within schools and other educational settings.

The rest of this section examines boys' and young men's experiences of education in the UK. It examines: how they are getting on, what difficulties they may be encountering and how their educational experience might be improved. Throughout, the intention is to promote a 'social justice' approach<sup>434</sup> which recognises both the negative impact of current gendered power relations as well as problematic aspects of many current 'constructions of masculinity', i.e. current ways of being boys and men. Educational policies should address gender equality, and the ways in which boys' and girls' gender development can be a limiting, restrictive process (both for individuals and for their relationships with each other).

## Boys and 'achievement'

The most publicly visible issue regarding boys' education is currently that of 'failing' or 'under-achieving' boys. This concern has largely been generated by a plethora of achievement data which show that boys are doing worse than girls in formal assessments in most subjects. Moreover, the differences between boys and girls are present in pre-school and persist through to university.

It is important, however, not to focus too narrowly on these crude measures of gendered educational performance. As will be outlined below, there is much more to education than exam results, and there are other aspects of boys' education that are equally important and currently in need of attention. But these statistics make the headlines and do reflect some problems with aspects of boys' educational experience.

431. Goldman R.(2005) *Fathers' Involvement in their Children's Education*, London: National Family and Parenting Institute

432. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (2003)

433. Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on gender mainstreaming in education, 1,006th meeting, 10 October 2007

434. For an outline of a social justice approach to the education of boys, see Reed L.R. (1998) *Zero tolerance: gender performance and school failure*, in Epstein D., Ellwood J., Hey V., and Maw J., *Failing Boys?: Issues in Gender and Achievement*, Buckingham, OUP

According to Government research and statistics:<sup>435</sup>

Girls, on average, do better than boys at GCSE: In 2007, 65 per cent of girls and 56 per cent of boys achieved the current 'benchmark' of five or more A\*-C grades.

Girls are more likely to sit 'A' levels and on average do better: in 2007, 54 per cent of 'A' level entries were girls, 46 per cent boys. Girls' pass rate was four per cent higher than boys. Girls get higher grades than boys at both GCSE and 'A' level.

In 2005-2006, the probability that a 17 year old male would participate in higher education by age 20 was estimated to be 30.5 per cent. For a 17 year old female the probability was estimated to be over seven points higher at 37.7 per cent.

While there are debates about how exactly to interpret these statistics and variations depending on specific subject and educational stage, the general picture is pretty clear: girls, on average, achieve better educational assessment marks than boys. The differences are highest in English and language-based subjects and minimal in Maths and Science. The differences exist before the age of seven and are maintained throughout schooling, with fluctuations along the way. In many subjects this difference in performance has been around for decades; in others it is relatively recent.<sup>436</sup> This alerts us to the fact that many of the issues, for example the concern about boys' literacy, have been around for a long time.

Beyond basic gender comparisons, it is essential to note that there are other factors – social class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, family structure and so on<sup>437</sup> – causing obvious differences in the educational achievement of boys and young men, differences between individual boys and differences between different groups of boys.

Most importantly, differences in achievement based on social class are far greater than differences in achievement between boys and girls. For example, the social class attainment gap at Key Stage four (as measured by percentage point difference of those eligible/not eligible for free school meals)<sup>438</sup> is three times as wide as the gender gap. A young boy's social class is a much better predictor of his future educational achievement than his sex. Boys from the higher professional class<sup>439</sup> are doing far better than the national average in educational attainment right across the curriculum, and far better than the majority of girls – just not quite as well as girls from the same social class. Similarly, girls who receive free school meals do much worse than the national average – just not quite as badly as boys who receive free school meals.<sup>440</sup>

Whereas the gender differences seem to be fairly consistent across all classes,<sup>441</sup> some statistical analyses suggest that they are wider amongst higher-achieving groups of girls and boys.<sup>442</sup> But although boys from the higher professional class do less well than their female peers at school, the effect of this slightly lower achievement on their quality of life is negligible (especially in terms of their future employment and careers). Nevertheless, the quality of these boys' educational experience – the extent to which they develop emotional literacy, learn positive self-esteem, learn how to relate equally, respectfully and constructively to women and other men – is a concern for them, as it is for other boys.

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435. DfES, *Gender and Education* (ibid.), and Broeke S., Hamed J. (2008) *Gender Gaps in Higher Education Participation: An Analysis of the Relationships between Prior Attainment and Young Participation by Gender, Socio-Economic Class and Ethnicity*, Research Report 08 14, London: Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills

436. For example, see Cohen M. (1998) *A habit of healthy idleness: boys underachievement in historical perspective*, in Epstein et al (ibid.). She points out that a gender gap in language-based subjects is not a recent phenomenon.

437. It is also important to recognise similarities as well as differences. See Becky Francis (2000) *Boys, Girls and Achievement: Addressing the classroom issues*, Routledge Falmer

438. Note that free school meals are a fairly crude measure of social class, simply comparing the 13 per cent of pupils who are eligible with the 87 per cent who are not.

439. Based on the standard Office for National Statistics socio-economic classification, which differentiates social class differences more precisely than free school meals.

440. DfES (2007) *Gender and Education: The Evidence on Pupils in England*, Nottingham: DfES Publications

441. Gorard S., Rees G., Salisbury J., *Investigating the Patterns of Differential Attainment of Boys and Girls in School*, British Educational Research Journal Volume 27(2), April 2001

The greater significance of class does not therefore mean gender should be ignored, but it does locate 'the problem of boys' in proper context. In fact, the educational under-achievement of children (whether boys or girls) from poorer backgrounds is a much bigger problem. A social justice approach to gender and education will have little legitimacy unless this reality is acknowledged.

Turning to ethnicity, some black and minority ethnic groups (Indians and Chinese for example) get much better than average results in educational assessments, whereas others (Bangladeshis and Pakistanis, for example) get worse.<sup>443</sup> The average socio-economic class of a particular ethnic group is a fairly reliable predictor of their achievement, with ethnicity as an independent variable having little effect. There are ethnic differences in educational achievement which intersect with gender, but the gap between boys and girls is fairly consistent across all ethnic groups, though with a significantly larger gap between African Caribbean girls and boys.<sup>444</sup> Ethnicity is far less significant than class in determining educational achievement but obviously will (like class) have a significant impact on boys' (and girls') experience of schooling and education.

## The quality of boys' educational experiences

It is important to broaden analysis of boys' status and needs in education and society. The 'achievement issue' has received most media attention and triggered policies (so far with little success) aimed at getting boys to achieve at the same level as girls, but there are many other pressing concerns for boys and young men which their education could also contribute to addressing.

When addressing the educational needs of boys and men it is important to recognise that traditional gender inequalities and behaviours persist. Women still have less (structurally) powerful positions in society and at work and are still paid less, on average, than men (see section on 'Work', page 45). Violence against boys and men and against girls and women is predominantly carried out by boys and men (see section on 'Violence', page 123). As outlined below, policies could be developed to enable boys and young men to recognise and learn about these inequalities and the impact they have, and encourage them to take these issues seriously and think about how they can address them.

Many boys and young men also seem unhappy with aspects of their lives and identity at school, and in society generally. There is considerable evidence, much of it from research within schools, that the lives available to boys and men and the ways of being boys and men can be damaging and limiting, perhaps even more so than those available to girls.<sup>446</sup> In many ways, this unhappiness represents an important opportunity for exploring this agenda with boys and young men, and encouraging them to 'own' it – to see it as something that matters to them and that they should care about, rather than as something that other people say is important.

Boys still dominate in the classroom while bullying and disruptive classroom behaviour is more common amongst boys. Boys are much more likely than girls to be: excluded from school (80 per cent of permanent exclusions are of boys); be defined as having Special Educational Needs (7:3 male to female ratio); and be defined as having behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (8:2 male to female ratio).<sup>447</sup> Most boys seem to be affected, in some way or other, by anti-school peer groups. Boys seem to be hugely influenced by their peers and many of the masculinities on offer seem, in some ways, to be defined in opposition to formal education. Boys' behaviour is often

442. Gorard S. (2000) *Education and Social Justice*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press

443. DfES, *Gender and education* (ibid.)

444. DfES, *Gender and Education* (ibid.)

445. See Sewell T., *Loose cannons: exploding the myth of the 'black macho' lad*, in Epstein et al (ibid.)

446. Much of this kind of evidence has come from qualitative research exploring boys' sense of self, their views of others, and their masculinities. See for example: Frosh S., Phoenix A., Pattman R. (200) *Young Masculinities*, Basingstoke: Palgrave; Seidler V. (2006) *Young Men and Masculinities: Global Cultures and Intimate Lives*, London: Zed Books; and Martino W., (2001) *Powerful people aren't usually really kind, friendly, open people!: Boys interrogating masculinities in school*, in Martino W., Meyen B. (eds.), *What About the Boys?*, Buckingham: OUP

447. DfES, *Gender and Education* (ibid.)

'policed' to fit in with a limited range of acceptable behaviour patterns. Even boys who resist such gendered behaviour have to deal with it, as of course do girls. Boys and men are claimed to lack emotional literacy and emotional intelligence and when they display these intelligences are often harshly treated by their peers. Both boys and girls see girls as more caring and co-operative than boys, and able to negotiate more caring and supportive relationships. Boys and men are more violent and more likely to commit suicide. Many boys and men experience feelings of powerlessness in relation to others.<sup>448</sup>

The introduction to this report (see page 22) indicates that qualities such as those above are not biologically determined – indeed they are hugely influenced by factors such as the ways that boys are brought up, their negotiations with their peers, the surrounding societal culture and so on. What this suggests is that positive changes in the lives of boys are achievable, and that there is an enormous need for educational initiatives that are geared more towards: emotional literacy; understanding relationships; respect for others; developing self-esteem; challenging and exploring attitudes to women and to violence. Addressing these issues is likely to have a positive impact on boys' enjoyment of, and achievement at, school and education.

## Addressing boys' educational needs within the current educational climate

There is no point assessing the status and needs of boys and men in education and advocating a few positive policy suggestions (aimed at gender equality and/or addressing restrictive gender formations) without trying to work out how such policies might lead to actual changes that meet these needs. This means examining the general educational context and the wider social and economic climate, and its potential to enable the identified educational needs to be met. An educational project that really engaged with the kind of issues outlined above could only be 'mainstreamed' into the education system if the process involved some fairly significant changes to that system and wider society.

The general structure, ethos and language of education are significant. The increasing 'marketisation' of State education tends to work against more co-operation and equality within education generally. What has been termed a 're-masculinisation' of educational organisations<sup>449</sup> – including a shoring up of hierarchical structures of leadership and an overemphasis on 'targets' – will need to be countered if the development of more co-operative, caring, flexible, open, less competitive masculinities is going to flourish.

Further, there is research to suggest that the current educational climate makes it difficult for boys (or girls) to get a decent, rounded education. Whilst the principle of assessing the progress of teachers and pupils is widely accepted, there are serious concerns about the current over-emphasis on the importance of national tests, which may skew the curriculum in favour of those parts likely to be tested, and focus attention on those students most likely to help schools reach government targets.<sup>450</sup> Within such a climate, children are often seen as little more than '*value-added knowledge containers*',<sup>451</sup> and there is a tendency for policy responses to boys' 'problems' (no matter how well-intentioned) to involve narrow, and increasingly short term, targets. Having said this, there are some recent signs of the loosening of this targets culture, for example the recent abandonment of SATs for Key Stage 3 pupils and the development of more tailored and flexible forms of assessment.

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448. Seidler V. (ibid.)

449. This process is discussed by Pat Mahony in *Girls will be girls and boys will be first*, in Epstein et al (ibid.), and Haywood C., Mac An Ghaill M. (2001) *The significance of teaching English boys: exploring social change, modern schooling and the making of masculinities*, in Martino et al. (ibid.)

450. Children, Schools and Families Committee, Testing and Assessment, Third Report of Session 2007-2008, HC 169-I, House of Commons, London: The Stationery Office

451. See: Reed L.R., in Epstein et al. (ibid.), Haywood C., Mac An Ghaill M., in Martino et al. (ibid.)

The broader societal context is not necessarily conducive to fostering more co-operation and equality between boys and girls, men and women. Sharpening economic inequalities, the consumer culture, breakdown of communities: all these impact on boys' and young men's lives (as they do with girls). There have been several research studies which demonstrate that aspects of working class boys' masculinity and their attitudes to education are completely bound up with their, often sophisticated, understanding of the wider hierarchical society and their place within it.<sup>452</sup> Similarly, boys who are privileged also understand their place in the same hierarchy. Any effective policy will need to take account of this broader context, and be realistic in its goals.

## A positive framework for engaging with boys' education

Many of the issues raised here point to the need for boys to address, understand and reconstitute the way their masculine identities are constructed, develop and are lived out, both at school and in wider society. They suggest the need for many boys and men to learn how to engage in more equal, non-violent, relations with girls and women and with each other. It is also true that masculine identities are not constructed or acted out in isolation from feminine identities. Therefore, these issues need to be addressed with and by girls as well as boys, together and separately, to achieve lasting and effective change.

There are many stages in boys' and men's lives, and many educational and other settings/places where policy strategies are needed: from pre-school through family learning to university and 'life-long learning'; in schools and in less formal educational spaces such as youth clubs and voluntary groups/projects. Gender socialisation starts at birth and is reinforced throughout adult life. Clearly, what happens before secondary school is hugely significant in shaping boys' and girls' different educational paths. Similarly, for many, it is at university and beyond where different, gendered, working and caring patterns develop.

The focus in this section is largely on school and school-age boys and young men. While this is a definite limitation, it also reflects the fact that the vast majority of boys spend around 32 hours a week in school, and that unless the concerns about boys' education are addressed in schools, they will not be meaningfully addressed in other contexts. Recent research has also suggested that efforts to reduce gender differences in Higher Education participation should predominantly be aimed at improving the progress of young men prior to Higher Education.<sup>453</sup>

Developing masculinities in line with, and as part of, a broader social justice approach is important in itself, and is also an effective way to improve boys' educational experiences and achievements. In particular:

**Boys need to be educated to be equal**, to understand and believe in equality, including gender equality. The moral and practical arguments for equality need to be discussed and debated. By starting from boys' own experiences, including a recognition of their own feelings of powerlessness and/or power, this should also enable boys to understand the unequal relationships between boys and men, and the negative consequences inequalities cause. Here the experiences and insights of feminist struggles to gain gender equality will be invaluable, as will an approach that challenges boys to think through their behaviour, attitudes and values without 'blaming' them for their 'maleness'.

**Boys need to be able to explore what being a boy and being a man means.** Spaces need to be created in formal educational and other settings to address the constricting aspects of masculinity and explore what being a boy/man means, what it could mean, what boys/men (as well as girls/women) might want it to mean and what it should and should not mean. Challenging the 'laddish' culture in education, the peer group 'policing' of acceptable masculinities and the anti-education agenda of many boys will be

452. See, for example, Willis P. (1977) *Learning to Labour: How working class kids get working class jobs*, Farnborough: Saxon House, and Mac An Ghail M. (1994) *The making of men: Masculinities, sexualities and schooling*, Buckingham: OUP

453. Broeke S., Hamed J. (ibid.)

an essential part of this process. It will also be important to encourage boys to understand the economic and social structures that currently limit and influence the opportunities available to boys and men (e.g. in relation to parenting and other caring roles), and to empower them to reflect on how they want to respond to and overcome these constraints. Developing more emotional literacy and more caring, less destructive identities may well be desired, and boys talk about their sense that their friendships are often more superficial than those of girls.<sup>454</sup> However, it is important not to be too prescriptive or judgmental about what kinds of masculinity are 'required' but to let boys genuinely explore and remake their own masculinity.

**Girls and women, as well as boys and men, need to be involved in the whole process of addressing boys' educational issues.** This is not only a men's issue or a boys' issue – but also an issue for all. A gender-sensitive approach, alive to the differing gender constructions of boys and girls, needs to be developed by all involved in education. Further, it is quite clear that girls are active in the construction of prevailing masculinity, and boys and girls need to be allies around remaking masculinity.<sup>456</sup>

**The educational context and wider society will need to be reformed** to make it more conducive to achieving greater gender equality and addressing the restrictive and problematic aspects of masculinity. A key aspect of this challenge for schools is attempting to engage actively with pupils' parents and communities around these issues.

Only with such a framework in mind are schools likely to address issues such as: bullying; homophobia; violence; literacy problems; gendered subject choices; boys' educational achievement within education; fathers' involvement in their children's education at school and elsewhere – and contribute to creating more secure, exciting, caring, non-violent men and boys in society generally.

Moving to greater gender equality and reconstructing masculinities, changing the ways in which boys and men live their lives, could only benefit girls and would inevitably occur alongside continuing developments in femininities too. This report is focusing on the educational needs of boys and men but there is plenty of evidence that, despite the concern with 'failing boys', girls' experiences in education are not all positive.<sup>457</sup> The stresses and strains of achieving educationally and conforming to acceptable femininities can be severe for girls.

## The legal and policy framework

'Action to challenge stereotyping needs to be a key component of the whole school curriculum and, in particular, careers, work-related learning, citizenship and personal, social and health education at both primary and secondary school. It is important that schools set a framework which tackles the many factors that affect pupil attainment, including gender, ethnicity, and social class. Schools also play a key role in shaping the values and attitudes of young people and should take a lead in challenging gender-based harassment, bullying and violence. If schools are to be at the forefront of promoting gender equality in terms of outcomes for pupils, they also need to be at the forefront of promoting gender equality for their workforce'.

Equal Opportunities Commission (2007) *Gender equality and schools: guidance for public authorities in England*

The 2007 Gender Equality Duty (see 'Men, boys and policy', page 34) has provided a new mechanism for addressing equality issues within educational institutions, with schools making up the largest proportion of public bodies covered by the Duty. Every school is required, among other things, to: prepare and publish a Gender Equality Scheme, showing how it intends to fulfil its duties and setting

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454. Frosh S. et al. (ibid.)

455. Seidler makes clear that it is important to allow genuine exploration of identity and masculinity in Seidler V. (ibid.)

456. Becky Francis's work shows how girls and women are inevitably involved in the making of boys and men. See Francis (ibid.)

457. Epstein et al. (ibid.) note the stresses and strains of achieving and the testing regime on girls

out its gender equality objectives; consider the need to include objectives to address the causes of any gender pay gap; gather and use information on how the school's policies and practices affect gender equality in the workforce and in the delivery of services; consult with key stakeholders (e.g. staff, governors, parents, pupils) and assess the impact of current and proposed policies and practices on gender equality. The actions set out in the Scheme should be implemented within three years, and schools must report against the scheme every year and review the scheme at least every three years. As yet, it is too early to judge the effectiveness of the Duty in shifting policy and practice.

In responding to the statistics concerning boys' achievement, the current Government has certainly been active. When Labour came to power in 1997 they cited boy's 'under-achievement' as one of the biggest issues facing schools. Since 1998, Local Education Authorities have been required to produce strategies to improve boys' achievements. In 2000, Ofsted was required to include 'promoting boys' success' as one of the inspection criteria.<sup>458</sup> The Government has also made it very clear that any educational policies targeted at boys should not be detrimental to girls. They have produced very detailed and accessible evidence about the current picture,<sup>459</sup> commissioned research into why boys do less well than girls and how to develop strategies to try to improve boys' achievement,<sup>460</sup> resulting in some clear policy suggestions.<sup>461</sup> There is an acknowledgement that the causes of the gender differences are complex, that boys' peer groups can be anti-education, and even that masculinities may need re-working towards a different, more caring identity.

Yet the narrow 'achievement issue' has been the main point of departure for research, policy development and educational strategies (though there has been some focus on sex education and occasionally emotional education too). It has shaped the context within which work in this area is happening – and its limited impact.

There are three main strands that can be identified in the current policy agenda:

**1) Promoting Good Schools, positive educational practice:** This approach simply states the need for general good educational practice: clear leadership; a positive ethos; good systems; clear lesson planning; good pedagogic practice; well-paced lessons; early intervention when trouble occurs; challenging bullying; challenging abuse; committed staff; and using the latest technology to aid teaching. The idea is that if standards can be 'driven up' generally and there is 'zero tolerance' for bad practice, even 'failing boys' will be switched on and achieve. While most educationalists could agree on much of the good practice outlined, it is only one version of good education, heavily influenced by the 'Effective Schools' agenda.<sup>462</sup> One problem with this is that the actual messy experience of children and young people and their relationships, their behaviour, their selves and their learning, gets in the way. Another is the educational and wider societal context within which such policies are being developed, as identified earlier.

**2) Promoting 'boy-friendly' teaching approaches:** There have been a range of strategies developed to try to improve boys' achievement, which stem from the view that boys need different teaching strategies and techniques to girls. These include: boys' literacy schemes; 'lads and dads' reading initiatives (such as The Breakthrough Project); dads watching quizzes or going to DIY stores with sons; more male 'mentors' in schools; 'real men read' campaigns; 'boy-friendly books'; use of ICT; short targets; short learning tasks; competition in class; using footballers as motivators/role models. These policies do seem to have some effect on boys' educational engagement (though whether this goes beyond simply the short-term positive effects expected, due to the boys receiving special attention, is debatable). But there is the danger that such policy initiatives may reflect a 'boys will be boys' philosophy, and so reinforce problematic aspects of

458. See <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Database/boys/boysgovt.html> for a summary of government initiatives in this area

459. DfES, *Gender and Education* (ibid.)

460. See Younger M., Warrington M. (2005) *Raising Boys' Achievement*, University of Cambridge Faculty of Education, Research Report 636, DfES

461. See for example Gary Wilson's policy recommendations in Wilson G. (2007): *Raising Boys' Achievement*, London: Network Continuum and Wilson G. (2003) *Using the National Healthy School standard to Raise Boys' Achievement*, DfES

462. For a discussion of this agenda see Reed L.R. (1998) *Zero tolerance: gender performance and school failure*, in Epstein et al, *Failing Boys? Issues in Gender and Achievement*, Buckingham: OUP

masculinity.<sup>463</sup> It is not clear, for example, that dads should read with sons more than with daughters or that positive male mentors are needed for boys more than girls.<sup>464</sup>

There is undoubtedly a real tension between meeting boys 'where they are currently at' and not wanting to reinforce some traditional masculinities. Boys need to be engaged with 'where they are at' or else nothing can change. Some policies that are targeted at boys' preferred learning styles, or engaging boys' at school, appear to treat all boys as having different (special) educational needs.<sup>465</sup> But there are plenty of boys who read, write and concentrate as well as even the highest-achieving girls. Similarly, there are non-violent, emotionally literate, caring boys and men. This suggests that boys' learning styles may not, essentially, be all that different to girls'. There is a need to study the approaches and experiences of these boys and find out what is different' about them in comparison with other boys. Why, for example, do they do well without so-called 'boy-friendly' teaching or boys' reading schemes? Any boy-friendly policies adopted need to be self-consciously located within a broader gender equality project, as well as being aware of the assumptions they are making about what boys need and who they are.

**3) Changing the socio-cultural environment:** This approach is the least developed of the three. It accepts the need to challenge what is seen as the 'dominant', mainstream, 'laddish' masculinity in schools and the associated anti-school peer group. It argues that boys are more susceptible to peer group pressures and that a less 'macho' masculinity needs to be fostered within education. While this educational policy agenda rarely makes the connections between such a school-based boys 'laddish' culture and the wider educational and societal context, it is the expansion and extension of initiatives which seek to explore and challenge the cultures of masculinity within schools (and society generally) that would have most success in mainstreaming gender equality and developing more positive masculinities for boys and young men.

This approach could include: placing the exploration of identity, relationships and equality at the heart of sex education; involving students more in all educational processes, for example as part of 'Student Voice' projects and 'Action Research' around gender equality and gendered identity;<sup>466</sup> revitalising sex education and developing government initiatives to focus more on sex and emotional education, for example by expanding the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) initiative (see box below); teaching about gender equality and the damaging effects of inequality more generally in Citizenship, History and Social Science; exploring the risks associated with certain forms of masculinity within Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHCE); raising such issues in assemblies; instigating single-sex spaces for exploring gender identity. The educational research that listens to boys and young men discussing their masculinity, their lives, their hopes and their fears, demonstrates the vibrancy and energy with which they engage with such issues. These are clearly issues which they are motivated to explore.<sup>467</sup>

Current social policy initiatives are mainly from an 'Effective Schools' direction, with bits of the 'boy-friendly strategies' approach. Effective schools are important (although views differ on what 'effective' means). Strategies for engaging boys will be needed. Yet, in the long run, it is changing the socio-cultural educational context which is likely to be most valuable.

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463. This philosophy is discussed in some detail in Epstein et al. (ibid.) and Francis B. (ibid.)

464. See argument on recuperative aspect of such ideas in Epstein et al. (ibid.)

465. Reed L.R. (1998) *Zero tolerance: gender performance and school failure*, in Epstein et al. (ibid.)

466. See the student voice work of Michael Fielding in, for example, Fielding M. (2001) *Students as Radical Agents of Change*, *Journal of Educational Change* 2 (3): 123-141

467. See Seidler V. (2006) *Young Men and Masculinities*, London: Zed Books; Frosh S. et al (2002) *Young Masculinities*, Basingstoke, Palgrave; Sewell T., *Loose canons: exploding the myth of the 'black mach' lad* in Epstein et al. (1998) *Failing Boys?*, Buckingham: OUP, and many of the contributions to Martino W. and Meyen B. (eds.) (2001) *What about the Boys?*, Buckingham: OUP

**Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL)**

Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) is a comprehensive programme to develop the social and emotional skills of all pupils, through:

- a whole-school approach to create the climate and conditions that implicitly promote the skills and allow these to be practised and consolidated;
- direct and focused learning opportunities for whole classes, across the curriculum, outside formal lessons and as part of small-group work;
- using learning and teaching approaches that support pupils to learn social and emotional skills and consolidate those already learnt; and
- continuing professional development for the whole staff of a school.

The skills are in five groupings: self-awareness, managing feelings, motivation, empathy and social skills. These skills underpin positive behaviour, regular attendance, learning, employability and well-being and have the potential to improve social mobility.

The skills SEAL seeks to promote are essential for children and young people to achieve all five 'Every Child Matters' outcomes. SEAL helps schools to create a safe and emotionally-healthy school environment where pupils can learn effectively. The skills are an important component of PSHCE and help pupils to be responsible citizens.

Primary SEAL is organised into seven themes using resources with built-in progression for each year group within a school. Secondary SEAL builds on the skills developed at primary school that are particularly relevant to meeting the challenges of exams, training and work. It is organised into three themes.

Available materials include a guidance booklet and a wide range of additional resources on the website ([www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies)) and CD-ROM.

## Specific policy issues

### Bullying

Bullying is a significant problem for boys in schools. Over 50 per cent of school children see bullying as a big problem and over half of nine to ten year old boys report having been bullied recently.<sup>468</sup> Boys are more likely to bully and be bullied than girls. The Government's 'Every Child Matters' (2003) and 'Children's Plan' (2007) both state that children should have the right to be healthy and stay safe and free from harm. The Government has made children's well-being part of the inspection criteria. All schools are required to have whole-school anti-bullying policies, and the latest government policy document on bullying, including strategies on how to tackle it, is excellent.<sup>469</sup> The Government has taken the issue seriously and produced policy statements, websites and helplines. Strategies such as 'buddy systems' as well as using celebrities and videos to convey anti-bullying messages have been promoted. Encouraging victims of bullying to use one of three strategies: avoidance, 'standing up' and friendship-support are advocated. All schools state that they do not tolerate bullying, but it still happens: from physical abuse to verbal taunting, evidence from both surveys and action research shows that it is not being effectively challenged.

One aspect is homophobic bullying. Stonewall has found that nearly two-thirds of young lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) students have experienced bullying at school.<sup>470</sup> For example, 'gay' has now become a ubiquitous, often general, sometimes mild, sometimes nasty, term of abuse but one that also often reflects and reinforces homophobic attitudes. The Government has recently

468. See Oliver C., Candappa M. (2003) *Tackling Bullying: Listening to the views of children and young people*, Nottingham: ChildLine/DfES

469. Oliver C., Candappa M., (ibid.)

470. Hunt R., Jensen J. (2007) *The School Report: The experiences of young gay people in Britain's schools*, London: Stonewall

reminded schools that they have a legal duty to take steps to tackle homophobic bullying. But anti-homophobic policies, like anti-bullying policies, will have little effect unless they go beyond excellent policy statements, one-off assemblies and mission statements to engage seriously with the prevalent environment in schools. Spaces within education for exploring the way boys are and the effects of homophobia need to be developed as outlined above.

## Sex and relationships education

Boys tend to be less well-informed than girls about sex and relationships and about contraception. Only 48 per cent of boys report having been told 'a lot' or 'quite a lot' about sex and relationships by their parents; boys are less likely than girls to obtain information from their friends (43 per cent of boys compared to 56 per cent of girls) and magazines and newspapers (26 per cent of boys compared to 52 per cent of girls). Yet boys are often influential in deciding which form of contraception, if any, is used.<sup>471</sup>

Sex and relationships education is a potentially valuable educational space that could contribute to exploring masculinity (and masculinities) and associated risks and opportunities for both boys and girls. Despite sex education, teenage pregnancy rates are still the highest in Europe and many young people claim sex education is a fairly hopeless, marginalised, often purely 'functional' activity in schools. The well intentioned 'non-judgmental' philosophy underpinning much of this work leads to sex education largely being about giving children facts about pregnancy, contraceptives and sexually transmitted diseases. This does not enable them to explore their emotions, relationships, aspirations and identities in any meaningful way. Nor does it encourage thinking about sexuality, sexual inequalities and social justice in sexual and/or personal relationships. Boys need to be helped to identify and respect their own feelings and to explore their visions for their long-term future.

They need to learn, amongst other things, the importance of respect for women in relationships and the unacceptability of and damage that violence to women causes. Research on young people's attitudes to sex, violence and relationships highlights just how essential this is. One study explored the understanding and attitudes of over 1,300 children aged eight to 16 to domestic violence and revealed disturbing trends that suggest work in schools to address this issue must start at a very early age. Teenage boys in particular had worrying attitudes. Over 75 per cent of 11-12 year old boys thought that women get hit if they make men angry, and more boys than girls, of all ages, believed that some women deserve to be hit. Boys aged 13-14 were even less clear that men should take responsibility for their violence. Boys of all ages, particularly teenagers, have less understanding than girls of who is at fault, and are more likely to excuse the perpetrator<sup>472</sup> (see section on 'Violence', page 123).

### Educational programmes to tackle violence

Womankind have developed an education programme which is available for use in schools ([www.womankind.org.uk](http://www.womankind.org.uk)). The Westminster Domestic Violence Forum has developed domestic violence materials for use in primary and secondary schools. The second series of the 'Watch over me' video for secondary schools produced by Miss Dorothy.com addresses the issues of domestic violence within the classroom. The video follows a soap opera format with credible characters who young people can relate to. In addition, the National Union of Teachers has published a pamphlet on domestic violence with information about why there needs to be a focus on preventive work in schools, how domestic violence can be tackled through the curriculum and what schools can do to challenge gender stereotypes, as well as making the links to child protection and safeguarding children.

Local Government Association (2005) *Implementing the new domestic violence Best Value Performance Indicators*, [www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk)

471. Equal Opportunities Commission (2007) *Gender equality and schools: guidance for public authorities in England*

472. Similar findings were revealed by a study of young people aged 16-21 by Burton S., Kitlinger J., Kelly L., Regan L. (1998) *Young Peoples' Attitudes towards Sex, Violence and Relationships*, Edinburgh: Zero Tolerance Trust

Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHCE) should also be broadened to include a focus on preparing the next generation of fathers (and mothers) – and to begin a dialogue with boys and girls about their future role as parents – as Ofsted reports have suggested.<sup>473</sup> This should not be restricted to PSHCE, but also integrated into other aspects of the mainstream curriculum.

It is unlikely that such education could be routinely facilitated by regular school staff – as currently defined. However, it is equally unlikely that it will happen in anything other than a piecemeal way outside of school. One policy recommendation should be, in conjunction with a realignment of the curriculum content and time allocated to different learning at school, to broaden teacher training to train Sex and Relationship specialists just as there are Maths specialists.

There have been recent developments which could be extended: the SEAL initiative which seeks to introduce social and emotional aspects of education and learning into PSHCE is useful (see box above). Citizenship education can be used to address issues of sexual and relationship responsibilities. This is an area where some single-sex work may be valuable and some exploration of masculinity may be possible. There is some evidence of small-scale good practice including discussion and drama workshops.<sup>474</sup>

### Building Bridges

Working With Men's 'Building Bridges' project, funded by the Department of Health, sought to demonstrate how targeted work in schools can improve young men's engagement with Sex and Relationships Education (SRE). The aim was to develop an integrated approach to work with young men, both through targeted SRE sessions in schools and within sexual health and contraceptive services. A series of sessions and materials<sup>475</sup> were developed through pilots in four Bristol schools, delivered to about 100 young men in Years 9, 10, and 11; these consisted of six one-hour sessions covering communication in relationships, 'being a man', risk-taking (including sexually transmitted infections), accessing services and reflecting on values, attitudes and knowledge.

The young men found the emphasis on learning and practising practical skills useful and enjoyable. Active learning – 'doing rather than watching', using learning agreements and asking the young men for feedback – helped them to engage. The approach and skills of workers – including a positive attitude to young men and treating them with respect, and good group management skills – were essential to the success of the work. The work on access to services highlighted the importance of relationships and trust between young men and 'gatekeepers' (e.g. teachers, mentors, youth workers). Location of services was also critical to young men's willingness to attend.

Davidson N. (2003) *Building Bridges: Integrating school sex and relationships education and contraceptive services for young men*, London: Working With Men

### Raising boys' achievement

There have undoubtedly been many micro-initiatives aimed at classroom practice, resources and whole-school strategies which have had some effect. There have been some strategies advocated to change boys' anti-school culture, such as getting 'peer-leaders' on side when trying to promote learning and education as acceptable for boys.<sup>476</sup> There have been attempts to get dads and male mentors involved in boys' education, and a range of literacy projects such as 'Real Men Read', which have had some success. A recent document, 'Boys into Books 11-14', supported by the Department

473. Ofsted (2005) *Personal, social and health education in secondary schools*, HMI 2311

474. Wilson G. (2007) *Raising Boys' Achievement*, Network Continuum, and Bearne E., Warrington M. (2003) *Raising boys achievement*, Literacy Today (issue 35)

475. E.g. A 'Building Bridges' pack and game

476. See Wilson G. (2006) *Breaking through Barriers to Boys' Achievement: developing a caring masculinity*, Network Continuum

for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) offers a reading list for boys and ideas about how to make the library a 'cool' place to be for boys. Schools have tried 'Bring your dad to school days' to involve men in their children's education.

All such strategies have potential strengths and potential drawbacks. For example, encouraging boys to read is obviously positive, but should they read 'boys' books' because boys are different to girls and so need to read different books? Isn't this unfair on boys, denying them the chance to develop their emotional literacy? Do boys need to be switched on to reading through 'boys' books' and then carefully steered away from such limited, gendered reading? This debate is complicated and reflects the uncertainty about how we want boys and men to be and what gender equality means. The view that aspects of boys' gender development are limiting warns against over-emphasis on specific strategies to target boys.

As argued earlier, the key is to help boys explore what a successful life as a boy and man might look like, and so provide them with reasons and ways to succeed at school that they feel good about. The nature of 'male' employment has changed. A range of societal changes, including the emergence of feminism, have brought more confidence and motivation for girls. Boys of all classes and ethnicities need to imagine positive, exciting futures. They need to work out a way of growing up as men that they feel good about, and that enables them to have more equal relationships with each other and with girls and women. There has been very little work of this kind in schools.

### **The numbers of male teachers**

Men make up 44 per cent of all secondary school teachers, but only 16 per cent of all primary school teachers. On average, English primary schools have only three male teachers, and one in ten do not have any men on the teaching staff at all. It is often argued that increasing the numbers of male teachers in schools – particularly primary schools – will improve discipline and achievement and provide 'positive male role models' for boys.

Nevertheless, it should not be assumed that men are more successful than women at engaging boys and young men, or that only they can do so. Although an increase in the numbers of male primary teachers would be welcome, the real issue is not how many there are, but who they are and what they do in the school. Ideally, male teachers can work alongside female colleagues to reduce the pressures on boys to conform to the narrow notions of masculinity – 'be tough', 'be independent', 'compete', and so on – that often come to dominate their lives. Alongside efforts to recruit self-aware men, this requires schools to provide opportunities for reflection and debate for all staff, and to make the promotion of gender equality central to their ethos.<sup>477</sup>

### **The school curriculum**

There are two main issues with regards to the curriculum that need addressing. The first, and most important, is that there needs to be a much more central space – ideally within the mainstream curriculum – for personal, social, emotional, moral and political education in terms of time, teacher training, status and resource allocation.

As has been discussed, this part of the curriculum should involve learning about gender inequality, social justice and the risks and problems associated with current masculinities (and femininities). Citizenship, PSHCE, SEAL and moral and social education need to be much more central to the curriculum.

The issue of violence against women should also be in the national curriculum; research by Ellis<sup>478</sup> on initiatives in educational settings found 73 local authorities had programmes (of varying lengths)

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477. For discussion of analogous issues in relation to nursery schools, see Cameron C., Moss P., Owen C., (1999), *Men in the Nursery: gender and caring work*, London: Paul Chapman Publishing

478. Ellis J. (2004) *Preventing Violence against Women and Girls: A Study of Educational Programmes*, London; Womankind

in operation in 2004 (see section on 'Violence' page 123), the most common pattern being six one-hour sessions with PSHCE. Some programmes promoted a whole school approach and made links to other education initiatives such as social inclusion and bullying, but how and to what extent individual schools embedded the work was unclear. The research also found that programmes were financed from a number of different sources, almost all short-term. This made the programmes insecure and potentially unsustainable.

Secondly, it is important to be aware of the gendered choices in education. There are persistent differences in subject choices between girls and boys. Girls tend to favour the Humanities and Human Sciences, with boys favouring Maths, Physics, Business and Computing. The national curriculum is currently not heavily gendered for pupils before they reach the age of 14 (though current attempts to give boys their own learning styles and materials may change this). But once options kick in, traditional gender choices are still very much in evidence. There have been some very good initiatives around Science which have succeeded in increasing girls' participation somewhat, especially in single-sex schools. These could be learnt from, and equivalent strategies developed, to encourage different choices for boys. Boys can not be forced into 'female' subjects but can be engaged with to broaden their horizons.

The choices young men and women make in school affect the kind of jobs, careers and worlds that they will inhabit. Guidance for schools on implementing the Gender Equality Duty<sup>479</sup> argues that schools have a key role to play in promoting non-stereotypical choices in the 14-19 curriculum. It suggests it is essential to ensure that young people have access to up-to-date information about sector workplaces and occupations, and to provide 'taster' sessions to give young people an opportunity to try out an area of learning before making their option choices (see 'Work', page 45).

#### **'Relationships without fear'**

The 'Relationships without fear' programme, developed in Stoke-on-Trent, provides young people with the opportunity to explore attitudes and beliefs which may contribute to abusive relationships. It encourages young people to look at rules and boundaries and examine early warning signs as well as providing information on where to go for help and support. The programme looks at different forms of abuse and stereotyping. In doing so, it aims to empower young people to be confident and to avoid, or address, abusive relationships. It equips educators to raise issues surrounding domestic violence.

'Relationships without fear' is designed so that it can be adapted to meet the individual requirements of schools or other settings. It follows a progressive reinforcement from Year Groups 4-11, building as the children move through the school. It is also mapped to aspects of the PSHCE and other curriculum subjects. Delivery is carefully monitored. This approach has proved extremely successful in affecting a positive attitudinal change to domestic violence by young people, as well as impacting on health and education outcomes.

To build sustainability and cost-effectiveness, the programme has evolved from being purely a direct delivery project to adopting a whole school approach. Basic awareness and information training is offered to all staff, while key staff are identified and trained to implement the programme. Experienced domestic abuse professionals offer on going support to school staff, and monitor delivery as well as providing individual support for pupils through a dedicated children and young persons' support worker. Additional support is in place through multi-agency links.

Local Government Association (2005) *Implementing the new domestic violence Best Value Performance Indicators*, [www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk)

479. Equal Opportunities Commission (ibid.)

## Extra-curricular activities (including sport)

Part of engaging with boys' (and girls') needs more would involve offering them a broader, more enjoyable educational experience through, for instance: more school orchestras, plays and productions, sports teams and outdoor trips. Educational experience needs to be widened away from a 'skills' and 'value-added' agenda towards a broader liberal-arts education. It is often only private schools, with their unequal access to resources, that provide the full range of extra-curricular activities which are so important to fostering positive personal development for boys (and girls).<sup>480</sup>

Within this extra-curricular context the relationship between sport and masculinity is particularly pertinent and controversial. Sport has long been seen as a site for encouraging and reproducing problematic masculinities. There is evidence and research to suggest that aspects of sporting culture reinforce some oppressive and damaging aspects of masculinity.<sup>481</sup> This has been most extensively explored in the context of men's involvement in football (both as participant and audience) but is also apparent in other sporting activity. It is important here to examine the different functions and effects sport has for boys and men with different masculinities; it has been argued, for instance, that over-emphasis on football can exclude some boys (e.g. those from particular minorities or who are disabled).<sup>482</sup>

The positive aspects of sport for boys and men also need to be acknowledged: physical pleasure, building relationships, friendships and connection with other boys and men, and the physical health benefits, are all valuable. Involvement in sport can be a useful, pragmatic way of addressing masculinity issues with boys and men who are alienated from mainstream services.<sup>483</sup> It can be argued that it is not football or sport that is the problem – few seem to think girls' football is a bad idea – it is the associated, often 'hyper-masculine' behaviour, and the type of boys' and men's friendships they can generate, that can be problematic. This is to do with the symbolic place which team sports have in cementing many boys' and men's identities. Alternative ways of getting physical exercise and enjoying sport could be promoted for boys, as well as exploring how to go beyond more superficial, 'bantering' friendships between men and boys.<sup>484</sup> In practice, although some early programmes (such as the YMCA's 'Dads and Lads') seldom moved beyond a focus on football to explore relationship and parenting issues,<sup>485</sup> a recent evaluation of the second phase of this programme suggests considerable progress. For instance, mothers and daughters have been involved, and fathers are accessing programmes for a variety of reasons, including a desire to take on more childcare.<sup>486</sup>

## Fathers' involvement in schools

Schools already have a responsibility to work with the fathers of the children currently attending: engaging with these men and creating a setting where they are welcomed, feel comfortable in and choose to go. It is now widely recognised that schools need to communicate proactively with fathers as well as mothers; be sensitive to the experiences and needs of non-resident fathers; organise school and extended school activities at times that fathers could easily attend; and so on. There is evidence that engaging fathers with schools has a significant impact upon educational outcomes for boys and girls, and on the environment and attitudes being reinforced in schools.<sup>487</sup>

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480. For example, Anthony Seldon, Head of the (private) Brighton College, has claimed that what makes 'independent' schools great is their extra-curricular opportunities. See discussion between Seldon and Adam Swift in *Prospect* (87), June 2003

481. Michael Gard discusses this in Martino et al (2001)

482. Frosh S. et al. (ibid.)

483. Featherstone B., Rivett M., Scourfield J. (2007) *Working with Men in Health and Social Care*, London: SAGE

484. See Martino W. et al (ibid.) and Frosh S. et al (ibid.) on the superficiality of many male, especially sporting, friendships

485. Lloyd T. (2001) *What Works with Fathers?*, London: Working With Men

486. Bartlett D., Featherstone B., Manby M., Jones K. (2006) Evaluation of YMCA 'Dads and Lads' programmes, [www.ymca.org.uk](http://www.ymca.org.uk)

487. Goldman R. (ibid.)

## Recommendations

**The Government should take steps to implement the measures set out in the 2007 Council of Europe recommendation on 'gender mainstreaming in education'.<sup>488</sup>** This should involve reviewing existing legislation and practices, developing mechanisms throughout the education system for promoting and implementing gender mainstreaming and monitoring and evaluating progress on a regular basis.

**The measures set out in the Gender Equality Duty provide a significant opportunity – and requirement – for schools to tackle inequality issues,** and in particular to explore and understand the differences between boys' and girls' experiences, attitudes and achievements, and to develop effective policy and practice in response. These requirements should form an important part of how Ofsted assesses the equality obligations of schools.

**The importance of personal, social, moral and political education should be recognised and significantly strengthened within schools and other educational institutions.** In particular, PSHCE (and within this, the social and emotional aspects of education and learning) should be made statutory during Key Stages 1-4.

**School curricula should be reviewed critically and developed at every Key Stage to address gender equality.** This should involve a positive commitment to expanding boys' gender identities, and tackling how gender constrains boys as well as girls.

**Concerted and planned programmes should be developed in schools to educate boys about the need for respect within relationships and towards women and girls more generally,** and to ensure they understand that violence against women and girls (and each other) is unacceptable. Education on emotional well-being, building healthy relationships and on tackling violence should be embedded across the curriculum.

**Boys and young men should be provided with opportunities within school and community contexts to learn the skills required for caring and domestic work** (including parenting effectively and co-operatively), and to explore and develop the place of caring roles in their lives.

**Equality specialists should be appointed to work with schools to mainstream gender equality and to highlight and assist them in addressing areas of concern which specifically affect boys,** such as anti-school peer-group pressure, as well as issues which specifically affect girls.

**'Gender sensitive' male teachers and male teaching assistants should be actively recruited into primary schools, particularly at junior levels.** Programmes for teachers should be developed on gender equity issues and the needs of boys.

**Male volunteers (including fathers and father figures) should be encouraged to come into schools far more, to talk about their lives and engage with their children's education.** Schools should ensure that their policies for parental involvement effectively reach and include men, including non-resident fathers.

**Sports groups should be encouraged to promote positive attitudes to gender equality among boys, and offer alternative ways of being a boy/young man.**

**It is important to develop, evaluate and disseminate examples and awareness of micro-teaching practice/strategies that are gender sensitive, engaging boys in learning (especially reading),** while recognising the need for such strategies not to reinforce traditional masculinities.

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488. Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on gender mainstreaming in education, 1,006th meeting, 10 October 2007



## 9. Violence

### **UN Commission on the Status of Women**

#### **Conclusions on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality (extract), Forty-eighth session 1-12 March 2004**

The Commission urges UN agencies, Governments, the private sector, NGOs and other stakeholders, to:

- 'encourage and support men and boys to take an active part in the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence, and especially gender-based violence... and increase awareness of men's and boy's responsibility in ending the cycle of violence, inter alia, through the promotion of attitudinal and behavioural change, integrated education and training which prioritize the safety of women and children, prosecution and rehabilitation of perpetrators, and support for survivors, and recognizing that men and boys also experience violence;
- 'encourage an increased understanding among men how violence, including trafficking for the purposes of commercialized sexual exploitation, forced marriages and forced labour, harms women, men and children and undermines gender equality, and consider measures aimed at eliminating the demand for trafficked women and children'.

### **The Council of the European Union**

#### **Conclusions on men and gender equality (extract) 30 November and 1 December 2006**

The Council of the European Union:

- 'acknowledges that the vast majority of gender-based acts of violence are perpetrated by men; urges the Member States and the Commission to combine punitive measures against the perpetrators with preventive measures targeted especially at young men and boys and to set up specific programmes for victims as well as for offenders, particularly in the case of domestic violence'.

## Introduction

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## Masculinities and Violence

'Every year some three million women will experience violence in one form or another. Rape, or the threat of it; assault, often at the hands of someone they know; intimidation through stalking; sexual abuse, either by a member of their own family or someone they know, much of it routine and known to others in the family; genital mutilation; and forced marriage.'

Trevor Phillips, Chair, Equality and Human Rights Commission

Men's violence represents a huge social problem, both in the UK and globally.<sup>489</sup> Whilst some women engage in acts of violence, men commit more serious and violent crimes than women; this gulf has been consistent over time, and is repeated in the statistics for other countries. Much of this violence – including, for instance, rape, sexual harassment and physical and sexual abuse – is inflicted on women and children (and girls in particular).<sup>490</sup> Other forms of violence – for example, football hooliganism, alcohol-related violence, rioting, racist attacks, bullying, military conflict – are predominantly directed at other men and boys. Men account for 75 per cent of all victims of homicide with rates three times that of female victims; the highest rates are for young men aged 15-29 years.<sup>491</sup> These manifestations of violence overlap in numerous ways, and there are complex and varied interconnections between them.

There are a range of ways to conceptualise the causes of male violence, including biological, psychological, role theory and cultural perspectives; however none of these appear sufficient in themselves to explain the extent and nature of such violence. What is clear, however, is that '*male*

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489. Hearn J. (1998) *The Violences of Men*, London: SAGE; and Pringle K., Pease B. (eds.) (2001) *A Man's World?*, London: Zed Books

490. WHO list more than 30 examples of different kinds of violence against women and girls, including trafficking in women, forced prostitution, rape, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, and female genital mutilation. See World Health Organisation (2002) *World Report on Violence and Health*, Geneva: WHO

491. Coleman K., Hird C., Povey D. (2006) *Violent Crime Overview, Homicide and Gun Crime 2004/2005*, Home Office Statistical Bulletin 02/06, London: Home Office

*violence, sexual or otherwise, is not the unusual behaviour of a few "odd" individuals, neither is it an expression of overwhelming biological urges: it is a product of the social world in which we live.*<sup>492</sup>

Research on men and masculinities, drawing on feminist analysis, emphasises issues of power and control, and the ways in which male violence is used to establish, enforce or perpetuate gender inequalities in social structures.<sup>493</sup> Connell, for instance, argues<sup>494</sup> that many men, as members of the dominant group, use violence to sustain their position vis-à-vis women and children, and that men may also use violence to assert their marginalised masculinities against other men.

There are important connections too between gendered power relations and other dimensions of inequality, based on class, race, age and sexuality, which impact on the formation of male identities. For example, violence by men on men is more common where social exclusion is also present. Where the distribution of resources and opportunities is unequal – and felt to be unjust by the perpetrator – demonstrating toughness and a willingness to use violence can become central elements of masculinity. Some men experience a sense of being thwarted or hard done by, of having been deprived of one's perceived entitlements. In some cases, a man may inflict violence against those whom he feels are profiting by his loss, should be his inferiors, or are perceived as threatening or disrespecting his status.<sup>495</sup>

Men from black and minority ethnic backgrounds are over-represented within the criminal justice system. Explanations for this include: analyses around demographic population and age structure factors; family structures; poor life chances due to poverty; poor housing; poor educational and employment opportunities; and institutionalised racism. But despite the higher proportions of black people prosecuted and imprisoned, there are few differences in the number of offences admitted to in self-report studies; some show higher rates of self-reported offending by white respondents.<sup>496 497</sup>

Homophobic violence affects one in five lesbians and gay men, according to a recent poll commissioned by Stonewall and published in June 2008. The poll found a homophobic crime or incident had been experienced by 12.5 per cent over the past year and 20 per cent over the past three years. Three in five of the victims reported that they had been attacked by someone they did not know who was under the age of 25, with most homophobic offenders aged 16-20.<sup>498</sup>

The ways in which men and boys develop their sense of being male, and how they construct their own versions of masculinity, are critical to their propensity for violence. The mechanisms through which male identities are formed and develop through life are a complex interplay of cultural identity, personal and community influences.

Many men and boys are seduced by pervasive and damaging ideas and images, fuelled by the media and by peer groups (among other factors), of what being a 'real man' is about: being rich, successful, handsome, powerful and obeyed or 'respected', physically strong, unemotional. Masculine identities are constructed that value displays of power, sexual conquest, homophobia, violent expressions of masculinity and negativity towards education. Simultaneously, women and girls are trivialised and objectified, and views supportive of sexual exploitation and domestic violence may develop. These can contribute to violence, as challenges to men's status or dignity are responded to by some men with force as they try to maintain or shore up a sense of masculine entitlement.

492. Cowburn M., Wilson C., with Loewenstein P. (1992) *Changing Men: A Practice Guide to Working with Adult Male Sex Offenders*, Nottingham: Nottinghamshire Probation Service

493. Ferguson H., Hearn J., Holter Ø.G., Jalmert L., Kimmel M., Lang J., Morrell R. and de Vylder S. (2004) *Ending Gender-based Violence: A Call for Global Action to Involve Men*, SIDA, Stockholm. Available at: [www.sida.se/content/1/c6/02/47/27/SVI34602.pdf](http://www.sida.se/content/1/c6/02/47/27/SVI34602.pdf)

494. Connell R. (1995) *Masculinities*, Cambridge: Polity

495. There is however no inevitable connection here. For example, in the case of child sexual abuse, there is no relation to social disadvantage or loss of entitlement.

496. Sharp C., Budd T. (2005) *Minority Ethnic Groups and Crime: findings from the 2003 offending, crime and justice survey*, report 33/05, London: Home Office

497. Armstrong D., Hine J., Hacking S., Armaos R., Jones R., Klessinger N. and France A. (2005) *Children, Risk and Crime: the on track youth lifestyle surveys*, Home Office Research Study 278, London: Home Office

498. Nicolas A., Kershaw C., Walker A. (2007) *Crime in England and Wales*, Home Office Statistical Bulletin 11/07

The contexts in which different forms of violence take place are also significant. In general, women are at greatest risk of violence from men they know, and women and girls are the most frequent victims of violence within the family and between intimate partners.<sup>499</sup> Men are most at risk from other men, and the place where they are most likely to be assaulted is on the street.<sup>500</sup>

Alcohol is a factor in the murder of 50 per cent of men by men.<sup>501</sup> Often these are the result of quarrels between unrelated, predominately white young men, unpremeditated, and frequently precipitated by relatively trivial events.<sup>502</sup> The occurrence of violence following alcohol consumption by young men led Tomson<sup>503</sup> to call for consideration of the '*combination of a masculine social identity and heavy group drinking and the importance of male honour in much social interaction that leads to much violent behaviour*'.

Historically, violence suffered by men has met with highly visible, public order responses, whereas there has been reluctance to interfere in the privacy of home and family life; only relatively recently has there been an increasing focus by governments and agencies on violence against women. Nevertheless, this public/private divide fails to recognise the relative lack of safety of women in both private and public spheres.

Despite the extent of male violence, it is also important to remember that the vast majority of men are not violent towards others. Although there is much public concern currently about violence by and among young men, most are not involved, and the quieter contribution of the majority of young men to the safety and well-being of others is generally unacknowledged. The vast majority of men of all ages do not commit acts of violence against others, and the complex dynamics of why some men do not engage in violent behaviour, whilst others do, are poorly understood and require further research. This should be of great significance in constructing strategies for reducing men's violence, both in relation to work on broad violence prevention (e.g. media campaigns, legal reform, education and support for children and families), and on specific project intervention with those who use violence.

## Legal and policy context

In recent years there have been repeated criticisms, particularly from women's organisations, of the Government's failure to adopt an integrated, strategic approach to ending violence against women,<sup>504</sup> which recognises that violence against women is both a cause and consequence of women's continued inequality.<sup>505</sup>

In 2008, the Government Equalities Office published a cross-departmental narrative on this issue ('Tackling Violence Against Women').<sup>506</sup> This highlighted that tackling violence against women is one of the priorities set out by the Ministers for Women in 2007 (See 'Men, boys and policy', page 28) and the action taken in recent years against domestic violence, forced marriages, sexual offences, human trafficking and rape.

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499. WHO Fact sheet N°239, *Violence against Women*, Revised June 2000

500. Coleman K., Hird C., Povey D. (ibid.)

501. Brookman F., Maguire M. (2003) *Reducing Homicide: A review of the possibilities*, Home Office online report 01/03

502. Polk K. (1994) *When men kill: Scenarios of masculine violence*, Cambridge University Press

503. Tomson S. (1997) *A top night out: Social protest, masculinity and the culture of drinking violence*, *British Journal of Criminology* 37, 90-102

504. Kelly L., Veitch J., *Making the Grade – 2007*, The third annual independent analysis of UK Government initiatives on violence against women, End Violence Against Women

505. Coy M., Lovett J., Kelly L. (2008) *Realising Rights, Fulfilling Obligations: A template for an integrated strategy on violence against women for the UK*, End Violence Against Women Campaign.

506. Government Equalities Office (2008) *Tackling Violence Against Women: A cross-government narrative*, [www.equalities.gov.uk](http://www.equalities.gov.uk)

The publication of 'Tackling Violence Against Women' is the first time that any UK government has attempted to bring together policies across a number of areas. However, the emphasis on criminal justice responses obscures the connections between education, poverty, mental and physical health and socio-economic factors. The document so far falls short of showing how Government will address these gaps.

In 2007, the Home Office announced a new range of Public Service Agreements (PSAs), putting emphasis on reducing and tackling the most serious crimes, such as rape and sexual assaults. The introduction of the Gender Equality Duty and the publication of departmental Gender Equality Schemes is also encouraging many departments to look at how gender, and specifically violence against women, impacts on their work. At local level, new indicators on domestic violence and sexual offending have been included as part of the new National Indicator Set for local government.

In addition to legislation and policy initiatives set out in the specific sections below, cross-government action plans have also been established, especially for domestic violence; sexual violence and abuse and human trafficking. Collaboration on initiatives has been particularly fruitful where it has involved not only government departments responsible for criminal justice and law enforcement, but also those with a welfare remit (e.g. the Department of Health and Department for Children, Schools and Families) and NGO experts. But this approach tends to be the exception; most initiatives in this field only engage criminal justice and law enforcement departments. This continues to give rise to concerns among practitioners that there is not enough emphasis on violence prevention.

Notably, 'Tackling Violence Against Women' highlights the importance of developing what it calls a 'men's agenda' and states that: '*Over the last year, the Government has also been working hard to get more men involved as a powerful lobbying force to challenge the culture and behaviour that enables – and excuses – violence against women*'.<sup>507</sup> Apart from welcome support for the establishment of the Coalition on Men and Boys, initiatives under this heading have so far been limited.

## Specific issues

### Domestic violence

The Government defines domestic violence as '*Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality*'<sup>508</sup>... *Whatever form it takes, domestic violence is rarely a one-off incident. More usually it's a pattern of abusive and controlling behaviour through which the abuser seeks power over their victim*'.<sup>509</sup> Some critics argue that the use of the term 'any incident' is not helpful, on the basis that it masks one of the defining features of domestic violence i.e. that it is a pattern of behaviour rather than an incident.

Whilst domestic violence has a high rate of under-reporting,<sup>510</sup> the statistics nevertheless show the scale of the problem:

- On average, two women a week are killed by a male partner or former partner.<sup>511</sup>
- 89 per cent of those suffering four or more incidents are women.<sup>512</sup>

507. Government Equalities Office (ibid.)

508. This includes issues of concern to black and minority ethnic (BME) communities such as so called 'honour-based violence', female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.

509. [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime-victims/reducing-crime/domestic-violence](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime-victims/reducing-crime/domestic-violence)

510. When professionals working in child protection, health and other social care settings routinely ask about domestic violence, this dramatically increases the amount of violence disclosed. See Hester M., Pearson C. (1998) *From Periphery to Centre – Domestic Violence in Work with Abused Children*, Bristol: Policy Press

511. [www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/dv/dv01.htm](http://www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/dv/dv01.htm)

512. [www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/dv/dv01.htm](http://www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/dv/dv01.htm)

- One in four women and one in six men will be a victim of domestic violence in their lifetime, with women at greater risk of repeat victimisation and serious injury.<sup>513</sup>
- The Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS) reports that domestic violence is an issue in 75 per cent of the public law workload and 65 per cent of the private law caseload.<sup>514</sup>

Men who are using violence outside of intimate relationships, and are already responding to perceived threats from others with violence, have an increased likelihood of using domestic violence,<sup>515</sup> but the range of men using domestic violence is far broader than this group. Prevalence studies<sup>516 517</sup> indicate that domestic violence occurs across all class, race, age and social status, and explorations of incidence demonstrate that it varies significantly with gender – men commit the majority of incidents. However, the dominant pattern of male violence towards women can mask other much less common forms, including: women’s violence, violence in same-sex relationships, and in relationships where both the woman and the man use violence.

Women who have experienced domestic violence find that, post-separation, their capacity to establish lives free from abuse can be further compromised by ongoing child-contact disputes.<sup>518</sup> Exposure to domestic violence also has damaging consequences for children, affecting their development and emotional well-being; research consistently shows that children living with domestic violence have much higher rates of depression, trauma and behavioural and cognitive problems than other children.<sup>519</sup> The impact is exacerbated when the violence is combined with alcohol or drug misuse.

Women’s Aid and Refuge, the two biggest national domestic violence charities, have long campaigned for better protection for women and children experiencing domestic violence, through: improved criminal and civil justice system responses; the provision of safe housing; support services; and prevention work. The last ten years has seen significant progress on some of this agenda.

Policy on domestic violence has largely focused on the criminal justice system: policing, prosecution, the identification of risk and multi-agency structures to respond to this risk. For example, the Sexual Offences Act 2003 modernised the legal framework for sexual offences and made it easier for prosecutors to meet the legal requirements for proving their case.<sup>520</sup> The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 also created a number of new powers to strengthen the case brought by victims.<sup>521</sup> The ‘National Domestic Violence Delivery Plan’, published in 2005, is seeking to: reduce the number of domestic violence-related homicides; reduce the prevalence of domestic violence; increase the rate of reporting for domestic violence; increase the rate of reported domestic violence offences that are brought to justice; and ensure that victims of domestic violence are adequately protected and supported nationwide. To achieve these outcomes, the Government has committed itself to,

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513. Mirrlees-Black C. (1999) *Domestic Violence: findings from a new British Crime Survey self-completion questionnaire*, Home Office Research Study 191 London Home Office

514. Figures based on 11 months rather than a year.

515. Gondolf E. (2002) *Batter Intervention Systems*, SAGE

516. Richardson J., Coid J., Petrukevitch A., Chung W. S., Money S., Feder G. (2002) *Identifying Domestic Violence: cross section study in primary care*, *BMJ*, Feb 2, 324 (7332):274

517. Mooney J. (1993) *The Hidden Figure: Domestic Violence in North London, Findings of a survey conducted on domestic violence in the north London borough of Islington*, Middlesex University, Centre for Criminology

518. Humphreys C., Thiara R. (2002) *Routes to Safety: Protection issues facing abused women and children and the role of outreach services*, Bristol: Women’s Aid Federation of England

519. Humphreys C., *Relevant Evidence for Practice*, in Humphreys C., Stanley N. (2006) *Domestic Violence and Child Protection*, Jessica Kingsley

520. For example, the new laws have limited the circumstances in which a victim’s previous sexual history is admissible in court for rape trials.

521. For example, breaking a ‘non-molestation’ order is now a criminal offence, and anyone convicted of doing so could face a prison sentence of up to five years.

among other things, building more capacity within the domestic violence sector, improving the way the criminal justice system responds and better supporting victims and managing perpetrators through the criminal justice system.

In relation to children affected by domestic violence, recent guidance<sup>522</sup> has stressed that with the Children Act 2004, lead responsibility now lies firmly with local authorities. Interventions should be available in every area to: identify and protect children from further harm; promote children's well-being, achievement and self-esteem; co-ordinate agency responses and share information appropriately; inform children and parents/carers about healthy relationships and the impact of violence and abuse; and ensure that services for children/young people affected by domestic violence are systematically planned in each local council area. While there has been broad agreement about the standards and services needed, the availability of services remains patchy. Work is needed on implementation, with incentives for local authorities to commission an appropriate range of services responsive to local need as well as make the links to adult protection policies and procedures.

In practice, policing has improved through the provision of specialist domestic violence officers and the higher profile given to domestic violence within the police, although this is not consistent across the country. Following on from pilot projects like 'Domestic Violence Matters' in the London borough of Islington<sup>523</sup> and the work of Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA),<sup>524</sup> the role of Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs)<sup>525</sup> has been developed and IDVA services are being rolled out across England and Wales. IDVAs' primary role is to support medium to high risk victims of domestic violence, promote risk management and facilitate access to legal remedies. Closely linked to IDVA services are Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs),<sup>526</sup> Specialist Domestic Violence Courts<sup>527</sup> and a network of Sexual Assault Referral Centres.

The result of all this activity is a steady rise in the effectiveness of the criminal justice system in bringing perpetrators of domestic violence to justice, with the successful prosecution rate for domestic violence rising from 46 per cent in 2003 to 69 per cent by December 2007.<sup>528</sup> The message from Government has been that domestic violence is a crime and that offenders will be brought to justice, and this is vital if we are to create a climate of intolerance for domestic violence. However, there are limitations to this approach if improvements in criminal justice response are not matched by improvements in the response of other agencies (e.g. housing, children's services and the voluntary sector). The criminal justice system is used by a minority of victims and is just one mechanism to address domestic violence. Other options, like prevention work, have not seen the same levels of investment.

It remains the case that most perpetrators of domestic violence are not brought into the criminal justice system. There is a significant role for health and social care agencies in engaging with perpetrators of domestic violence, both in terms of prevention work but also in holding these men accountable for their behaviour. Research on help-seeking behaviours of men using domestic violence found 71 per cent of domestic violence perpetrators had been to their GP.<sup>529</sup> But at present there is no coherent strategy for primary care on how to recognise or respond to men who may be using violence towards partners.

522. LGA, ADSS, Women's Aid, CAFCASS (2006) *Vision for services for children and young people affected by domestic violence*, London: Local Government Association. This multi-agency guidance was produced by and supported by the Department of Health, Department for Children, Schools and Families, and the Home Office

523. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/r91.pdf>

524. <http://www.caada.org.uk/aboutus.html>

525. <http://www.caada.org.uk/aboutus.html>

526. <http://www.caada.org.uk/toolkits.html>

527. <http://www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/dv/dv018.htm>

528. Government Equalities Office (ibid.)

529. Hester M. et al. (2006) *Domestic Violence Perpetrators: Identifying Needs to Inform Early Intervention*, Bristol: University of Bristol/Northern Rock Foundation/Home Office

Recent research by Cleaver<sup>530</sup> in six English authorities, looking at child protection responses in relation to children exposed to domestic violence, found that half of the referrals to social services which were subject to an assessment were re-referrals.

When a family is subject to social work intervention in relation to domestic violence, there is all too frequently little or no involvement of specialist domestic violence agencies. Cleaver's research also found that, where initial child protection conferences were held, domestic violence services were represented in only five per cent of cases and referral to a domestic violence agency happens in 20 per cent of cases. Mostly these will be referrals to services for the victim. While there is little research on engaging the perpetrator in such settings, it seems likely that this happens infrequently.

## Child abuse

There is a considerable scholarship exploring how child abuse has been defined and explained over the decades.<sup>531</sup> Indeed, the term 'abuse' is contested, with many authors preferring what is considered to be the broader concept of 'maltreatment'.<sup>532</sup> The relative contribution of factors such as poverty, poor housing, health inequalities, individual psychological characteristics and family dynamics have been discussed and debated. There is also literature exploring how gender matters in relation to understanding the causes and consequences of maltreatment. The literature is extensive in relation to child sexual abuse.

The vast majority of surveys across the world over the past 20 years suggest that men and boys perpetuate about 90 per cent of child sexual abuse, and reveal little or no correlation between child sexual abuse and the class, ethnicity or sexuality of perpetrators; the centrality of gender as a factor is, however, clear.<sup>533</sup> The majority of children who are sexually abused are girls,<sup>534</sup> but recent research has shown higher levels of abuse to boys than in previous studies. UK data also highlight the high proportion of incidents perpetrated by brothers and stepbrothers (as well as by fathers and stepfathers) within families.<sup>535</sup> It is important, however, to differentiate between offending by adults and by young people. Many young people who display sexually harmful behaviour do not go on to offend as adults. A significant number of young abusers also have a learning disability, and the management of their behaviour needs to take this into account.

Statistics on other forms of child abuse tend to be less clear-cut in terms of gender. In relation to physical abuse, women seem to constitute at least 30 per cent of abusers of children, rising to at least 50 per cent for emotional abuse.<sup>536</sup> However, figures such as these are influenced by the greater amount of day-to-day contact that women have with children (and therefore the greater opportunities they have to offend). They also ignore the severity of the violence, which tends to be more serious when inflicted by male perpetrators.

The contribution men make to the neglect of their children is often poorly understood within policy and practice. Mothers are frequently considered and treated as 'neglectful', whereas the notion of the neglectful father is often absent. Yet men may neglect their children in a range of ways, including by withholding financial and material resources and failing to work with the mother in providing childcare. Men can also contribute to mothers' neglect in direct and indirect

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530. Cleaver H. et al. (2006) *The response of child protection practices and procedures to children exposed to domestic violence or parental substance misuse*, London: DfES

531. See Parton N. (2007) *Safeguarding children: a socio-historical analysis*, in Wilson K. and James A. (eds.) *The Child Protection Handbook* (3rd edn), Edinburgh: Bailliere Tindall

532. See, for example, Cawson et al. (2000) *Child Maltreatment in the United Kingdom*, London: NSPCC

533. Pringle K., *Child Abuse*, in Flood M., Gardiner J.K., Pease B., Pringle K. (2007) *International encyclopedia of men and masculinities*, London: Routledge

534. Kelly L., Regan L., Burton S. (1991) *An Exploratory Study of the Prevalence of Sexual Abuse in a Sample of 18-21 Year Olds*, London: Polytechnic of North London

535. Cawson P. et al. (ibid.) and Cawson P. (2002) *Child Maltreatment in the Family*, London: NSPCC

536. Pringle K. (ibid.)

ways. The links between domestic violence, maternal depression and the neglect of children are increasingly understood by researchers.<sup>537</sup> However, it tends to be women who are held responsible by being categorised as neglectful or failing to protect their children. Meanwhile, fathers are not engaged with or held responsible in the same way (see 'Fatherhood', page 65).<sup>538</sup>

Current understandings of, and approaches to, child abuse – and child sexual abuse in particular – draw heavily on feminist engagement with the issues in the 1980s and 1990s in the UK and the USA, which emphasised the harms to women and children from violent and abusive men. The core analysis sought to highlight the linkages between various forms of abuse, such as pornography, rape, domestic violence and sexual abuse,<sup>539</sup> and to explain men's disproportionate involvement in such activities as arising from men's desire to maintain power and control over women and children.<sup>540</sup>

Whilst these principles remain central, the complex issues involved have been explored further in a number of ways. There has been recognition of the abuse perpetrated by women, although this remains at a much lower level than by men. There has also been growing evidence of a significant overlap between men who abuse their children physically and/or sexually and men who are abusive to their partners;<sup>541</sup> this has important implications for co-ordination and information-sharing between different service responses.

Another issue which has received greater attention is that of children affected by witnessing violence within the family, particularly to mothers. Children are increasingly regarded not just as 'silent witnesses' to this violence, but as social actors with their own perceptions. An important focus for research is understanding children's coping strategies, and how services can assist children – particularly when both boys and girls are reluctant to engage with formal sources of support.<sup>542</sup> Girls, for example, often use friendship networks as sources of support, more so than boys.<sup>543</sup>

At service level, Scourfield's research<sup>544</sup> found mainly negative discourses among social workers about men, who tended to be regarded as a threat, as no use, absent or irrelevant (although on occasion the fathers were regarded as more capable than a 'failing' mother). Interestingly, there were different constructions of men who were sexually abusive to children, and men who were violent to women. The former were regarded as operating according to predictable behaviour and attitudes: *'we should assume that multiple offences will have been committed; these offences are deliberate and planned and involve the 'grooming' of children; abusers will minimise and deny their abuse, so are generally not to be believed, whereas children are always to be believed if they apparently disclose abuse; you should not expect abusers to change their behaviour, at least not without intensive specialist therapy'*.<sup>545</sup> In contrast, men's physical violence towards women was interpreted in various ways, including mainstream feminist accounts based on men's power and control over women, and more traditional explanations of violence such as mutual hostility in a couple, or alcohol as the primary cause.

537. See Daniel B., Taylor J. (eds.) (2005) *Child Neglect: Practice Issues for Health and Social Care*, London: Jessica Kingsley

538. Milner J. (1996) *Men's Resistance to social workers* in Fawcett B., Featherstone B., Hearn J., Toft C. (eds.) *Violence and Gender Relations: Theories and Interventions*, London: SAGE; Scourfield J. (2003) *Gender and Child Protection*, Basingstoke: Palgrave; Ashley C., Featherstone B., Roskill C., Ryan M., White S. (2006) *Fathers Matter: Research findings on fathers and their involvement with social care services*, London: Family Rights Group

539. Kelly L. (1988) *Surviving Sexual Violence*, Cambridge: Polity

540. Featherstone B., *Gender and Child Abuse* in Wilson K., James A. (eds.) (2007) *The Child Protection Handbook* (3rd edition), Edinburgh: Bailliere Tindall

541. Hester M., Pearson C., Harwin N. (2000) *Making an Impact: Children and Domestic Violence*, London: Jessica Kingsley

542. Mullender A., *What Children Tell Us*, in Humphreys C., Stanley N. (2006) *Domestic Violence and Child Protection*, London: Jessica Kingsley

543. Fuller R., Hallett C., Murray C., and Punch S. (2000) *Young People and Welfare : Negotiating Pathways: Summary of Research Results*, Report to Economic and Social Research Council

544. Scourfield J. (2003) *Gender and Child Protection*, London: Palgrave Macmillan

545. Featherstone B., Rivett M., Scourfield J. (2007) *Working with Men in Health and Social Care*, London: SAGE

Given the evidence, particularly in relation to child sexual abuse, that men pose a greater threat to children than women do, there is a policy tension between promoting men's greater involvement as carers for children – e.g. in nurseries, family centres, children's centres, health projects, social work settings – and ensuring effective protection for children. Whilst there are potential benefits for children, women and men themselves in increasing men's involvement in caring, effective strategies must be in place at policy and practice levels for protecting children from all forms of abuse (see section on 'Work', page 45).<sup>546</sup>

## Rape and sexual assault

The current definition of rape in law is that framed in the Sexual Offences Act 2003, which came into force on the 1 May 2004. This defined consent as: '*if (s)he agrees by choice, and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice*'. In the offences of rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault and causing a person to engage in sexual activity without consent, a person is guilty of an offence if they act intentionally; if the other party does not consent to the act; and if they do not reasonably believe that the other party consents.

Deciding whether a belief is reasonable is to be determined with regard to all the circumstances, including any steps the defendant has taken to ascertain whether the complainant consents. In some circumstances, attributes such as disability, intoxication or youth may imply that it was not reasonable to believe there had been consent.

This is a major change in the law, and the Act abolishes the so-called 'Morgan' defence of a genuine though unreasonably mistaken belief as to the consent of the complainant. It means that the defendant has the responsibility to ensure that the other party consents to the sexual activity at the time in question. It will be important for the police to ask the offender in interview what steps he took to satisfy himself that the complainant consented.

The British Crime Survey 2006/07 states that five per cent of all women have been raped (or suffered attempted rape) and 24 per cent have been sexually assaulted.<sup>547</sup> Nearly all victims of rape are women, and in most cases the perpetrator is known to the victim, with only 11 per cent of serious sexual assaults committed by strangers.<sup>548</sup>

Rape and sexual assault are frequently part of the range of abusive behaviours that characterise domestic violence; they are also increasingly part of young men's violence towards women. Women aged 16-24 are almost four times more likely to have experienced sexual assault in the last year than women aged 45-49<sup>549</sup> and the proportion of rape victims under 20 years old has been increasing.<sup>550</sup>

While most men have not raped or committed serious sexual assault, many do, and many have attitudes that collude with justifications for rape. The ICM survey of just over 1,000 men and women<sup>551</sup> found that more than one-quarter (26 per cent) of those asked said that they thought a woman was partially or totally responsible for being raped if she was wearing sexy or revealing clothing, and more than one in five (22 per cent) held the same view if a woman had had many sexual partners. Similarly, more than one-quarter of people (30 per cent) said that a woman

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546. Cameron C., Moss P., Owen C., (1999) *Men in the Nursery: gender and caring work*, London: Paul Chapman; Pringle K., *Men and childcare: policy and practice*, in Popay J., Hearn J., Edwards J. (eds.) (1998) *Men, Gender Divisions and Welfare*, London: Routledge

547. Povey E., Coleman K., Kaiza P., Hoare C., Jansson K. (2008) *Home Office Statistical Bulletin: Crime in England and Wales 2006/07*, Supplementary Volume 2 to Crime in England and Wales 2006/07

548. Finny A. (2006) *Domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking: findings from the 2004-05 British Crime Survey*, Home Office Online Report 12/06

549. Finny A. (ibid.)

550. Finny A. (ibid.)

551. ICM (2005) *Sexual Assault Research Summary Report*, London: Amnesty International UK [http://www.amnesty.org.uk/uploads/documents/doc\\_16619.doc](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/uploads/documents/doc_16619.doc)

was partially or totally responsible for being raped if she was drunk, and more than one-third (37 per cent) held the same view if the woman had failed to clearly say 'no' to the man.

Most of the treatment programmes for sex offenders are geared towards child abusers rather than men who rape women, although recent approaches have endeavoured to encompass various forms of sexual offending. There is some evidence<sup>552</sup> that a greater proportion of rapists, as opposed to child abusers, are in denial and probably less inclined to elect for treatment. While the benefits of programmes to treat sex offenders have been demonstrated,<sup>553</sup> evidence for their effectiveness in relation to rapists is so far lacking.

The Government produced its 'Action Plan on Sexual Violence' in April 2008. The current low levels of provision of specialist support services for victims of rape and sexual assault was highlighted, with commitments to address this with up to £1m funding for Rape Crisis centres. The Government approach on the whole, however, mirrors that taken for domestic violence and similarly leaves prevention work under-funded. In contrast, initiatives in the USA, like Washington-based 'Men Can Stop Rape'<sup>554</sup> and initiatives to reduce sexual and physical violence by young people through the 'safe dates' projects have shown some success, but do not have a UK parallel.

## Pornography

Pornography can be defined as '*sexually explicit media that are primarily intended to sexually arouse the audience*'.<sup>556</sup> 'Sexually explicit' representations include images of female or male nudity or semi-nudity, implied sexual activity and actual sexual activity. Pornography may be accessed through books, films, and more recently, the internet. In general, men are significantly more likely than women to view pornography frequently, to be sexually aroused by it and to have favourable attitudes towards it.

Some commentators suggest that pornography can have some positive effects, for example by challenging restrictive sexual mores, promoting sexual pleasure and developing education. They tend to reject accusations of obscenity and calls for censorship, arguing that male and female viewers of pornography interpret such images in diverse ways and that pornography should not be automatically associated with sexism or violence.<sup>557</sup>

Others believe that pornography portrays sex and sexuality – and women in particular – in highly abusive, objectifying and degrading ways. They argue it is violent, coercive and harmful – and becoming even more so – to those who participate in its production, within an increasingly profitable and mass-market industry.<sup>558</sup> Connections are also made with wider economic, racial and geographical inequalities which push vulnerable people into becoming involved.<sup>559</sup>

Although the impact of pornography remains contested, research on extreme pornographic material has demonstrated increased risk among adult men of developing pro-rape attitudes, beliefs and

552. Grubin D., Gunn J. (1990) *The imprisoned rapist and rape, Internal report*, London: Department of Forensic Psychiatry, Institute of Psychiatry

553. For example, a recent meta-analysis of 69 studies showed 37 per cent less sexual recidivism among treated offenders over control groups, although further work is required to clarify what works for whom and under what circumstances. See Losel F., Schmucker M. (2005) *The effectiveness of treatment for sexual offenders: A comprehensive meta-analysis*, Journal of Experimental Criminology, No. 1

554. <http://www.mencanstoprape.org/>

555. [http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/programfulldetails.asp?PROGRAM\\_ID=84](http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/programfulldetails.asp?PROGRAM_ID=84)

556. Malamuth N. (2001) *Pornography*, in Smelser N.J., Baltes P.B. (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 17, Amsterdam/New York: Elsevier

557. Strossen N. (1995) *Defending Pornography*, London: Simon and Schuster

558. Jensen R. (2007) *Getting Off: Pornography and the End of Masculinity*, Cambridge, MA: South End Press

559. Kelly L., Regan L. (2000) *Sexual exploitation of children in Europe*, Journal of Sexual Aggression, 6 (1-2)

560. Itzin C., Taket A., Kelly L. (2007) *The evidence of harm to adults relating to exposure to extreme pornographic material: a rapid evidence assessment*, London: Ministry of Justice

behaviours and of committing sexual offences.<sup>560</sup> Other studies have also highlighted correlations between the use of pornography and sexual violence.<sup>561 562</sup> The Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill contains a new offence of possessing violent and extreme pornographic material.

Child pornography (or as some prefer to call it, 'child abuse images') is a visual record of the sexual abuse of a child, and it is increasingly conceptualised as a form of child sexual abuse and exploitation.<sup>563</sup> Consumption of child abuse images, largely by men, continues to fuel demand, which is satisfied through the further abuse of children.<sup>564</sup> Despite attempts to close down dissemination channels in the UK, such images remain very prevalent on the internet, hosted in particular by sites overseas which are beyond the reach of UK legislation.

As well as women and children, men are also harmed by pornography; it has been argued, for instance, that pornography promotes myths of male sexual readiness and penis size.<sup>565</sup> Concern is also focusing on the impact on boys and young men of their growing consumption of explicit images (especially via the internet), in a world where children are beginning adolescence and puberty earlier, sexual exploitation is increasing and sexual imagery and pornography is increasingly 'normalised'. Seeing extreme behaviours may trouble or disturb, encourage experimentation or promote sexually aggressive attitudes and practices. Pornography also helps teach and reinforce sexist and unhealthy notions of sex, relationships and masculinity.<sup>566</sup>

## Prostitution

In addition to the potential impact of pornography, prostitution may help to promote or facilitate the normalisation of rape or sexual coercion or violence against women. The researchers in one study<sup>567</sup> found a correlation between high levels of pornography use and higher levels of use of prostitutes. Fifty-four per cent of men who frequently used women in prostitution admitted to having committed sexually aggressive acts against non-prostitute partners, compared with 30 per cent of the less frequent users.

Another study<sup>568</sup> revealed the peak age for buying sex is 34, with men aged 20-40 counting for the majority. Most are employed, around half are in a relationship and over one-fifth have children. The report also discussed the issue of the trafficking<sup>569</sup> of women for sexual exploitation with men who had used prostitutes. Several young men interviewed were aware of the issue of trafficking and made distinctions between trafficked women and non-trafficked women. Worryingly though, only seven per cent of the men interviewed indicated that knowing a woman had been trafficked would deter him from having intercourse with her. In fact, many interviewees believed that paying for sex meant it was always consensual and so could not be rape, even in cases involving trafficked victims. This study by the Women's Support Project also found that 12 per cent of their interviewees

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561. Cowburn M., Flood M., *Pornography*, in Flood M., Gardiner J.K., Pease B., Pringle K. (2007) *International Encyclopedia of Men and Masculinities*, London: Routledge

562. Malamuth N., Addison T., Koss M. (2000) *Pornography and sexual aggression*, *Annual Review of Sex Research*, 11, Allentown, PA: Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality

563. Healy, M.A. (1996) *Child Pornography: An International Perspective*, Stockholm: World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

564. Carr, J. (2004) *Child Abuse, child pornography and the internet*, London: NCH

565. Brod H. (1990) *Eros thanatized*, in Kimmel M. (ed.) (1990) *Men Confront Pornography*, New York: Crown

566. Flood M., *Boys, Sex and Porn: New technologies and old dangers*, speech at conference on *Whatever Happened to Child Sexual Abuse?*, London: BASPSCAN and Nottingham Trent University, 29 November 2007

567. Macleod J., Farley M., Anderson L., Golding J. (2008) *Challenging men's demand for prostitution in Scotland*, Women's Support Project ([www.womenssupportproject.co.uk](http://www.womenssupportproject.co.uk))

568. Coy M., Horvath M., and Kelly L. (2007) *It's just like going to the supermarket, Men Buying Sex in East London*, London: CWASU/London Metropolitan University

569. The Government defines human trafficking as 'the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of people, by means of threat, use of force, abuse or other forms of coercion, for the purposes of specified exploitation'. It signed The Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings, on 23 March 2007

felt that rape of a prostitute or call girl was not possible, and 22 per cent explained that, once he pays for it, the customer is entitled to do whatever he wants to the woman he buys.

In 2006, the Government published a strategy on prostitution, to be used by local areas to develop their own responses to prostitution, including: preventing people from being drawn into prostitution; providing support for people who are already involved and want to find a way out; and tackling the demand for prostitution.

In 2008, it launched a six-month review to look at what more could be done to address demand. Ministers have been examining both the Swedish model (where legislation to criminalise men paying for sex has been introduced) and the Dutch model (where a liberal attitude is taken, and ‘tolerance zones’ have been established).

In September 2008, the Home Secretary announced plans to shift legal responsibility onto those who pay for sex when the prostitute involved has been forced into that role.<sup>570</sup> The police will also be given powers to close brothels for a period of three months, even without evidence of anti-social behaviour or use of Class A drugs. A change in the law regarding kerb-crawlers will also mean that they could be prosecuted after a first offence, rather than as a result of persistent action.

The findings of a recent government-backed poll<sup>571</sup> suggested there is public support for criminalising the purchase of sex; 58 per cent of men and women support making it illegal to pay for sex if it will help reduce the numbers of women and children trafficked into the UK for sexual exploitation. The research also showed differences between women and men; a clear majority of women found both paying for sex and selling it unacceptable (61 per cent and 65 per cent respectively), but men were much more equivocal, with just 42 per cent and 40 per cent respectively finding it unacceptable. Younger people were more likely to find paying for sex and selling sex unacceptable (64 per cent and 69 per cent respectively).

It has been argued,<sup>572</sup> however, that toughening up the laws alone is likely to make little difference, given that tackling prostitution is time consuming and not a police priority in many locations. Instead, it has been suggested that more effort should be put into helping women to address the problems they face (e.g. drug abuse, homelessness, poor mental and physical health) and providing constructive routes out of prostitution.

Moreover, the success of any government-led initiatives may be limited as long as wider attitudes towards women and sex go unchecked. For example, the ‘Safe Exit’ project has highlighted the sexualisation of popular culture, evidenced by the rapid growth of lap- and pole-dancing clubs, striptease acts, ‘lads’ mags’, etc. They hold that this *‘normalisation of commercialised sex implicitly supports and promotes paying for sexual services as a legitimate form of leisure and entertainment’*.

#### Home Office poster campaign to tackle male demand for prostitution

A poster campaign to raise awareness of the exploitation and trafficking of some women among men who pay for sex was launched in May 2008 by Home Office Minister Vernon Coaker, as part of the Government’s review into tackling the demand for prostitution. The posters were piloted in men’s toilets in pubs and clubs in Westminster and Nottingham. They were supported by online advertising, with additional advice on the UK Human Trafficking Centre’s ‘Blue Blindfold’ website. ([www.blueblindfold.co.uk](http://www.blueblindfold.co.uk))

570. *New prostitution rules will protect trafficked women*, Home Office press release, 22/09/08

571. The survey was conducted by Ipsos-MORI between 11 and 12 June, and 29 and 31 August 2008 among a nationally represented sample of British adults aged 18+. Results are based on 1,012 respondents and 1,010 respondents respectively. See *Harman: sex trafficking changing attitudes to prostitution*, Cabinet Office press release, 04/09/08

572. Professor Roger Matthews, ‘Help women to quit street prostitution’, *Guardian* letters, 24/09/08

## Harassment

Under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, it is an offence for a person to pursue a course of action which amounts to harassment of another individual, and that they know or ought to know amounts to harassment. Under this Act, the definition of harassment is behaviour which causes alarm or distress. This Act can provide for civil remedies, a jail sentence or restraining order backed by the power of arrest.

Harassment can include physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct. In addition, while the conduct must be unwanted by the recipient, it does not necessarily have to be that the harasser has a motive or an intention to harass. However, the harasser must know or ought to have known that their behaviour would amount to harassment.<sup>573</sup>

Sexual harassment in the workplace is often assumed to be behaviour that takes advantage of a position in order to try to coerce someone into sexual intimacy. In fact, sexual harassment may be committed by peers as well as by 'superiors' and of course the harassment may be same-sex and is not necessarily about trying to force sexual intimacy. An older American study found that 25 per cent of cases of sexual harassment include some reference to a man trying to persuade a woman into sexual relations with him, but in less than five per cent of cases did the harassment involve a bribe or threat for sex.<sup>574</sup>

In 2006, the Equal Opportunities Commission reported eight per cent of calls about sexual harassment in the workplace being from men, though they believed that reporting by men was low.<sup>575</sup> Some cases include homophobic abuse where the man was seen as not buying into the 'macho' behaviour and culture of the workplace.

Sexual harassment is about enforcing gender norms and keeping someone in their place. It seeks to make them feel embarrassed, uncomfortable, vulnerable and intimidated and reduces a person to their perceived sex role; it is not generally about sex. Sexual harassers<sup>576</sup> seek to enforce gender roles and usually target those who defy what is perceived as the norm. The behaviours of sexual harassment are less behaviours of seduction and more of rejection, humiliation and control.

This raises questions for service provision both in terms of support to victims and in terms of programmes to tackle perpetrators' behaviours. Any attempts to tackle sexually-harassing behaviour again need to understand the nature of sexual harassment and address the causes and attitudes to gender, identity and status that enable it.

## Stalking

Stalking is defined as two or more events of harassment causing fear, alarm or distress, by phone calls, texts and letters, or loitering outside home or work, or by damaging property. Stalking is a criminal offence. The vast majority of stalkers are male<sup>577</sup> and the most common victims of stalking are female. Analysis of the large-scale British Crime Survey (BCS) shows that 19 per cent of women, and 12 per cent of men, have experienced stalking at some point in their lifetimes.<sup>578</sup>

Stalking often happens within the context of domestic violence after the end of relationship. It may also occur between people who may be relative strangers to one another or have come

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573. <http://www.respect.gov.uk/members/article.aspx?id=7944>

574. Fitzgerald L. quoted in Goleman D., 'Sexual harassment: it's about power, not lust', *New York Times*, 22 October 1991

575. 'Sexual harassment of men revealed', *The Observer*, 25 June 2006

576. Berdahl J. (2007) *The sexual harassment of uppity women*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92 pp 425-437 and Berdahl J. (2007) *Sexual harassment: protecting social status in the context of gender hierarchy*, *Academy of Management Review* 22 pp 641-658

577. Purcell R., Pathe M., and Mullen P.E. (2001) *A Study of Women who Stalk*, *American Journal of Psychiatry* 158:2056-2060

578. Walby S., Allen J. (2004) *Domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey*, Research Study 276, London: Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate

into contact only briefly for some ordinary professional or social reason. Patterns of victimisation vary for men and women. In the BCS survey, 37 per cent of cases of aggravated stalking (with additional violence) against women were by an intimate, 59 per cent by other acquaintances, and seven per cent by strangers. Among men, eight per cent were intimates, 70 per cent other acquaintances, and 30 per cent strangers.

A common feature is that the stalker attempts to take or regain control and assert a connection that is denied or rejected by the victim, or seeks to punish the victim for this rejection. Where the stalker and stalked had been in an intimate relationship, stalking behaviour can escalate to serious physical and sexual violence. In a recent study<sup>579</sup> into seven domestic homicides, patterns of stalking behaviour were present. The authors of this study and others<sup>580</sup> call for this type of coercive control to be taken seriously, whether or not there is history of physical violence.

Stalkers in intimate partner situations are often in denial, angry or depressed at the end or imminent demise of a relationship. There is no excuse for stalking behaviour and the escalation of violence that often follows. Promotion of counselling and support for men around relationship breakdown and the acceptability of seeking such help, may also reduce the incidence of stalking and other dangerous behaviours.

### **Forced marriage, 'Honour' crimes, and female genital mutilation**

Certain forms of violence against women are more commonly reported in black, minority ethnic and refugee communities, such as forced marriage, so-called 'honour' crimes and female genital mutilation (FGM). These forms are often overly and mistakenly associated in the public mind with Islam, whereas they are seen across a range of communities and religious backgrounds.

While it is important to understand the context of the abuse, practices such as these should never be justified, condoned or excused. Public policy responses that accept cultural, religious or traditional justifications for these practices breach international human rights standards.<sup>581</sup>

**Forced marriage** is different to arranged marriage in that, in a forced marriage, both parties do not give their full, free and informed consent to the marriage. A forced marriage can include a range of criminal offences and human rights abuses such as: emotional abuse; unlawful imprisonment; abduction; physical abuse; rape; enforced pregnancy and childbirth; disruption or termination of opportunities for education, career or economic independence. The reasons given by perpetrators for a forced marriage are varied and can include: securing or honouring closer family ties, perceived cultural or religious obligations, ensuring land or wealth remains in the family and safeguarding one's children from perceived negative influences or choices. However, these are rooted in male entitlement and the control of women's sexuality.

Cases mostly involve women aged 15-24 (there is some evidence that a small number of men have been coerced into marriage), and one in four is under 18 years old. Of the 300 or so cases per year reported to the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU), established by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with the Home Office, 85 per cent involve young women and 15 per cent involve young men. Campaigners suggest the actual number of cases may be much higher.

Under the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007, where a forced marriage has or is about to take place, courts are able to make orders to protect the victim or the potential victim and help remove them from that situation. The Act is part of a wider programme of work to raise awareness of the problem of forced marriages and protect women's rights in this area. For example, the FMU

579. Regan L., Morris A. and Dibb R. (2007) *'If only we'd known': an exploratory study of seven intimate partner homicides in Englishire*, Final Report to the Englishire Domestic Violence Homicide Review Group, London: CWASU/London Metropolitan University

580. Stark E. (2007) *Coercive Control*, New York: Oxford University Press

581. For example, Article 24(3) of the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child commits state parties to *'take all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children'*. Similar provisions are set out in Article 5(a) of the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Marriage Unit (FMU) has provided information to victims and to social workers, police, health and education professionals and is developing statutory guidance on how to handle cases under the Act.

**Honour crimes** encompass a variety of manifestations of violence against women including: murder (termed 'honour killings'), assault, confinement or imprisonment and interference with choice in marriage 'where the publicly articulated justification is attributed to a social order claimed to require the preservation of a concept of honour vested in male family and or conjugal control over women and specifically women's sexual conduct – actual, suspected or potential'.<sup>582</sup>

The instigators of such crimes are usually male. This reflects the fact that a family's honour is judged by the behaviour and obedience or conformity of the women members of the family. However, perpetrators can include female family members. Often the whole family is aware of and colluding in, whether willingly or not, the crime. Other family members' attempts to help a victim can lead to similar violence and retribution. Male honour or entitlement is discussed elsewhere in this chapter as a factor in much male violence, and certainly is prevalent in, but not limited to, black, minority ethnic and refugee communities.

The often extremely close-knit, intricate family connections and a tradition of putting the wider family interest above individualism can be a factor both in bringing about such abuses and making it harder for young people to escape or reject them. Communities are not homogenous and many individual and families reject these practices. However, sometimes they come under intense pressure from extended family members to commit such crimes.

**Female genital mutilation (FGM)** is a collective term for a range of procedures which involve, in the World Health Organisation definition, '*the partial or complete removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs whether for cultural or any other non-therapeutic reason*'. FGM is usually carried out on girls aged 4-13, but in some cases it is performed on babies or young women before marriage or pregnancy. FGM has been widely condemned as violence against girl children and women, a serious public health hazard and a human rights issue. The practice is medically unnecessary, and causes enduring physical, psychological and sexual harm.

FGM is mainly practised in African countries, and sometimes in Middle Eastern and Asian countries, but it is increasing in immigrant and refugee communities in Western Europe. One recent study<sup>583</sup> revealed that nearly 66,000 women with FGM were living in England and Wales in 2001, and that over 20,000 more girls under 15 years old could be at risk.

The procedure is traditionally carried out by an older woman with no medical training and with rudimentary equipment. However, men dominate decision-making at a family and community level generally, and this includes whether or not FGM should be practised on children. Men therefore have a key role in either perpetuating or eradicating FGM. One current project ('Mobilising Men on FGM in the UK'), led by WoManBeing, is surveying the knowledge, attitudes and practices of African men, and planning appropriate interventions with men to address the issues.

FGM has been a criminal offence in the UK since 1985, and the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 makes it an offence for UK nationals or permanent UK residents to carry out FGM abroad, or to aid, abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of FGM abroad or even in countries where FGM is legal. However, there have been no prosecutions under the law despite more and more women presenting themselves to healthcare professionals and specialist clinics.

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582. Hossain S., Welchman L (2005) *Honour: Crimes, Paradigms and Violence Against Women*, London: Zed Books

583. Dorkenoo E., Morison L., Macfarlane A. (2007) *A Statistical Study to Estimate the Prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation in England and Wales*, London: Foundation for Women's Health, Research and Development (FORWARD)

## Violence against immigrant women

Men's violence towards women may be facilitated by the 'No Recourse to Public Funds' requirement. This is an immigration rule which means that those who are in the UK illegally, and those who may be here perfectly legally but on temporary or conditional visas, are not entitled to public funds. Public funds include benefits such as income support and housing benefit. Should a woman, who has no independent financial means and who is subject to the No Recourse rule, wish to leave a violent situation she will find it virtually impossible in practise to access a refuge or other specialist provision, as refuges work on the premise that the person's living costs are covered by their receipt of income support and housing benefit. People in the UK on student, visitor, temporary work or new-spouse visas could all be affected by this rule as are those who may be illegal migrants, trafficked victims or refused asylum seekers.

All too often the abusers in such relationships are very well aware that their victims will not be able to access help, and use this as a way to further terrorise and control them with impunity. It results in discriminatory and unequal access to justice and safety for some women, and is in breach of UK obligations to protect women within the jurisdiction from violence.<sup>584</sup>

## Violence in gay, bisexual or transgendered (GBT) relationships

There are significant gaps in our knowledge of the prevalence of violence in GBT relationships and in the provision of services for this section of the community.

A survey in the London boroughs of Greenwich and Bexley<sup>585</sup> of homophobic and domestic violence in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community found that 29 per cent had experienced domestic violence from a partner, ex-partner or family member. More women (17 per cent) than men (nine per cent) had experienced physical violence from their same-sex partner.

While services working with men who use violence towards their male partners exist in many cities in the USA, there is very little recognition of this as a problem here. Levels of risk for heterosexual male victims are often lower than that of heterosexual women, whereas the experience of GBT male victims appears to be more similar in risk profile to that of female heterosexual victims. Sexual violence is often present as a central issue in GBT domestic violence and abuse, whereas this is not the case for heterosexual men.

The threat to 'out' remains a central weapon that GBT perpetrators can rely on as a means of control. Added to this are problems of homophobic abuse starting in the family of origin, the historic oppression of gay people by the police and a lack of specialised resources which mean that many GBT victims do not come forward for help.

## Young men, gangs, and violence

Men attempting to define their value and status through their ability to dominate other men is not a recent phenomena. For example, the 1960s saw regular bank holiday fights between 'Mods' and 'Rockers' in Brighton. However, the number of deaths of young men makes today's manifestation of youth violence a pressing problem; the murder rate for men aged 20-24 has more than doubled in recent decades.<sup>586</sup>

Young men aged 16-24 are the group most at risk of becoming a victim of violence. The British Crime Survey 2006/7 shows that 13.8 per cent of this group were victims of violent crime in the year prior to interview, compared to 3.6 per cent of all adults. While men, and young men in particular, are disproportionately affected by violence, this is not evenly distributed throughout the population.

584. Amnesty International UK (2008) *No Recourse – No safety: The UK Government's failure to protect women from violence*

585. Moran L.J., Patterson S., Docherty T. (2004) *Count me in!, A report on the Bexley and Greenwich Homophobic Crime Survey*, London: Galop

586. Dorling, D. (2005) *Murder in Britain*, *Prison Service Journal*, Vol 166, HM Prison Service

A particular focus of media concern in relation to violence has been the rising death toll among young men as result of gun and knife crime.<sup>587</sup> A recent independent review of evidence in relation to knife crime found that: knife carrying, especially amongst young men, is not unusual but there is insufficient evidence on the extent, nature, motivation, frequency and possible growth of knife carrying; children who have been victims of crime are more likely to carry knives; and children, young people and those living in disadvantaged areas are more likely to be the victims of knife offences.

The most common reason given by young men for committing a violent offence is self-defence, and this is also the reason most frequently given for carrying a knife.<sup>588</sup> Boys who use violence have learned that individuals in their immediate environment often have hostile intentions and may inappropriately attribute hostile intent when none may exist.<sup>589</sup> There is a paradox of young men in urban areas of high deprivation being both feared and fearful, leading to a willingness to use violence both to maintain a reputation and provide an illusion of safety.<sup>590</sup>

Often, but not always, young men who carry weapons are involved with gangs. Early research into gangs identified how they serve to bolster self-esteem in environments where marginalisation is widespread, and focused on how gangs are organised around hierarchies, how they define territory, and their distinctive cultural features (names, rituals, dress, language). Post-war research has stressed more the ways in which young men can feel blocked from achieving mainstream success in increasingly materialistic societies, leading them to retreat to exaggerated (and illusory) performances of masculine strength through violence. Understanding the intersections between exclusion, and the developing identities of boys and their peer groups, is therefore vital in order to understand how an *'aggressive street culture replaces success in other spheres of life as an expression of masculinity'*.<sup>591</sup> The links gangs have with criminal activity and organised crime (particularly drugs distribution) have also been increasingly explored.<sup>592</sup>

Whilst boys and young men are more likely to be involved in gangs and/or carry (or be threatened with) weapons, the roles that girls and young women play with and around gangs is insufficiently recognised. As well as participating in gangs, minding weapons, and acting as alibis for (male) gang members, women associating with gangs are frequently the targets of violence. Purely by associating with a gang member, they may be at risk of rape and sexual assault, as retaliation for something a boy to whom they are connected has (or may have) done. Sexual assault in playgrounds is also a worrying phenomenon whereby schools may be used as grooming grounds to attract girls to gangs. Sexual assault referral centres are also increasingly seeing teenage girls (14-15 years old) reporting sexual assault by multiple perpetrators. Under-reporting and detection is a common issue in relation to violence generally, but even more so for sexual violence occurring within a gang environment. There is a lack of specialist services looking at gender-based violence in relation to gang involvement, however, some projects are beginning to appear.<sup>593</sup>

In 2007, the Home Office launched the 'Tackling Gangs Action Programme' (TGAP), under which neighbourhoods in London, Liverpool, Birmingham and Manchester were awarded £1.5m over a six month period to develop innovative approaches to dealing with gangs. Further measures were set out in the 2008 'Violent Crime Action Plan' including attempts to: challenge the idea that weapons are glamorous; address the fear and peer pressure that drive young people to carry weapons; and

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587. Centre for Crime and Justice Studies (2007) *Knife Crime – a review of evidence and policy*, 2nd edition

588. Colman K., Hird C. and Povey D. (2006) *Violent Crime Overview, Homicide & Gun Crime*, 2004/05, Home Office Statistical Bulletin 02/06, London: Home Office

589. Barker G. (2005) *Dying to be Men: Youth, Masculinity and Social exclusion*, London: Routledge

590. Mullings C.W. (2007) *Holding Your Square: Masculinities, Streetlife and Violence*, Cullompton, Devon: Willan publishing

591. David Lammy M.P., *Youth violence is not about race*, New Statesman, 18 August 2008

592. For a more detailed summary of the research background, see Alexander C., *Gangs*, in Flood M., Gardiner J.K., Pease B., Pringle K. (eds.) (2007) *International Encyclopedia of Men and Masculinities*, London: Routledge

593. Firmin C. et al. (2008) Building Bridges Project, Young People of London/Race on the Agenda (ROTA)

invest in interventions and information-sharing between agencies to identify those likely to commit serious violence. In the same year, the Home Office also launched a knife awareness campaign of adverts in women's magazines, encouraging mothers to talk about knives with their children; a new good practice guide for local agencies to help them tackle gang-related crime; and guidance for schools on how to reduce the risks of gang-related problems and how to deal with any incidents that do occur.<sup>594</sup> Despite these efforts, it has been argued that gaps in policy and practice remain. For example, there should be greater involvement of young people in the formation of policies that affect them; partnerships between community-based projects and statutory criminal justice agencies should be strengthened; and wider societal measures are required to address the cultures that foster gang membership and the carrying of weapons.<sup>595</sup>

Beyond the more public forms of violence described above, it is also important to consider young men's violence within relationships. This is an area with a dearth of information. One review of the literature found a broad range of prevalence estimates between different studies and suggested that it was hard to come to any clear conclusions about the extent of violence among adolescent partners.<sup>596</sup> In a recent survey in ten secondary schools in Scotland,<sup>597</sup> the majority of young people reported they had never experienced or inflicted physical violence within a relationship. However, nine per cent of girls reported being kicked, hit or bitten by their boyfriend, ten per cent reported their partner had tried to force them to have sex – and three per cent that they had actually done so. Young women were also more likely to report inflicting verbal and emotional abuse on their partner.

## Militarism

To address men's violence necessarily means examining its relationship with militarism.<sup>599</sup> Whilst it is beyond the scope of this report to analyse in detail the complex connections between public policy, public expenditure,<sup>600</sup> violence and the military, it is clear that the armed forces are part of the State and are organised in close association with political, economic and administrative power at the highest levels. They are concerned with both national offence and defence. They are specifically geared to the ability, actual and potential, to inflict violence and other forms of harm.<sup>601</sup> It is also the case, of course, that the military can sometimes play a specifically peacekeeping or humanitarian role, such as responding to natural disasters.

The impact of the military upon those outside the military – women, men and children – can obviously be huge. This is so in terms of direct and indirect violence on other combatants and civilians in combat areas. Research has shown too, that where troops are deployed for any length of time on active service, there is frequently an increase in prostitution and trafficking. During and after a military conflict has taken place, the levels, scale and severity of violence against women also increase within the community and may remain high for many years.<sup>602</sup>

594. For a more detailed discussion, see NCVCCO/NCVYS(2008) *Gang, Gun and Knife Crime: Seeking Solutions (Part 2)*, Speaking Out Briefing No 10

595. Firmin C. et al.(ibid.)

596. Hickman L.J., Jaycox L., Aronoff J. (2004) *Dating Violence among Adolescents, Trauma, Violence and Abuse*, Volume 5, no.2

597. Burman M., Cartmel F. (2006) *Young People's Attitudes Towards Gendered Violence*, Health Scotland

598. The survey was of 1395 respondents aged 14-18, with an additional 12 focus groups. Fifty five per cent were female and 45 per cent male.

599. Ferguson H., Hearn J., Holter Ø.G., Jalmert L., Kimmel M., Lang J., Morrell R. and de Vylder S. (2004) *Ending Gender-based Violence: A Call for Global Action to Involve Men*, Stockholm: SIDA <http://www.sida.se/content/1/c6/02/47/27/SVI34602.pdf>

600. In 2007, the UK had the second largest total (not per capita) military expenditure in the world, after the US, just above China and France, See SIPRI Yearbook 2008: Armaments, Disarmaments and National Security. <http://yearbook2008.sipri.org/files/SIPRIYB08summary.pdf>

601. WHO estimated that in 2000, while 520,000 were killed through homicide, 310,000 were killed from war-related acts. WHO (2002) *World Report on Violence and Health*, Geneva, Statistical Appendix.

602. Amnesty International (2004) *Lives blown apart: crimes against women in times of conflict*

Militarism and militaries are among the most clearly gendered of all governmental activities. Within the military, men are the vast majority of the active members and overwhelmingly dominate the higher ranks of management.<sup>603 604</sup> The military provides resources for many kinds of military masculinities; these may include strongly masculinised and homophobic masculinities,<sup>605</sup> although in the UK and some other countries efforts are being made to tackle discrimination against gay men and lesbians<sup>606</sup> and to increase the status and role of women.<sup>607</sup>

The effects of military life on the lives of men in the military and their family and friends can also be severe. An issue that has been taken up in the UK and elsewhere is the links between military service and domestic violence.<sup>608</sup> For example, the one-year EU project 'Developing best professional practice for reducing sexual abuse and trafficking in militarised areas of peace-time Europe' (DAPHNE) has addressed this question in UK and France.<sup>609</sup> Additionally, institutionalised bullying, particularly of new recruits – some of whom have been driven to suicide – is an area of deep concern.<sup>610</sup> Soldiers aged under 20 are 1.7 times more likely to kill themselves than civilians of the same age, according to figures from a 2004 Ministry of Defence report.<sup>611</sup> These issues were investigated by the House of Commons Defence Select Committee in 2005.<sup>612</sup>

Other effects of military service have been highlighted. One direct set of effects is in the form of injury and mental health problems, especially after active service, for example, in Iraq. About ten per cent of UK troops airlifted out of the Iraq war zone between January and October 2003 suffered primarily from psychological problems.<sup>613</sup> A reluctance to engage in help-seeking behaviour is one pattern of young veterans.<sup>614</sup> More general effects concern the difficulties of adjusting to civilian life.<sup>615</sup> Up to 8,500 former members of the armed forces are serving sentences in UK prisons, it has been claimed. The Probation staff union, NAPO, said its figures suggested about one in every 11 prisoners used to be in the armed forces.<sup>616</sup>

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603. Higate P. (ed.) (2002) *Military Masculinities*, New York: Praeger

604. Women's military activity is also significant in particular times and places, and they may occupy key servicing or administrative positions.

605. Tatchell P. (1995) *We Don't Want to March Straight: Masculinity, Queers and the Military*, London: Cassell.

606. In July 2008, the Army joined the Royal Navy as a member of Stonewall's 'Diversity Champions' programme. These Services are working with Stonewall to promote good working conditions for all existing and potential employees and to ensure equal treatment for those who are lesbian, gay and bisexual

607. Since the early 1990s there have been significant changes in the duties of women within the UK armed forces; for instance women became eligible to serve in surface ships, as aircrew, and also in a much greater range of posts in the Army. They now form nine per cent of service personnel, and 11 per cent of officers.

608. Mercier P.J., Mercier J.D. (eds.) (2000) *Battle Cries on the Home Front: Violence in the Military*, Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas

609. [http://ec.europa.eu/justice\\_home/funding/2004\\_2007/daphne/illustrative\\_cases/illustrative\\_cases\\_en/09\\_military\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/funding/2004_2007/daphne/illustrative_cases/illustrative_cases_en/09_military_en.pdf)

610. James K. Wither (2004) 'Battling bullying in the British Army 1987–2004', *The Journal of Power Institutions in Post-Soviet Societies*, 1. <http://www.pipss.org/document46.html> The forces helpline is at: <http://www.forces-helpline.com/>. A very recent BBC investigation in Catterick Garrison is reviewed in Russell Jenkins (2008) 'Five Army instructors suspended over bullying claims at Catterick', *The Times*, 19 September. <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article4781233.ece>

611. Sarah Hall 'Army recruits more prone to suicide than civilians', *The Guardian*, 28 August 2004. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2004/aug/28/mentalhealth.politics>

612. House of Commons Defence Select Committee (2005) Third Report: <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200405/cmselect/cmdfence/63/6302.htm>. Also see 'The bullying culture of the British Army', *The Independent*, 15 March 2005 <http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/leading-articles/the-bullying-culture-of-the-british-army-528493.html>

613. Iversen A. et al. (2005) *Goodbye and good luck: the mental health needs and treatment experiences of British ex-service personnel*, *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 186: 480–486. See [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/4632263.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4632263.stm)

614. van Staden L.N., Fear N., Iversen A., French C., Dandeker C., Wessely S. (2007) *Young military veterans show similar help seeking behaviour*, *BMJ*, 334:382 (24 February)

615. Higate P. (2001) *Theorizing continuity: From military to civil life*, *Armed Forces and Society*, 27(3): 443–460.

616. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/wales/7589953.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/wales/7589953.stm)

### Tackling domestic violence in British Forces Germany

The Domestic Abuse Forum in British Forces Germany (BFG) seeks to address the myths surrounding domestic abuse and strives to raise awareness of the long-term impact of domestic abuse.

The close relationships within the military means that friends, neighbours and colleagues are often likely to report domestic disputes by calling the Royal Military Police or by making a referral to social services. This can result in early intervention with those families where domestic abuse is an issue.

The Domestic Abuse Forum also works hard to ensure that those who wish to leave an abusive relationship know how to access support. It appears that sometimes spouses are deterred from leaving their abusive partner because of the enormity of the task given the added dimension of relocating to the UK, finding a new home, new job and new schools for their children.

Work is also being done in BFG on perpetrator programmes for those who want to change their behaviour. The conviction rates at Courts Martial in BFG for cases where domestic abuse is an issue are very low, mirroring the UK picture.

Mags Godderidge, Director of Relate, British Forces Germany and Chair of the Domestic Abuse Forum (personal communication)

### Male victims of violence

Men are often victims of public forms of violence, such as war, political conflict and street and gang violence, as well as being the main combatants. Similarly, men can also be victims of violence in families or relationships, even though here (again) they are predominantly the perpetrators of it. Boys and men are most at risk from other boys and men, and much violence is male on male.

In terms of interpersonal violence, in the British Crime Survey 2007-2008<sup>617</sup> men had the highest risk of violent crime victimisation, but men were also most likely to be the offender (87 per cent of incidents involved male offenders). Violence against men is much more likely to be stranger violence (45 per cent of violent incidents against men, compared with 19 per cent of violent incidents against women). Conversely, 33 per cent of violent incidents against women were domestic violence, compared with four per cent of incidents against men.

In recent years, the numbers of attacks on people because of their race or religion has risen significantly. According to Ministry of Justice figures,<sup>618</sup> 41,000 such offences were committed in 2005-2006, a rise of 12 per cent on the previous year. Ten per cent of murder victims are black, well above the proportion of black people in the population (two per cent). Some seven per cent of victims are Asian and four per cent are from other ethnic minorities. Statistics such as these are also reflected in higher rates of fear of crime, which can have life-limiting implications. Nevertheless, people from black, minority ethnic and refugee backgrounds continue to have lower rates of confidence in the police, resulting in lower reporting and lower satisfaction rates where police did take action.<sup>619 620</sup>

Research on men's experiences<sup>621</sup> suggests that male victims of assault tend to regard their victimisation as 'weak and helpless'. Men's ability to admit to and recover from their abuse is hindered by male stoicism and stereotypical views among service providers of men as aggressors and women as victims.<sup>622</sup>

617. Kershaw C., Nicholas N., Walker A. (2008) *Crime in England and Wales 2007/08*, Home Office Statistical Bulletin

618. Cited in Morris N., 'Number of attacks on ethnic minorities soar', *The Independent*, 30/10/07

619. Phillips C., Bowling B. (2007) *Ethnicities, racism and criminal justice*, in Maguire M., Morgan R., and Reiner R. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*, Oxford University Press

620. Yarrow S. (2005) *The experiences of young black men as victims of crime*, London: Criminal Justice System Race Unit

621. Stanko E., Hobdell K. (1993) *Assault on men: masculinity and male victimisation*, *British Journal of Criminology*, Vol. 33(3)

622. Flood M., *Men as Victims of Violence*, in Flood M., Gardiner J.K., Pease B., Pringle K. (2007) *International Encyclopedia of Men and Masculinities*, London: Routledge

In comparison to women, who tend to internalise blame, men tend to externalise it; this may result in feelings of anger which can be a problem for others. Research<sup>623</sup> in Scotland, based on 21 men who had identified as victims of domestic violence in the 2000 Scottish Crime Survey, found that ten of these also admitted using physical violence.

This suggests that services for male victims of domestic violence have could have great value not only in increasing the safety of men, but also of women and children. Indeed, services for male victims should also be experienced in recognising and responding to men who are perpetrators.

Men are often reluctant to access social care services, and this is compounded by the lack of specialist provision dealing with male victims of crimes such as sexual assault, rape and domestic violence.

## Responses to male violence

Two main approaches to male violence can be identified. The first values 'tough' measures and immediate action, frequently driven by whatever currently is public concern. These are often targeted largely at men and boys, and reflect deeply, ingrained assumptions about the influence of, and connections with, masculinity issues (see also 'Ways Forward, page 151). Although this kind of approach is often presented as 'gender neutral' (as if that was good thing) it is often blind to the way gender, and specifically masculinities, drive much of male violence. Where we have this approach, we see tougher policing, more convictions, increased use of custody and very little preventative work. Young men become increasingly criminalised but the interplay between masculinities and social exclusion is largely unaddressed.

The second, more indirect, approach is largely aimed at supporting women – and specifically women as carers (although it is frequently presented as a whole-family response). Often such interventions do not serve the needs of women well, and men are not engaged with. As well as reinforcing gender stereotypes, this can result in an over-reliance on women to ensure that children's needs are met, and a marginalisation of the contribution from men (see 'Fatherhood', page 65).

In relation to services and support generally, there is also concern about equality of access for marginalised or minority groups. If government policies around cohesion and commissioning of services are poorly articulated or understood, then where there is a competition for scarce resources there is a real risk that economies of scale will kick in, resulting in the provision only of large-scale, generic services. Smaller specialist services meeting a very specific need to enable clients to access services in the first place, lose out. Black and minority ethnic and refugee communities, people with substance abuse and/or mental health issues, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, ex-offenders etc are all groups who may need non-statutory, specialist help, advice, advocacy and understanding of a provider to enable them to access more statutory or mainstream service providers.

## Specialist services for male perpetrators of domestic violence

Services for convicted domestic violence offenders are delivered by the Prison and Probation Service. Those outside of the criminal justice system are delivered through a mixture of voluntary sector organisations and multi-agency partnerships. To be in line with the Nation Service Standards, applicable to Prison and Probation Services and those working outside the criminal justice system, interventions must focus on risk management, structured group work with the perpetrator, and they must have a women's safety service in place. Work with men who are abusing their female partners seeks to engage attendees around gender issues, and attempts to shift their thinking about expectations of entitlements in relationships.

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623. Gadd D., Farrall S., Lombard N., and Dallimore D. (2002) *Domestic Abuse against Men in Scotland*, Scottish Executive: Edinburgh

There is a lack of research as to the difference, if any, between men attending the services outside and inside the criminal justice system. However, men attending the services that are not the requirement of a criminal sanction are rarely doing so on a wholly voluntary basis. Often they are referred to such services by statutory children's services and increasingly via the family courts. Even where there is no involvement of statutory agencies, the men are often under pressure from partners and others to end their use of domestic violence.<sup>624 625</sup>

In relation to services for convicted domestic violence offenders, all Probation Service areas in England and Wales are running accredited domestic abuse treatment programmes. One approach is called the Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP) and another is the Community Domestic Violence Programme (CDVP). There is a third domestic violence programme called Healthy Relationships (HR), which is currently available in five prisons.

Following the roll-out of the accredited domestic violence programmes, the numbers of domestic violence offenders coming before the courts quickly outstripped the available places, leaving long waiting lists for offenders to start these programmes.<sup>626</sup> Some probation areas have reduced waiting lists by reducing the numbers of offenders eligible for these programmes, by restricting access to only those assessed as high risk. While this may be understandable when faced with high levels of demand, the impact on the safety of victims, and what is available for those who fail to get on programmes, is concerning. Levels of resourcing for these programmes – and specifically for the women's safety services (whose funding is separate) – are not meeting the need.

Perpetrator programmes outside the criminal justice system often provide routes into services that enable men to self-refer themselves. Having a self-referral route can enable partners and others to make concrete demands on perpetrators to address their behaviour and contribute to the safety of those at risk.<sup>627</sup> These programmes can take referrals from a range of agencies (e.g. Children and Family Courts Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS), Child Protection Agencies, Relate etc. This seems a vital component of a co-ordinated approach to domestic violence that can hold perpetrators accountable, improve outcomes for children and increase safety for those at risk.

Provision of services outside of the criminal justice system is very patchy and inconsistent, with significant parts of England and Wales having none at all. The result is that many men who wish to access services to address their use of domestic violence do not have this option, and children's services wishing to engage with fathers who are using violence towards their partners do not have access to an appropriate service to refer such men. Access to these services is also compromised by the lack of engagement with men around their violence by maternity, child health and family services. These services should work more closely in partnership with perpetrator programmes to identify and refer men who are violent. This raises specific difficulties for local authorities in meeting the requirement of the Gender Equality Duty in terms of provision of services to men. In addition, there is almost no specialised provision for perpetrators of domestic violence from specific black and minority ethnic and refugee communities either within the criminal justice context or outside.

624. Burton S., Regan L., Kelly, L. (1998) *Supporting women and challenging men: lessons from the Domestic Violence Intervention Project*, Bristol: The Policy Press

625. Hague G., Kelly L., Malos E., Mullender A., with Debbonaire T. (1996) *Children, Domestic Violence and Refuges: A Study of Needs and Responses*, Women's Aid Federation of England

626. House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee, *Domestic Violence, Forced Marriage, and 'Honour'– based violence*, Sixth Report of Session 2007-08, HC 263-I, 13 June 2008, London: The Stationery Office

627. Burton S., Regan L., Kelly L. (1998) *Supporting Women – Challenging Men: Lessons from the Domestic Violence Intervention Project*, Policy Press

### Respect's work on domestic violence

Almost all providers of perpetrator programmes outside the criminal justice system, and many of those within the criminal justice system, are members of Respect. This is the national association for those working with perpetrators of domestic violence and providing associated support services. The stated aim of Respect is to increase the safety of women, children and others at risk from domestic violence.

Respect has recently (April 2008) set National Service Standards and an accreditation system for all organisations working with domestic violence perpetrators and providing linked support services. This should assist and inform the development of a consistent level of service provision across the UK.

Respect and the National Offender Management Service are working together to develop a model for individual work with perpetrators of domestic violence, which is being piloted in the autumn of 2008.

[http://www.respect.uk.net/pages/Accreditation\\_Development\\_Project.html](http://www.respect.uk.net/pages/Accreditation_Development_Project.html)

## Responses to youth crime

The youthful nature of much of the violence under discussion has led to a youth justice response. An independent audit of the youth justice system stated that despite commitments to reduce the numbers of children sentenced to custody, the trend is in the opposite direction with numbers increasing by eight per cent since March 2003, against a target of a ten per cent reduction. The majority, 64 per cent, of the Youth Justice Board's expenditure goes on purchasing custodial places, compared to just five per cent on prevention.<sup>628</sup> This lack of a focus on prevention and over-reliance on a criminal justice response is seen across government responses.

One of the flagship responses to concerns about youth crime (largely young men's crime) is the Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO). Those under 18 years old make up 40 per cent of those who are subject to an ASBO, and the breaching of the conditions of an ASBO is a criminal offence. Critics of the use of the ASBO would say that this has led to increasing criminalisation of young people.<sup>629</sup>

Research by the Youth Justice Board found that young people subject to ASBOs were likely to be highly disadvantaged and led lives characterised by: family breakdown and inconsistent supervision; educational difficulty and under-achievement; previous abuse, bereavement and loss; residence in high crime neighbourhoods, with relatively few age-appropriate facilities.<sup>630</sup>

There is little evidence to show that punitive approaches to violence by young men have any impact in bringing about change in their behaviour. While the use of ASBOs has grown, the use of Individual Support Orders, which can lead to a range of interventions to support young people, has remained relatively rare.

There are almost no perpetrators' services aimed specifically at young men using domestic violence. Practitioners working in services which work with adult perpetrators are frequently asked to respond to young men's behaviour within the home, particularly in the case of violence towards mothers. Little exists in the way of established services to address this. Cheshire Against Domestic Abuse Partnership<sup>631</sup> provide one of the few examples of a structured intervention targeted at young men using violence and abuse in relationships.

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628. Garside R., Solomon E. (2008) *Ten years of Labour's youth justice reforms: an independent audit*, Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, Kings College London

629. Macdonald S., Telford M. (2007) *The use of ASBOs against young people in England and Wales: lessons for Scotland* *Legal Studies* 27 (4), 604–629

630. Youth Justice Board (2006) *Anti-Social Behaviour Orders*, London: YJB

631. <http://www.cheshire.gov.uk/domesticabuse/Partnership/CDAP.htm>

## Preventive work with young men

There are a range of approaches to, and materials for, prevention work with young men and young women, which have shown promise in engaging them in reassessing the attitudes and beliefs that support abuse, as well as their understanding of non-abusive behaviour. Young people taking part in this work actively bring up the connections between being violent to a partner and their sense of what 'being male' or 'being female' in relationships means.

In addition to efforts to develop prevention with young men and young women, there are also opportunities to address boys and young men specifically, particularly through work in educational institutions such as schools; this is critical to any strategy to tackle men's violence effectively (see also 'Education', page 105). A preventive strategy in relation to violence and abuse should involve engaging boys and young men about constructive ways to 'do masculinity'; positive relationships; respect for women; and non-violent behaviours.

## Anti-violence activism

A key area of action in involving men in gender equality strategies is in relation to tackling men's violence. Reflecting the development and focus of anti-sexist men's groups going back to the 1970s, anti-violence activism among men has grown worldwide during the past decade or so. In many countries, groups of men are seeking to take responsibility for ending men's violence. Whilst approaches vary significantly, they tend to involve a range of strategies, including: taking personal steps to minimise their own use of violence and to challenge other men to do likewise; engaging in community education; holding workshops in schools, prisons and workplaces; working with violent men; and developing mass media campaigns targeted at men. Most groups undertake activities in alliance with women's groups and organisations, and share a commitment to providing services for the victims and survivors of men's violence. The best-known example is the White Ribbon Campaign (see box below).<sup>632</sup>

Such groups tread a delicate political path in seeking to mobilise men in order to undermine the structures of privilege from which they benefit. Unsurprisingly, they are sometimes received with scepticism, particularly by some women's organisations, who may believe that male activists may entrench rather than undermine male privilege; Pease has identified a set of principles and conditions designed to avoid the potential pitfalls here.<sup>633</sup> Male anti-violence activists may also attract anger, hostility and contempt from some men. Although men's participation in anti-violence activism can be difficult for them, it remains a vital element in efforts to end violence against women.<sup>634</sup>

During 2007-2008, the Government has supported a number of initiatives (including the establishment of the Coalition on Men and Boys) to get more men involved in activities to challenge the culture and behaviour that enables – and excuses – violence against women.<sup>635</sup>

632. The range of groups and strategies is described in more detail in Flood M. (2005) *Men's Collective Struggles for Gender Justice: The Case of Anti-Violence Activism*, in Kimmel M., Hearn J., Connell R.W. (eds.), *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities*, London: SAGE

633. Pease B. (2008) *Engaging Men in Men's Violence Prevention: Exploring the Tensions, Dilemmas and Possibilities*, Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearing House

634. Flood M. (ibid.)

635. Government Equalities Office (2008) *Tackling Violence Against Women: A cross-government narrative*, [www.equalities.gov.uk](http://www.equalities.gov.uk)

#### The White Ribbon Campaign (WRC)

The WRC is probably the largest initiative in the world working with men to end men's violence against women. It was originally established in Canada in 1991, and the UK Branch was set up in 2004. The Campaign asks men to wear a white ribbon as a personal pledge never to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women. It encourages men to do educational work in schools, workplaces and communities, to support local women's groups and to raise money for the international educational efforts of the WRC. The Campaign works closely with women's groups and in partnership with others (e.g. schools, businesses, trade unions, sports clubs, youth groups, government and NGOs). For further details, see [www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk](http://www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk).

## Recommendations

**Integrated strategic responses should be developed at national and local levels to tackle violence against women.** Consideration of masculinity issues should be central to such responses.

**In addition to existing provision within the criminal justice system, each local authority should have a service for men who are perpetrators of domestic violence, accredited against National Service Standards.** This should not be at the expense of provision for victims of abuse, but part of a wider strategy to promote prevention work, reduce re-offending, and improve outcomes for children.

**Young people who sexually offend should be seen as children in need, with more consistent assessment, information-sharing and intervention processes established.** Provision of services for children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviour should be increased.

**Preventive work with boys and young men is required to help them develop non-abusive masculinities, and ways of relating to women and girls based on equality and respect.** Every Local Safeguarding Children Board should support the development of initiatives to assist boys and young men in making a positive transition to adulthood. These should involve engaging boys and young men around the challenges they face, and on issues such as violence, relationships, sexuality, bullying and so on.

**There should be a requirement of children's services to attempt to engage, when safe to do so, with perpetrators of domestic violence where children are affected.**

**Training on awareness and recognition of potential child sexual abuse should be increased and improved, especially for social workers and health professionals (not just those working specifically with children).** Training for professionals on responding to child sexual abuse when it comes to light should also be more widely available.

**Efforts should be increased to reduce the consumption by boys and men of all forms of pornography – and violent pornography in particular – and to improve sex education and media literacy.** The Government, together with the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP), should seek to ensure that all internet service providers are filtering access to pornography sites, and only allowing adults access to classified pornographic materials.<sup>636</sup>

**The Government should explore the effectiveness of current media regulations on harmful content, and strengthen educational measures to counter the disturbing normalisation of pornographic imagery and practices across all media (including in particular television, advertising and the internet).** Specific campaigns aimed at men should highlight the links between pornography, prostitution and violence against women.

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636. Flood M., *Boys, Sex, and Porn: New technologies and old dangers*, presentation at conference on *Whatever Happened to Child Sexual Abuse?*, London, 29 November 2007

**The National Action Plan to reduce violence against women should consider how services that meet the needs of black minority ethnic and refugee communities are resourced.**

**There should be greater collaborative working between the specialist violence against women voluntary sector and statutory agencies.**

**The Government should seek to develop culturally sensitive, educative approaches to eradicate female genital mutilation (FGM);** this should include efforts to improve men's understanding of the harm involved in such practices, and to involve them in campaigns against FGM.

**A review should be instigated of the incidence of sexual assault within the military, particularly among active service personnel.** There is also a need for a review of the needs of family members of active service personnel, specifically in relation to domestic violence.

**The number of services for male victims of domestic violence should be increased (in addition to an extension of service provision for female victims);** such services should be required to have a good understanding and awareness of work with male perpetrators of domestic violence. The statutory sector should take a lead in developing such provision.

**Further research is required to highlight approaches that are effective in reaching men, tackling negative attitudes towards gender issues and promoting reductions of violence.** Resources for the evaluation of treatment programmes should be increased, focusing on what types of interventions are effective, with which offenders and in what circumstances.



## 10. Ways forward

Men's attitudes, beliefs and actions affect progress towards a very wide range of social goals – including promoting gender equality and strategies towards its achievement. If men 'create problems and experience problems', then they must also be part of the solution. If we are to improve the lives of men, women and children, then men's participation in achieving change is vital. Indeed, without their involvement, and shifts in the distribution of power between men and women (and between different groups of men), then gender equality will be far harder – if not impossible – to realise.

Efforts to involve men in gender equality strategies have been endorsed at international level by the UN Commission on the Status of Women, and at EU level by the Council of Ministers (see 'Men, boys and policy', pages 28-30). There are also some examples of attempts to build this approach into the policies and programmes of international organisations, especially in relation to family planning and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, violence against women and poverty and development.<sup>637</sup> In this section, we explore comparable ways forward in the UK context.

This conclusion explores sites and strategies for taking this work forward and highlights some key elements of good practice in working with men. The chapter concludes with a set of 'core' recommendations; these are supplemented by the specific recommendations in relation to particular areas of work, identified in the previous sections.

### Sites and strategies

There are various arenas through which gender change is highlighted, modelled, articulated and achieved. Below, we identify and consider action in four of these arenas: by government, in organisations, through the media and by men working together.

#### Public policies for gender equality

Many mainstream government policies tend to be shaped, either explicitly or more often implicitly, around traditional notions of masculinity as the 'norm'. For example, the benefits system has tended to prioritise a 'male breadwinner' model of social security provision. 'Contributory' benefits, such as national insurance and pensions, have generally privileged a typically 'male' employment pattern of full-time, long-term labour market participation. By contrast, 'categorical benefits' (which are not means-tested or dependent on contributions), such as child benefit, disability living allowance and carers' allowance are more likely to be paid to women, but they are usually paid at a lower level than contributory benefits. Many benefits also treat a couple as comprising a claimant and a dependent, with the benefit paid to one partner for use by them both; in practice, the man is more often the claimant, and he therefore tends to receive and control the available resources.<sup>638</sup> Overall, the benefits system has tended to undervalue forms of unpaid work, such as domestic care and community and voluntary work, reinforcing women's roles in these activities.

Another example is criminal justice policies. These are substantially targeted at men and boys, yet there is relative silence about masculinity issues in debate about policy formulation. Indeed, the approaches of male-dominated institutions, such as the police force, judiciary, and prison system, routinely draw on unspoken assumptions about masculinity, and reinforce 'tough' responses. In the process, the needs of both male and female workers and offenders can be marginalised.

Conversely, many services (e.g. in relation to health, social care and child welfare) are largely geared towards women, both supporting – but also entrenching – their roles as primary carers. This also reflects stereotypical beliefs (not least among men themselves) that men should be powerful and

637. See, for instance: Connell R., *Masculinities, Power and the Epidemic: Messages of Social Research*, speech at international symposium on *Politicising Masculinities: Beyond the Personal*, 15-18 October 2007, Dakar; Ruxton S. (2004) *Gender Equality and Men: Learning from Practice*, Oxford: Oxfam GB; Pease B., Pringle K. (2001) *A Man's World: Changing Men's Practices in a Globalized World*, London: Zed Books

638. Bennett F. (2005) *Gender and benefits, Working Paper Series No. 30*, Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission

should not display any weaknesses or vulnerabilities. These assumptions have frequently led to men being overlooked or 'screened out' by service providers, regarded either as too dangerous to engage with (sometimes understandably so), or as of secondary importance in comparison to women.<sup>639</sup> Whilst it remains true that women's needs are not fully met by service providers, men's needs are more likely to be invisible to them, and services often struggle to engage with them effectively.

Other policies have had different impacts on men and women, but the implications for gender equality have not been sufficiently analysed or addressed. For instance, the introduction of the national minimum wage has had a greater impact on women's pay (although a significant gender pay gap continues). Yet the focus of 'welfare to work' strategies has been on paid employment, and funding for employment training has been overwhelmingly directed at men (see section on 'Work', page 45).

The lack of gender analysis in relation to policy is also evident in relation to the statistics upon which policy is based. For instance, the Government's annual Household Below Average Income (HBAI) figures – which are used to assess poverty levels – attempt to measure the living standards of an individual as determined by household income. But this assumes that both partners in a couple benefit equally from that income, an assumption that fails to take into account the evidence that, in practice, men tend to control more household resources than women. In other words, HBAI statistics may obscure and/or overestimate the position of women relative to men.

Where gender differences have been identified, a common response among policy-makers is to develop separate policy strands aimed at men and women. There may be circumstances where a focus on one gender is justified; for example, some specific aspects of men's health may lend themselves to this approach.<sup>640</sup> But there is a significant risk in establishing parallel policy streams that the impact of policies on relations *between* men and women are ignored. For example, developing policy initiatives geared at increasing fathers' involvement with children should consider carefully the implications for mothers, the complexity of family dynamics and how to engage effectively with violent men. Alongside strategies to improve 'girls' education', it is not enough simply to add 'boys' education' strategies; this approach simplifies the issues at stake (see section on 'Education', page 105).

## Organisational support

Businesses, public sector organisations, trade unions, sports and community organisations can play a significant role in advancing or impeding progress towards gender equality (see also section on 'Work', page 45). Although there are differences between these kinds of organisations, they are all potentially arenas of gender change. However, shifts in organisational gender regimes are uneven, and are affected by other aspects of organisational restructuring, such as moves towards 'flat structures', new working processes and the amalgamation of different occupational categories.<sup>641</sup>

These trends may undermine the potential of organisations as sites where gender equality principles can be furthered. Nevertheless, there are still various ways in which organisations can contribute. They can act as model employers, fostering a supportive institutional culture; for instance they can address the entrenched 'long hours' culture and make it acceptable for men and women to take leave or work flexible hours without fearing that they may be regarded as less committed to their work than other employees. They can also pursue fair employment practices and equal pay, and take action to tackle discrimination. Institutional policies should, for example, go beyond the statutory minimum and include generous paternity and parental leave, flexible working arrangements and anti-bullying, anti-violence and harassment policies.<sup>642</sup> Opportunities for training on equalities issues

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639. Edwards J., *Screening out men*, in Popay J., Hearn J., Edwards J. (eds.) (1998) *Men, Gender Divisions and Welfare*, London: Routledge

640. Recent examples are the development of policies targeted at men in relation to chlamydia screening and suicide prevention.

641. Connell R. (2006) *The Experience of Gender Change in Public Sector Organisations*, *Gender, Work and Organisation*, Vol.13, No.5

642. Hearn J., Parkin W. (2001) *Gender, Sexuality and Violence in Organisations*, London: SAGE

and for personal counselling can also be put in place. Another important consideration in moving forward gender equality strategies in organisations is how to involve men in powerful positions in the process of change.

## Media representation

Media representations of men and masculinity influence men's understandings of what being a man is about, and help to establish the parameters for debate about public policy. Top-selling magazines and popular self-help books – and to a lesser, but significant extent, TV shows and films – are full of information about masculinity today.<sup>643</sup>

The example of the rapid rise of 'men's magazines' in the UK in the 1990s, such as *Arena*, *Loaded*, *FHM* and *Maxim*, is well-known. Whilst there are significant differences between these publications,<sup>644</sup> in general their 'laddish' depiction of heterosexual masculinity is of '*playfulness, flight from responsibility, detached and uninhibited pleasure-seeking and the consumption of women's bodies*'.<sup>645</sup> Moreover, women tend to be presented, through a plethora of soft porn images, as sexual objects. Although most men's titles are experiencing a sharply declining circulation, worryingly '*many of their readers are migrating to more troubling forms of media – specifically, internet porn, which can obviously go much, much further than these magazines could ever dare*'.<sup>646</sup>

The dramatic expansion of popular psychology and self-help books during this period has also provided a new source of information, primarily aimed at women but also sometimes at men, about relationships and self-identity. The most widely read – such as *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*<sup>647</sup> – tend, however, to rest on superficial myths about men's and women's 'innate' communication abilities and to reassert sex stereotypes from the 1950s. Given the apparent gulf between men and women, such texts suggest that all that can be done is to accept their separate but complementary natures. Having said this, Gauntlett argues<sup>648</sup> there are other self-help books for men that share more positive messages: they accept that men can change, that they can express more vulnerable and loving feelings, that they place too much emphasis on work at the expense of personal life and that their needs are remarkably similar to those of women.

Essentialist notions of what men and women are like are also central to advertising.<sup>649</sup> Although some adverts portray gender reversals (e.g. women in management positions), over the past decade most have reassured viewers that traditional gender relations remain unchanged; for example, where men are portrayed in domestic roles (e.g. in the kitchen), they are often ridiculed for their supposed incompetence. Other adverts perpetuate the notion of a 'sex war'; whilst threatened or implied violence against women in adverts has been a theme for some time, a more recent strand has depicted men as the victims of (female) violence and revenge. An underlying emerging trend has been the encroachment of, and borrowing from, pornographic imagery and idioms.

## Mobilising men

There is wide diversity within the overall label of 'men's movements', including groups with very different political agendas<sup>650</sup> – and often considerable tensions between groups. In the UK, Collier

643. Gauntlett D. (2002) *Media, Gender and Identity*, London: Routledge

644. For further analysis, see Jackson P., Stevenson N., Brooks K. (2001) *Making Sense of Men's Magazines*, Cambridge: Polity

645. Gill R. (2007) *Gender and the media*, Cambridge: Polity

646. Cochrane C., *The dark world of lad's mags*, New Statesman, 23 August 2007

647. Gray J. (1992) *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, New York: Harper Collins

648. Gauntlett D. (ibid.)

649. Gill R. (ibid.)

650. These include: 'men's rights' groups that see men as having 'lost out' to women; 'mythopoetic' men's groups exploring spiritual growth; and various groups with profeminist approaches, and gay and/or black membership. For more detail on these categorisations, see Clatterbaugh K. (1997) *Contemporary Perspectives on Masculinity*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press

and Sheldon<sup>651</sup> have traced the evolution of various 'fathers' rights' groups, highlighting a shift from concerns around property and finance in the 1970s and early 1980s to, by the late 1990s, a growing focus on child contact and residence arrangements (in addition to financial issues and the Child Support Agency). Some of these groups provide an important and largely invisible advice and support service for non-resident parents alongside policy and campaigning activity; others are openly hostile to women and mothers and have focused largely on highly visible and combative protest actions.

Increasingly, claims by men's and fathers' rights groups of the need for equal treatment have been bolstered by reliance on emerging 'rights' discourses within policy debates. However, these claims have often been undermined by misrepresentation of the continuing evidence that women still suffer far deeper gender inequalities overall, and poorly supported arguments that men and boys are now 'losing out' to women and girls.

From a very different standpoint, other men – both individuals and groups – are willing to demonstrate support for gender equality and more positive forms of masculinity, both in their personal lives and through organised activism. Probably the most obvious example is that of gay men coming together during the 1980s and 1990s in response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic – pioneering new approaches to caring for the sick and developing education campaigns on safe sex – and demonstrating in the process new ways for men to work with and care for each other.

The establishment in Britain of the White Ribbon Campaign (WRC), an international campaign which seeks to mobilise men against men's violence, shows that there is potential to develop this kind of action in Britain too. An important feature of the WRC has been the establishment of links with women's organisations and the development of joint initiatives (see section on 'Violence', page 123).

There are also an increasing number of fathers and male carers engaged with early years and other children's services. This development has emerged largely independently of the fathers' rights movement. It represents a new form of mobilisation, with men taking on an actively involved caring role in their children's lives, supported by services traditionally aimed at women. This also offers great potential for joint initiatives involving women and men.

## General recommendations

Below, we set out our general recommendations. These are developed in the following categories: developing the policy framework; building institutional mechanisms; monitoring progress; involving men; sharing good practice in working with men and boys; improving data collection; furthering the research agenda; increasing funding; and media representation.

For additional recommendations in relation to specific policy areas, see sections on 'Work' (page 45), 'Fatherhood' (page 65), 'Health' (page 83), 'Education' (page 105) and 'Violence' (page 123).

### Developing the policy framework<sup>652</sup>

Men and boys should be addressed explicitly across government policies, programmes, and performance frameworks, rather than their presence being left implicit. There should be a particular focus on addressing men and masculinities in relation to policies on work, fatherhood, health, education and violence, and to the priorities of the Ministers for Women. The aim should be to 'join up' policies and programmes by focusing on the relations between groups and integrating ('mainstreaming') gender concerns, rather than targeting parallel strategies at women and men separately.

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651. Collier R., Sheldon S. (2008) *Fragmenting Fatherhood: A Socio-Legal Study*, Oxford: Hart Publications

652. This section draws extensively upon the framework set out in Connell R. (2003) *The Role of Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality*, UN Expert Group Meeting, Brasilia, Brazil, 21-24 October 2003

The Government should promote a clear public statement on why men and boys should be involved in gender equality strategies. It is essential to define 'gender' as men's concern as well as women's, to articulate reasons for men and boys to support gender equality and to disseminate this statement widely.

In line with the Gender Equality Duty, policy and programmes should address the specific needs of men and boys where they differ from the needs of women and girls. There may be circumstances where gender analysis leads to the conclusion that specific action orientated at women or men is necessary. The Equality and Human Rights Commission should monitor and enforce compliance with the Duty rigorously, holding public authorities to account.

In designing an appropriate policy framework, central and local government, and other relevant stakeholders (e.g. business, trade unions, NGOs) should build upon the conclusions of the 2006 EU Council on 'Men and Gender Equality' and of the 2004 UN Commission on the Status of Women on 'the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality'.

### **Building institutional mechanisms**

Gender Equality 'Champions' should be appointed in all government departments to monitor and promote implementation of gender equality strategies, and in particular the Gender Equality Duty. Champions must be at senior level, with sufficient power and resources to enforce their responsibilities, and with clear measures set out for success.

The Government Equalities Office and the Equality and Human Rights Commission should establish designated policy and research positions focusing on how men and boys can contribute to tackling gender and other inequalities.

The Government should explore the establishment of a 'Panel on Men and Boys' to stimulate and lead public debate about the engagement of men and boys with gender issues. The panel should be composed of high-profile men and women with expertise on gender.

### **Monitoring progress**

The development by the Government Equalities Office of a performance framework for equality, and work to improve the available data, should address men and masculinity issues.

The 'Gender Impact Assessments' (GIAs) required by the Gender Equality Duty of the policies, budgets and structures of public bodies should include assessment of their impact on men and boys. New statements of government policy should only be released publicly after an assessment has been undertaken.

The development of equalities objectives in the Public Service Agreements for government departments within the next Comprehensive Spending Review should address men and masculinity issues explicitly.

### **Involving men**

Men with senior positions within government, business, trade unions and NGOs should provide high-profile and proactive support for gender equality measures, and encourage other men to play their part. They should also model good practice for men in organisations, working collaboratively with and supporting female colleagues on gender issues.

Achieving progress towards gender equality requires more than working with men as isolated individuals; the development of men's groups and networks committed to advocacy for gender

equality should be encouraged at community level. At local level, these organisations have a potentially important role as stakeholders to be consulted as part of Gender Equality Duty compliance.

Men's and women's groups should establish regular contact and exchange of ideas and practice, and should seek to work in alliance for gender equality as far as possible.

### **Sharing good practice in working with men and boys**

There is a need to undertake a further study to establish clear criteria for identifying effective practice in working with men and boys and examples of this in different policy areas (drawing both from UK and international experience). Key issues are likely to include: frameworks for thinking about men, masculinities and gender; strategies for reaching and engaging men and boys; the role of 'transitions' in the lives of men and boys; co-working between men and women; integrated working between adults' and children's services; professional attitudes; and the evaluation of programmes.

The Government Equalities Office (GEO) should play a lead role in disseminating good practice in engaging men and boys in gender equality work, through events for key stakeholders, in conjunction with national organisations representing and working with men who have a commitment to gender equality. The GEO website also provides an appropriate vehicle for disseminating information to researchers and policy-makers.

Greater efforts should be made both at national and local levels to encourage cross-sectoral links and sharing of good practice between those working with men. This should include a stronger lead from government, more innovative approaches to funding partnerships bringing together different sectors and the development of joint training and support networks between local projects. The Coalition on Men and Boys can act as a catalyst and forum for such discussion.

There is a need for educational institutions to increase training opportunities for professionals (including teachers, social workers, youth workers, counsellors, health workers) to develop their understanding of issues relating to men and masculinities and to improve their practice.

### **Improving data collection**

In order to fulfil the Gender Equality Duty, official statistics should be routinely disaggregated by gender. Whilst the provision of such statistics has improved since the late 1990s, gaps remain which should be addressed,<sup>653</sup> e.g. in relation to the staffing of public bodies, access to services and the intersection of social disadvantage and gender (in particular disability, sexuality, age and men's violence to children).

There is a need to develop more studies that integrate attention to the problems men create with attention to the problems men experience, and to broaden official data collection with regard to the relationship between gender and other equalities issues (e.g. age, disability, sexuality).

The general lack of statistics on gender issues in Wales should be remedied by the Office for National Statistics.

### **Furthering the research agenda**

The development of policy towards men and boys should draw more extensively on the substantial body of academic research which now exists, both in the UK and in Europe. As part of its research programme, the Government Equalities Office should maintain a continuing focus on issues and trends in relation to masculinities, and their relationship with and impact on policy development.

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653. Breitenbach E. (2006) *Gender Statistics: an evaluation*, Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission/University of Edinburgh

Further research is required to explore the intersection of masculinities with other equalities strands, such as race, faith, sexuality, age, disability and class. This could be initiated by the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Government Equalities Office.

The connections between masculinity and disadvantage for particular groups of men and boys have received little research consideration so far (e.g. older men, male migrants and refugees, homeless men, disabled men and boys). Further attention should be directed at their circumstances.

Research is necessary to map both mainstream and specialist services working with men across a range of sectors, to improve the number and quality of external evaluations of project work, and to explore and disseminate good practice in working with men (and in working with men and women together).

Proposed research by the Government Equalities Office into how policy levers can address inequality should explore the dynamics by which some men come to a position of challenging sexism and gender inequality. In order to promote more widely among men positive attitudes and actions towards equality, it is essential to understand the factors that can influence them to adopt these approaches, and how the underlying processes work.

The impact of the different cultural contexts in Wales<sup>654</sup> and England (and Scotland and Northern Ireland) on the development of masculinities has received little research attention, and should be addressed.

### **Increasing funding**

Policy-makers and funders should seek to devote increased resources to innovative projects working with men and boys, in particular those which are seeking to address masculinity issues from a critical perspective. These may include father-inclusive children's services, anti-violence initiatives, health programmes and education programmes in schools. This support should not be at the expense of vital projects to support women and girls, such as refuges and rape crisis centres.

It is essential to raise the profile of work on gender, and in particular to increase the gender awareness of those in leadership positions (and especially men) who control resources which could be devoted to gender work; this should lead to an expansion in the level of funding available overall. Good practice should be promoted, modelled and disseminated by 'Gender Champions' within government departments.

### **Improving media representation**

Given the power of the media to foster restrictive representations of masculinity (and femininity), it is important to develop strategies in response. Educational initiatives in to assist viewers to analyse media content critically – and in particular the portrayal of gender – should be significantly expanded.

Research should be initiated into the representation of men in the media (including newspapers, photographs, adverts etc.). This should analyse patterns of representation and the discourses that lie behind them, and make recommendations as to how the current limited range of representations of masculinities can be developed and extended.

There is potential for the development of communication and social marketing campaigns aimed at men and boys. There are examples of campaigns producing positive changes in attitudes and behaviours in relation to addressing violence against women and girls.<sup>655</sup>

654. The only specific work we have encountered on Welsh masculinities, for example, is Scourfield J., Drakeford M. (1999) *Boys from Nowhere: Finding Welsh men and putting them in their place*, Contemporary Wales, vol. 12

655. Flood M., *Involving Men in Efforts to End Violence Against Women*, presentation at Domestic Violence Network Forum (Eastern Suburbs Domestic Violence Network), Sydney, 18 March 2008

Media organisations should adopt, implement and monitor editorial guidelines and policies aimed at achieving gender balance in all aspects of their output. This should include revealing and discussing the position and circumstances of men and boys, rather than treating them as the norm.

Entry-level training for journalists should address gender issues, and awareness-raising workshops should be organised for practising journalists, with the aim of drawing attention to the impact of gender on journalistic choices and decisions.

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