



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP-2017/0220, 13 November 2017

International Men's Day debate

Summary

There will be a Backbench Business Committee debate on International Men's Day on Tuesday 14 November 2017 at 9:30am in Westminster Hall. The debate is sponsored by Jeremy Lefroy MP.

International Men's Day has been part of the mainstream annual events calendar in the UK since 2010 (it was first created in 1992 in Trinidad and Tobago) and is marked by 70 countries around the world. This year, International Men's Day will take place in the UK on 19 November.

The organisation, [International Men's Day UK](#), has said that the focus remains on "how we can make a difference to men and boys, and, how we can give men and boys better life chances by addressing some of the issues that affect Men and Boys."

There have been two previous debates on International Men's Day in [2015](#) (Westminster Hall) and [2016](#) (Commons Chamber).

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

Alex Bate
Tim Jarrett
Alexander Bellis
Carl Baker
Nerys Roberts
Wendy Wilson

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1. What is International Men's Day?

The organisation, [International Men's Day UK](#), has issued a background briefing on the aim of International Men's day:

International Men's Day has been part of the mainstream annual events calendar in the UK since 2010 (it was first created in 1992 in Trinidad and Tobago) and is marked by 70 countries around the world. **The UK has the most International Men's Day events than anywhere else in the world.**

The event gives everyone who wants to celebrate International Men's Day the opportunity to help work towards shared objectives which are applied equally to men and boys irrespective of their age, ability, social background, ethnicity, sexuality, gender identity, religious belief and relationship status.

Those objectives are:

- To promote male role models
- To celebrate the contribution that men make
- To focus on men's health and wellbeing
- To highlight discrimination against men the inequalities that men and boys face
- To improve gender relations and promote gender equality
- To create a safer world for everyone

In the UK, International Men's Day started to take root in 2010 with a men and boys' conference in Brighton and since then has expanded rapidly to include at least 50 different events every year (see <http://ukmensday.org.uk/events/list/>). The UK has the most International Men's Day events than anywhere else in the world. Events are being held in all four UK nations. These events range from the Parliamentary debate to community events, health days, business events, student events, political events, conferences, comedy nights and fundraisers.

There is no one body who 'owns' International Men's Day in the UK which therefore gives organisations the creative freedom to apply the above (alongside the How to Make Difference to Men and Boys in the UK theme below) – hence the eclectic and diverse mix of events.

The Day is overseen by six volunteers who are involved in a range of British charities and academia.

The Twitter account is @ukmensday and the international hashtag is #internationalmensday

International Men's Day also provides a crucial focus for a range of charities who support vulnerable men and boys to highlight their particular issues:

- ManKind Initiative (domestic abuse) – national conference
- Men Get Eating Disorders Too – national conference
- CALM (male suicide) –awareness raising and fundraising
- Mankind Counselling (Sexual abuse/violence) – fundraising

- Survivors Manchester (Sexual abuse/violence) – fundraising

The main themes focus on raising issues about men and boys' wellbeing and vulnerability as well as marking the positive role men make to their families and society more widely. On the issue of wellbeing and vulnerability, they focus on a range of key issues [...] and **how we can make a difference to men and boys in these areas:**

- The high male suicide rate
- The challenges faced by boys and men at all stages of education including attainment
- Men's health, shorter life expectancy and workplace deaths
- The challenges faced by the most marginalised men and boys in society (for instance, homeless men, boys in care and the high rate of male deaths in custody)
- Male victims of violence, including sexual violence
- The challenges faced by men as parents, particularly new fathers and separated fathers
- Male victims and survivors of sexual abuse, rape, sexual exploitation, domestic abuse, forced marriage, honour-based crime, stalking and slavery
- The negative portrayal of men, boys and fathers

2. Issues raised by International Men's Day UK

2.1 Men's health

Life Expectancy

Male life expectancy at birth is 3.7 years lower than female life expectancy at birth in the UK.

However, this gap has narrowed by almost one year since 2001. Male life expectancy at birth has risen from 75.9 to 79.2, while female life expectancy has risen from 80.5 to 82.9.¹

Premature and preventable mortality

Mortality from **cardiovascular disease** among those aged under 75 is twice as high among men as among women. For cardiovascular diseases considered preventable, mortality among men under 75 is almost three times as high as among women.

Mortality from **liver disease** in those aged under 75 is 24% higher among men than among women. For liver diseases considered preventable, mortality among men under 75 is just over twice as high as among women.

Mortality from **respiratory disease** in those aged under 75 is 37% higher among men than among women. For respiratory diseases considered preventable, mortality among men under 75 is 26% higher than among women.

Mortality from **cancer** in those aged under 75 is almost twice as high among men as among women. For cancers considered preventable, mortality among men under 75 is 17% higher than among women.²

Recent background

In January 2016, the UK National Screening Committee (NSC) recommended against the introduction of a national prostate cancer screening programme in men over 50. Although UK NSC acknowledged evidence showing a benefit of prostate screening to reduce prostate cancer deaths by 21%, it argued that the major harms of treating men who incorrectly test positive still outweighed the benefits.³

In the 2016 International Men's Day debate in Parliament, Labour MP Paula Sherriff argued reticence by some men to visit a doctor was impacting on levels of early diagnosis of testicular and prostate cancer.⁴

¹ ONS, [Life expectancy at birth and at age 65 by local areas, UK](#)

² Public Health England, [Public Health Profiles](#)

³ [The UK NSC recommendation on Prostate cancer screening/PSA testing in men over the age of 50](#), January 2016

⁴ [HC Deb 17 November 2016, c485-6](#)

In response to a PQ in February 2016, the then Health Minister Lord Prior of Brampton confirmed that Public Health England (PHE) had carried out research into the factors that affect early diagnosis of various health issues, including hesitance to seek help:

PHE encourages local authorities to prioritise NHS Health Check invitations to individuals with the greatest health risk which includes older men.

PHE Social Marketing has also conducted qualitative research amongst older adults (aged 50+), including elderly men, on the factors that influence early diagnosis (including barriers to help seeking) for the development of our Be Clear on Cancer, Breathlessness, Inflammatory Arthritis and Blood Pressure campaigns. The findings of this work have been incorporated into the campaign strategies, messaging and local partnership activity for all campaigns.⁵

HPV vaccine for men and boys

A school based HPV vaccination programme to help protect against cervical cancer has been offered to girls aged 12-13 since 2008. In November 2015, following a review of the evidence, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) published a [position statement](#) recommending the introduction of a vaccination programme for men who have sex with men (MSM) aged up to 45, who attend genitourinary medicine and HIV clinics.

Since the recommendation, both the [Welsh](#) and [Scottish](#) Governments have announced that they will roll out vaccination programmes in line with the JCVI recommendations. In England, a pilot HPV vaccination programme was launched in June 2016, with the evaluation of the pilot expected to be published shortly.

At the time of the introduction of the vaccination programme for adolescent girls, the JCVI felt that vaccinating boys was unlikely to be cost-effective, as high coverage in girls would provide substantial herd protection for boys. However, due to strengthening evidence of the association of HPV with non-cervical cancers, this position was kept under review. In an interim statement in July 2017, the JCVI recommended against the extension of the national HPV vaccination programme to adolescent boys:

Each analysis concludes that with the high uptake levels consistently seen in the UK HPV vaccination programme there will be a substantial effect on HPV related disease, not just in the female population, but also indirectly in the male population. Modelling does predict some additional population health benefits from extending the programme to adolescent boys, with most of these benefits being seen in unvaccinated girls, and MSM.

Clearly there is benefit in vaccinating boys and the data considered by the Committee shows that the HPV vaccine is both safe to use in boys and generates comparable immunogenicity to that seen in girls. While it is clear that a programme to vaccinate adolescent males would provide those vaccinated with direct protection against HPV infection, and associated disease, all the evidence suggests that the risk of infection in males has already

⁵ [PQ HL5351 \[Health Services: Older People\], 4 February 2016](#)

been dramatically reduced by the girls programme and that these herd effects will continue to have a substantial impact. Therefore, most of the benefit in boys can be achieved through achieving high uptake in a girl's only vaccination programme.⁶

2.2 Suicide and self-harm

The suicide rate in Great Britain is over three times higher among men than women. Since 1981, the suicide rate among men has fallen by 20%. However, the suicide rate among women has fallen by 55%, meaning that the gender gap in rates has grown.⁷

The gender gap in 2016 was widest among those aged 25-29 (374 male deaths due to suicide compared with 85 female deaths) and age 80-84 (101 male deaths due to suicide compared with 29 female deaths).

Rates of emergency hospital admission for intentional self-harm are, however, 40% lower among men than among women.⁸

By the end of 2017, every local area is expected to have in place a multi-agency suicide prevention plan. Public Health England's guidance on [Local suicide prevention planning](#) lists "reducing risk in men" as one of the main priorities for local authorities, and gives examples and ideas on how this can best be achieved, including:

- using peer communicators so that men receive information and support from trusted sources
- undertaking outreach work in community and work-based settings rather than in formal health settings
- providing dedicated non-clinical spaces within which safe conversations can take place, such as the CREE (men's sheds) project in County Durham, and/or where short-term respite can be provided such as Place of Calm in East Sussex

The [2017 annual report of the National Suicide Prevention Strategy](#) set out some examples of local initiatives helping to address suicide prevention in young and middle-aged men:

Men remain the most at risk group and are three times more likely to die by suicide than women. Suicide is the biggest killer in men under 50 years old and a leading cause of death in young men. We must go further to address this inequality. Several campaigns and charities have been targeting specific male groups using messages and providing support in settings that are familiar and accessible to men. Initiatives such as the [Men's Sheds Association](#) and the joint campaign between the [Campaign Against Living Miserably \(CALM\)](#) and Lynx are raising awareness of mental wellbeing and male suicide.

We recognise that sporting communities are an important way to engage with young and middle-aged men; there is evidence that engagement via this route can be successful (for example, [State of Mind Sport](#) and [Andy's Man Club](#)). We will consider further engagement through the sporting community to build on the

⁶ JCVI, [Statement on Extending HPV Vaccination to Adolescent Boys](#), July 2017

⁷ ONS, [Suicide in the United Kingdom](#)

⁸ Public Health England, [Public Health Profiles](#)

good work already taking place around the country to address these issues.

To help drive home these messages, the NSPA ([National Suicide Prevention Alliance](#)), through the Samaritans, worked with its members to support the "[It's Okay to Talk](#)" campaign (in conjunction with Andy's Man Club) to mark World Suicide Prevention Day in 2016. Here they used links with sport to show that it's ok for men to talk about mental health issues and suicide.

[...]

The [Time to Change](#) national campaign led by Mind and Rethink Mental Illness aims to reduce stigma and discrimination relating to mental health, and is funded by the Department of Health, Comic Relief and the Big Lottery Fund. We recently announced further collective funding of £20 million to support the next phase of Time to Change which is placing more focus on addressing stigma within local communities and empowering them to develop their own local responses. To date, their work has seen a reported change in over 3.4 million people's attitudes to mental health.

2.3 Mental Health

Despite the gender breakdown of suicide statistics as reported above, men are generally less likely to be recorded as having mental health problems.

According to the Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing in England, men are around 35% less likely than women to have symptoms of a common mental health problem. One in eight men had symptoms, compared with one in five women.⁹ Men with symptoms were also less likely to be receiving any kind of treatment.

Just over 1 in 3 of those referred to talking therapies for common mental health problems in England is male.¹⁰

The previous section on suicide and self-harm sets out some of the initiatives in place to address specifically male mental health issues. The Government has also allocated funding to the [In Your Corner](#) campaign, targeted specifically at men:

£12 million has been allocated between 2016/20 in Time to Change to challenge mental health stigma, which has reached 750, 000 children and young people through social marketing campaigns and improved attitudes of over 4.1 million people in England. Their latest campaign, In Your Corner, is specifically targeted at men.¹¹

⁹ NHS Digital, [Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey 2014](#)

¹⁰ NHS Digital, [Improving Access to Psychological Therapies Report, January 2017 Final, February 2017 Primary + Quarter 3 2016/17](#)

¹¹ [PQ 7839 \[Mental Health: Males\], 12 September 2017](#)

2.4 Educational Attainment

Early years

In July 2016, the charity, Save the Children, published a report, [The Lost Boys](#). This argued that boys were falling behind in language and communications skills by the time they started primary schooling, with boys nearly twice as likely to fall behind as girls. Poor boys in particular should be the focus of attention, argued the report, because of “just how many are struggling.” The report’s main recommendation was for investment in high quality early education and childcare provision, led by graduates.¹²

General background information on available Government support for childcare in England can be found on the [Childcare Choices](#) website.

Schooling

Girls have outperformed boys at GCSE level for many years.

In 2017 the average Attainment 8 score for boys in state-funded schools was **43.4** compared to **48.7** for girls. This is equivalent to around one grade lower in five subjects on average or half a grade lower per subject. The new performance measures are explained in detail in this [blog piece](#), but, in short, Attainment 8 is an average points score based on a pupil’s best eight grades in particular groups of GCSEs. The maximum a pupil can achieve is 80 points if they get A* in eight qualifications that fit in these groups. One point difference is equivalent to one grade difference in one qualification.

The 2017 attainment 8 data uses the new GCSEs in maths and English with grades 9 to 1 replacing A*-G. This has resulted in a drop in overall performance and the gap between boys and girls increased on this measure from around 4.5 points in 2015 and 2016 to 5.3 points in 2017.

The other new measure, Progress 8, takes prior attainment into account and is the preferred measure of a school’s impact. It compares standardised results around a national figure of zero, with confidence intervals used to account for the possibility of random variation in results of individual school cohorts. In 2017 the average progress 8 score for boys was **-0.24** compared to **0.18** for girls. This gap is statistically significant and equivalent to just less than half a grade difference per subject for pupils from a similar academic starting point. It suggests that boys on average are not just starting secondary school with lower attainment levels, they are also making less progress than girls at secondary school.

In 2017 **39%** of boys and **45%** of girls achieved a grade 9-5 pass in both English and maths. This is the new pass level.¹³

¹² Save the Children, *The Lost Boys: How boys are falling behind in their early years*, July 2016,

¹³ DfE, [GCSE and equivalent results: 2016 to 2017 \(provisional\)](#)

Higher education

In May 2016, the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) published a report, [Boys to men: The underachievement of young men in higher education – and how to start tackling it](#).¹⁴

This said that “a lower proportion of entrants to UK higher education institutions are male than ever before and they make up less than one-half of the total”.¹⁵ This trend mirrored the experience of other developed countries. The report also identified higher drop-out rates for males, and, overall, lower degree performance.

However, it also noted that men still outperformed women in some key areas, including; entry to institutions typically requiring the highest grades; entry to research degrees; and entry to science and engineering courses. Male graduates did better than female graduates in terms of employment, and earnings, on some indicators.

Despite this, “young men were not performing as well in higher education as young women”. This, said the report’s authors, was “storing up problems for the future”.¹⁶ Suggestions for addressing the issues included:

- Targeting some widening participation funding to young men (and disadvantaged young men in particular).
- More universities setting targets for male recruitment.
- Altering modes of study and ways of teaching to reflect perceived differences in the way males (and those from under-represented groups generally) develop and study.

Government policy

In answer to a PQ of 27 October 2017 on the education of white working-class boys, Lord Agnew outlined what the Government was doing to address inequalities in this area, including:

- Continued investment via the Pupil Premium “worth almost £2.5 billion this year”. The largest group of eligible pupils for this additional school funding was white working class boys.
- Funding worth £72 million for the Opportunity Areas programme.
- Undertaking reforms to technical education pathways for post-16 students.
- Following the passage of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017, requiring higher education providers to publish application, drop out and attainment data broken down by gender, ethnicity and socio-economic background.
- Asking the Director of Fair Access for Higher Education to “focus universities on increasing the participation of white working class boys”.¹⁷

¹⁴ Hillman and Nicholas Robinson for the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI), ‘[Boys to Men: The underachievement of young men in higher education – and how to start tackling it](#)’, May 2016

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ [PQ HL 1982 \[on Education: Males\], 26 October 2017](#).

On the issue of boys' educational underperformance more generally, the 2015 Government said in March 2017 that it was:

Committed to tackling educational underachievement wherever it exists, not by targeting specific pupil groups but by setting high expectations for all pupils and building a self-improving school system offering world-class education to every pupil.¹⁸

2.5 Crime and justice

The Ministry of Justice published a summary of statistics on gender differences in the criminal justice system.¹⁹ A summary of points is given below:

- 4.5% of men were victims of crime in 2015/16 in England and Wales, compared with 3.8% of men.
- Men were 85% more likely to be victims of violent crime, but 50% less likely to be victims of domestic violence.
- 73% of those prosecuted, convicted and sentenced for crimes in England and Wales were men.
- 21% of male offenders were first-time offenders, compared with 35% of women. Re-offending rates were higher among men (26%) than women (18%).
- Men represent 95.5% of the prison population.

2.6 Rough Sleeping

The estimated number of rough sleepers in England has increased each year since 2010. The autumn 2010 total was 1,768 while the autumn 2016 total was more than twice as high at 4,134. The number of rough sleepers increased by 30% between 2014 and 2015²⁰ and 16% between 2015 and 2016.²¹ Of the 4,134 rough sleepers identified in autumn 2016, 88% (3,625) were men.

The Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) database contains information about rough sleepers in London who have been contacted by outreach teams or who have accessed accommodation for rough sleepers in London. CHAIN is used by people working with rough sleepers in London and it is maintained by St Mungo's. The data does not include people from "hidden homeless" groups such as those "sofa surfing" or living in squats, unless they have also been in contact with an outreach team, day centre or assessment hub.

Between April 2016 and March 2017 8,108 people were seen sleeping rough by outreach workers in London. 85% of the people seen were male. The CHAIN bulletin for 2016/17 records "The gender balance of rough sleepers has remained consistent with that seen in 2015/16."²²

¹⁸ [HL Deb, 30 March 2017, c79GC](#)

¹⁹ Ministry of Justice, [Statistics on Women and the Criminal Justice System Infographic 2015](#)

²⁰ This represented the biggest year-on-year increase since 2011.

²¹ DCLG, [Rough Sleeping statistics Autumn 2016 – England](#), 25 January 2017

²² [CHAIN Annual Bulletin 2016/17](#)

33% of those seen in London in 2016/17 had experienced time in prison, 10% had experience of the care system and 7% had served in the armed forces. In terms of support needs, the Bulletin states:

The most frequently reported support need amongst rough sleepers in 2016/17 who had received an assessment was mental health, at 47% (compared to 46% in 2015/16). Alcohol was the second most prevalent support need, at 44% (compared to 43% in 2015/16). Just over a third (35%) of people assessed had a drugs support need, which is a slight increase on the 31% in 2015/16. Just under a quarter (23%) of those assessed had no support needs identified, compared to 26% in 2015/16.²³

2.7 Recent changes to parental rights

A new presumption of shared parenting was introduced by the Coalition Government through the *Children and Families Act 2014*.

When a court is considering whether to make, vary or discharge a child arrangements order, which settles contact or residence, or both, the court takes into account a number of factors, such as the child's physical, emotional and educational needs, and their ascertainable wishes and feelings (considered in light of their age and understanding). Above all, the child's welfare is the court's paramount consideration under section 1(1) of the *Children Act 1989*.

Although the independent Family Justice Review, established by the Government, recommended no legislative change in its November 2011 final report,²⁴ the Government said in its response that "on careful reflection, the UK Government believes that legislation may have a role to play in supporting shared parenting and will consider legislative options for encouraging both parents to play as full a role as possible in their children's upbringing".²⁵

In putting forward the new legislation, the then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families, Edward Timpson, told the House that:

The perception of bias in the family courts is an issue for parents, and it can lead to proceedings becoming more adversarial ... It amends the Children Act 1989 to place a duty on the courts in cases where there are disputes about children's care to presume that the involvement of both parents in the child's life will further the child's welfare, provided that this involvement is safe ... We recognise that the court should already take account of the importance of a child's relationship with both parents, but there is currently no legislative statement to that effect. We want to reinforce by way of statute the expectation that both parents should be involved in a child's life, unless the child is at risk of harm or it is not in the child's best interests.²⁶

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ [Family Justice Review, Final Report](#), November 2011, p142

²⁵ Department for Education and Ministry of Justice, [The Government Response to the Family Justice Review: A system with children and families at its heart](#), February 2012, p66

²⁶ [Public Bill Committee \[Children and Families Bill\]](#), HC Debate, 14 March 2013 c289

The 2014 Act amended section 1 of the *Children Act 1989* to include the following sub-sections in regard child arrangement orders:

(2A) A court ... is as respects each parent within subsection (6)(a) to presume, unless the contrary is shown, that involvement of that parent in the life of the child concerned will further the child's welfare.

(2B) In subsection (2A) "involvement" means involvement of some kind, either direct or indirect, but not any particular division of a child's time.

and with the caveat that if "there is some evidence before the court in the particular proceedings to suggest that involvement of that parent in the child's life would put the child at risk of suffering harm whatever the form of the involvement", then the shared parenting presumption does not apply.

The amendments to the *Children Act 1989* took effect from 22 October 2014. However, it should be noted that the *Children and Families Act 2014* did not amend the existing position under the *Children Act 1989* that "the child's welfare shall be the court's paramount consideration".

Looking ahead, the [Conservative Party's 2017 manifesto](#) stated that "we shall explore ways to improve the family justice system. The family courts need to do more to support families, valuing the roles of mothers and fathers, while ensuring parents face up to their responsibilities".²⁷

On 19 October 2017, in response to the written parliamentary question "what the timetable is for the publication of the Government's Green Paper on family justice", the Minister for Justice, Dominic Rabb, told the House: "I am clear that we need to look across the entire family justice system to make sure it is delivering the best outcomes for children and families, and protecting its most vulnerable users. We are working to consider what further changes are needed and will bring forward our proposals in due course".²⁸

²⁷ Conservative Party, [Forward, Together – Our Plan for a Stronger Britain and a Prosperous Future](#), p73

²⁸ [PQ 107456 19 October 2017](#)

3. Parliamentary material

3.1 General debates

[International Men's Day](#), HC debate, 17 November 2016, cc.468-491

3.2 Health

PQ 16895 [[Health: Males](#)] 23 Nov 2015

Asked by: Campbell, Mr Gregory

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what steps his Department is taking to change attitudes to personal health issues among men.

Answering member: Jane Ellison (Department of Health)

We recognise that men do not seek medical help as often as women, and their health can suffer as a result and that changing their behaviours could reduce premature death, illness and costs to society. The Department does not have a separate policy approach to men's health as all policy subjects are expected to take into account equality issues as they are developed.

In 2013, Public Health England was established to protect and improve the nation's health and to address inequalities, working with national and local government, the National Health Service, industry, academia, the public and the voluntary and community sector. Local authorities are responsible for assessing the current and future health needs of their local population and targeting of interventions to reduce health inequalities. We have also given local authorities the flexibility to innovate and tailor services to meet local individual and population needs.

3.3 Mental health and suicide

Oral questions: [Male Suicide](#), HC debate, 11 October 2016, c.153

[Male Suicide and International Men's Day](#), HC debate, 19 November 2015, 241WH - 288WH

3.4 Education

[Educational Attainment: Boys](#), HL debate, 30 March 2017, 65GC – 81GC

- See also the [Letter dated 05/04/2017 from Viscount Younger of Leckie to Baroness Morris of Yardley regarding the link between poverty and boys' underperformance](#) as discussed during the debate on the educational underperformance of boys in state schools.

[Educational Performance: Boys](#), HC debate, 06 September 2016, 120WH – 140WH

PQ HL1982 [[Education: Males](#)] 26 Oct 2017

Asked by: Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what measures they are taking to improve the education of white working class boys.

Answering member: Lord Agnew of Oulton [Department for Education]

We set high expectations for what every young person can achieve, regardless of their background. Our ambitious programme of reform is already transforming the education landscape to enable our country to deliver the high quality education and training that every young person deserves.

There are 1.8 million more children in schools rated good or outstanding than in 2010, and the Education Endowment Foundation is working in hundreds of schools to expand the evidence of what works best to accelerate progress. Our continued investment through the Pupil Premium, worth almost £2.5bn this year alone, provides additional funding to support schools in raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. White working class boys form the largest group of eligible pupils and so benefit significantly from this extra support. The most recent gap index analysis shows that the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers is narrowing at both age 11 and age 16; this means better prospects for disadvantaged pupils.

We know, however, there is more to do. Our £72m Opportunity Areas programme will both create opportunities for young people in social mobility 'coldspots', and share effective practice across the country to ensure all young people get the opportunities they deserve.

The twelve areas represent a wide geographic spread; several, such as West Somerset, Blackpool and Scarborough, have high proportions of white pupils.

Our reforms to technical education, as described in our Post-16 Skills Plan, will create a system of high quality employer led routes to skilled employment which will help young people, particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, to fulfil their potential.

We are also working to widen access to Higher Education. The Higher Education and Research Act will require providers to publish application, drop out and attainment data broken down by gender, ethnicity and socio-economic background, shining a spotlight on those institutions that need to go further. The Director of Fair Access (DFA) for Higher Education enforces access agreements to promote disadvantaged student pathways into Higher Education and we recently asked him to focus universities on increasing the participation of white working class boys.

PQ 68564 [[Education: Males](#)] 28 Mar 2017

Asked by: Morris, Grahame

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to (a) raise the aspirations of and (b) address the educational attainment gap for working class boys.

Answering member: Edward Timpson [Department for Education]

This Government is determined to deliver an education system that works for everyone and ensures that all pupils – regardless of background, ethnicity or gender – have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. We are therefore unapologetic in setting high expectations for what all pupils will achieve.

Our curriculum and qualifications reforms will ensure that pupils receive a rigorous academic education that prepares them for further study and ultimately success in employment. Our new performance measures focus attention on the academic progress pupils make throughout secondary school, as well as on GCSE attainment.

We are encouraging schools to help pupils develop essential qualities that underpin success in education and beyond, such as resilience, perseverance and self-control.

Disadvantaged pupils attract the pupil premium, which is providing schools with £2.5bn of additional funding in the current financial year alone to raise the attainment of eligible pupils.

We are continuing to strengthen apprenticeships and technical education routes in partnership with industry, so that young people have a wider range of high-quality education and training options which will equip them with the skills employers need and value.

We are also equipping young people to make informed decisions on the education, training and employment options open to them. We are investing £90m over this Parliament to ensure all young people have access to high-quality careers advice – through the work of the Careers & Enterprise Company and a business mentoring programme for young people at risk of underachieving or dropping out of education.

In addition, we recently consulted on a number of measures designed to increase the number of good school places – including allowing the creation of new selective schools, lifting the cap on faith admissions and further drawing on the capacity and expertise of the universities and independent schools. In considering these proposals we are keen to understand how we can open up access to good school places for all pupils – particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. We are currently analysing the submissions to the consultation and plan to publish a response in the spring.

PQ 59364 [[Higher Education: Males](#)] 18 Jan 2017

Asked by: Rosindell, Andrew

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that working class, white males are better able to access higher education.

Answering member: Joseph Johnson [Department for Education]

We want to ensure that everyone with the potential has the opportunity to benefit from higher education, regardless of their background. In our most recent Guidance to the Director of Fair Access, we asked him to focus universities on increasing the participation of white, working-class boys in higher education.

We are also legislating to introduce a Transparency Duty on institutions which would require them to publish application, offer

and drop-out rates by socio-economic background, ethnicity and gender. Other measures in the Higher Education and Research Bill focusing on widening participation by under-represented groups include:

- o bringing together Office for Fair Access (OFFA) and Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) resources and expertise in the proposed Office for Students (OfS) to rationalise and improve delivery;
- o ensuring access and participation plans explicitly cover access, progression and student success; placing an overarching duty on the OfS to have regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity in relation to access and participation in all that it does; and
- o ensuring the Director for Fair Access and Participation has a clear role within the OfS in relation to access and participation activities.

PQ 56023 [[Teachers: Males](#)] 12 Dec 2016

Asked by: Smith, Royston

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to attract men into the teaching profession.

Answering member: Nick Gibb [Department for Education]

We value diversity in the workforce but want the best people in the classroom, regardless of their gender. Evidence shows that the quality of teaching is the single most important factor in determining how well pupils achieve. Our support for recruitment to initial teacher training (ITT) is mainly aimed at the secondary phase. We offer generous financial incentives including bursaries and scholarships worth up to £30,000 to attract the best graduates into the profession. We have also given schools the freedom to recruit and train their own teachers.

There have been 8,604 male entrants to postgraduate ITT in 2016/17 (32 per cent of the total). The proportion of entrants to secondary postgraduate ITT in 2016/17 that are male is 40 per cent, an increase of three percentage points since 2012/13. The proportion of primary entrants to postgraduate ITT in 2016/17 that are male is 20 per cent, a decrease of three percentage points since 2012/13.

PQ 45812 [[Pre-school Education: Males](#)] 19 Sep 2016

Asked by: Mackintosh, David

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the findings on the gender pay gap for early language attainment at age five in Save the Children's report, entitled The Lost Boys: How boys are falling behind in early years, published in July 2016.

Answering member: Caroline Dinéage [Department for Education]

The Save the Children report, The Lost Boys: How boys are falling behind in the early years, addresses the gender gap of boys falling behind in language and literacy in the early years. I would like to clarify to the Hon. Member that the report does not refer to pay.

The answer to this parliamentary question therefore sets out what Government are doing to support disadvantaged children regardless of background or gender.

The Government recognises a key part of raising the standard of education for all children is to ensure they receive a good level of development in literacy and numeracy before they start school at age five. This is why in 2010 we extended the free entitlement to 15 hours for all three and four year olds, and in 2013 introduced the entitlement for two-year-olds which has increased early education take-up for children from the most disadvantaged families. We have also introduced an early years pupil premium to help providers support the learning and development of children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework sets the prime areas of learning which early years providers must follow. This includes a focus on communication and language. The Early Years Foundation stage is published on gov.uk, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/335504/EYFS_framework_from_1_September_2014_with_clarification_note.pdf

The 2014-15 EYFS Profile results tell us that the proportion of children achieving a good level of development continues to increase – 66 % in 2015, compared to 60% in 2014 and 52% in 2013. The EYFS Profile results also show that more than 80% of children are reaching the expected communication and language skills by age five. A higher proportion of children eligible for free school meals are achieving a good level of development – 51% in 2015 compared to 45% in 2014. Although the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers is narrowing, we recognise there is still some way to go.

The quality of early education is improving, the numbers of qualified staff have risen, the numbers of graduates in the workforce continues to rise, and a record number of providers are rated good or outstanding, with 86% of providers currently on the Early Years Register judged good or outstanding for overall effectiveness at 31 March 2016.

PQ 40523 [[Higher Education: Males](#)] 27 Jun 2016

Asked by: McCartney, Karl

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, with reference to the report, Boys to Men: The under achievement of young men in higher education, published by the Higher Education Policy Institute in May 2016, what steps the Government is taking to increase (a) the level of achievement of young men in higher education and (b) male entry rates into higher education.

Answering member: Joseph Johnson [Department for Business, Innovation and Skills]

The Government is committed to ensuring that everyone with the potential has the opportunity to benefit from higher education, irrespective of their background or gender.

In the last academic year we saw record entry rates to higher education, including among those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In our recent guidance to the Director of Fair Access, we asked him to focus support on groups with the lowest participation rates, including white males from disadvantaged backgrounds. Universities expect to spend more than £745 million through access agreements agreed with the Director of Fair Access on measures to improve access and also success for students from disadvantaged backgrounds - up significantly from £404 million in 2009.

3.5 Families

PQ HL6563 [[Flexible Working: Males](#)] 18 Apr 2017

Asked by: Baroness Manzoor

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to tackle workplace discrimination; in particular, what assessment they have made of the case for more flexible working for men; and what steps they are taking to address issues which prevent men from undertaking a greater share of care work in the home.

Answering member: Lord Prior of Brampton [Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy]

The Government believes that increased opportunities for flexible working, including for men, will help to achieve full employment, increasing labour market participation among under-represented groups, and to close the gender pay gap. Flexible working can help families to achieve the right balance between the demands of work and home life and to decide how they will share responsibilities at home and at work.

Government has taken a number of steps to promote greater opportunities for flexible working. The Right to Request Flexible Working entitles employees with 26 weeks' service to request a working pattern which suits them and their employer. Shared Parental Leave enables working parents to share up to 50 weeks of leave including up to 37 weeks of paid leave in the first year of their child's life. We are committed to reviewing the impact of these policies in 2019 and 2018 respectively, once they have had a chance to bed in. In the meantime, as set out in the Government's response to the Women and Equalities Select Committee's report on the Gender Pay Gap, we will explore options for increasing communications activity around flexible working.

PQ HL5855 [[Sex and Relationship Education](#)] 21 Mar 2017

Asked by: Lord Northbourne

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of their decision to make sex and relationship education compulsory in schools, whether they will consider requiring all schools that have male pupils to recognise and promote the importance of the role of fathers in society; and what steps they are taking to promote responsible fatherhood and appropriate preparation of boys and young men for responsible fatherhood.

Answering member: Lord Nash [Department for Education]

All pupils, irrespective of gender, have the opportunity to learn about the responsibilities of fatherhood in non-statutory Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education or as part of the wider school curriculum.

Schools are free to draw on the non-statutory programme of study produced by the PSHE Association in planning their provision. The programme of study includes topics on the roles and responsibilities of parents and the value of family relationships. Issues relating to parenting skills are included for pupils at key stage 3.

Following the Government's announcement of 1 March about proposals for Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and PSHE, we plan to undertake a comprehensive programme of engagement with stakeholders about future provision in these areas. While we are not proposing to put content of the subjects on the face of legislation as this is too prescriptive and risks the legislation becoming out of date as the world changes, this process of engagement will enable us to get the balance of content right in guidance, enabling schools to design appropriate curricula. Regulations and statutory guidance will be subject to full public consultation later this year and the regulations will be subject to debate and vote in Parliament. Our plan is for schools to teach statutory Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education, and PSHE (subject to consideration and consultation), from September 2019.

PQ 68339 [[Parental Leave: Males](#)] 21 Mar 2017

Asked by: Lammy, Mr David

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of (a) financial considerations and (b) considerations of gendered working culture as barriers to fathers taking up shared parental leave.

Answering member: Margot James [Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy]

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has committed to undertake a review of the effectiveness of Shared Parental Leave and Pay in 2018.

PQ HL5362 [[Families](#)] 22 Feb 2017

Asked by: Lord Northbourne

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to address issues arising from family breakdowns, and the impact on male children of growing up in a household without a resident father.

Answering member: Lord Henley [Department for Work and Pensions]

The Government recognises the damaging impact of conflict between parents on children's outcomes. New evidence was published last year highlighting this link, and making clear that the presence or absence of parental conflict has a much greater impact on a child's outcomes than the structure of the child's family. Our child maintenance system encourages separated parents to collaborate and make family based arrangements where they can, working together in the interests of their child once they separate. Evidence shows that after separation where parents are able to take a collaborative, low conflict approach it is better for children's outcomes, including over the involvement of the non-resident parent where this is appropriate, whether this is the child's mother or father.

PQ 52198 [[Domestic Violence: Males](#)] 17 Nov 2016

Asked by: Campbell, Mr Alan

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much her Department has spent to support male victims of domestic abuse in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Answering member: Sarah Newton [Home Office]

The Government is committed to tackling all forms of domestic violence, and supporting all victims. The Government has provided over £30 million of funding for domestic and sexual abuse victims over the last three years. The majority of these services have been commissioned on the basis that the needs of all victims are met.

The Home Office has specifically funded the Men's Advice Line, which provides support and advice to male victims of domestic violence and the national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender domestic abuse helpline over the last three years.

4. Further reading

4.1 Mental health

[Over half of men have had suicidal thoughts](#), *Telegraph*, 28 September 2017

[Mind survey finds men more likely to experience work-related mental health problems](#), *Mind*, 9 August 2017

[It's time to talk about suicides among middle-aged men](#), *Independent*, 22 July 2017

- An article looking at the various 'societal issues' behind male suicide

[Boys treated for eating disorders up by more than a third in a year, latest figures reveal](#), *Independent*, 4 May 2017

[Telling young men to suppress their anger is a dangerous game – society must give them an outlet](#), *Telegraph*, 21 April 2017

- A piece by Charlotte Leslie [MP between 06 May 2010 - 03 May 2017]

[Men much less likely to seek mental health help than women](#), *Observer*, 5 November 2016

- An article about [a survey carried out by the Mental Health Foundation](#)

[Men twice as likely as women to have no one to rely on for emotional support](#), *Mind*, 30 June 2016

[Young gay and bisexual men 'six times more likely to attempt suicide than older men' research finds](#), *Independent*, 26 April 2016

4.2 Men's health

[Plan not to give HPV vaccine to boys causes concern](#), *BBC News*, 19 July 2017

[Cancer rates for women soar as they drink and smoke like men](#), *Times*, 3 February 2017

[Surge in aggressive prostate cancer cases](#), *Times*, 20 July 2016

- A report suggests that more men should be screened for prostate cancer

[Give HPV vaccine to boys to protect against cancers, experts say](#), *Observer*, 9 July 2016

[Experts call for warnings on all alcohol as men refuse to believe risks](#), *Guardian*, 13 May 2016

[Men miss out because doctors treat them like women](#), *Times*, 11 March 2016

- An article suggesting that treatments for breast cancers should be adapted differently for men

4.3 Homelessness

[Homelessness is a gendered issue, and it mostly impacts men](#),
Telegraph, 6 August 2015

4.4 Education

[How can we attract more men into London's Early Years workforce?](#)
Fatherhood Institute, 12 September 2017

[GCSE results 2017: Girls maintain lead over boys despite new linear exams](#), *Times Educational Supplement*, 24 August 2017

[A-level reforms may have helped boys achieve better results](#), *Guardian*,
17 August 2017

[A-level results 2017: Boys beat girls to top grades for first time in 17 years amid tougher exams](#), *Telegraph*, 17 August 2017

[Theresa May's Forgotten Pledge: How Does The UK Get More White Working Class Boys Into University?](#) *Huffington Post*, 6 June 2017

[The Lost Boys: how boys are falling behind in their early years](#), Save The Children, 2016

[Majority of white working class boys fail to get good GCSEs](#),
Independent, 9 November 2016

[Our schools are failing boys, which is bad news for Britain](#), *Guardian*, 6 September 2016

- Written by Karl McCartney [MP between 06 May 2010 - 03 May 2017]

[Why do more women than men go to university?](#) BBC News, 18 August 2016

University of Bristol, [Understanding the Gender Gap in Literacy and Language Development](#), 18 July 2016

[UK's university gender gap is a national scandal, says thinktank](#),
Guardian, 12 May 2016

Cambridge Assessment, [Gender Differences in GCSE](#), 20 October 2015

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, [ABC of Gender Equality in Education](#), March 2015

- This paper “tries to determine why 15-year-old boys are more likely than girls, on average, to fail to attain a baseline level of proficiency in reading, mathematics and science, and why high-performing 15-year-old girls still underachieve in areas such as mathematics, science and problem solving when compared to high performing boys.”

[Boys' Reading Commission final report](#), All-Party Parliamentary Group on Literacy, National Literacy Trust, 2012

- Report looking into the underachievement in reading amongst boys. It finds that this is caused by three main factors:

- The home and family environment, where girls are more likely to be bought books and taken to the library, and where mothers are more likely to support and role model reading;
- The school environment, where teachers may have a limited knowledge of contemporary and attractive texts for boys and where boys may not be given the opportunity to develop their identity as a reader through experiencing reading for enjoyment;
- Male gender identities which do not value learning and reading as a mark of success.²⁹

The report makes several recommendations to tackle these problems.

4.5 Men and families

[UK mums and dads are worst in developed world at sharing childcare](#), Fatherhood Institute, 12 June 2016

Livia Sz. Oláh, Rudolf Richter and Irena E. Kotowska, [The new roles of men and women and implications for families and societies](#), Families and Societies, 11 (2014).

Eloise Poole, Svetlana Speight, Margaret O'Brien, Sara Connolly and Matthew Aldrich, [Father involvement with children and couple relationships](#), Modern fatherhood, 2014

- A study of relationships within the family unit

Eloise Poole, Svetlana Speight, Margaret O'Brien, Sara Connolly and Matthew Aldrich, [What do we know about nonresident fathers?](#) Modern Fatherhood, 2013

- A statistical look at fathers who do not live with their children
Svetlana Speight, Eloise Poole, Margaret O'Brien, Sara Connolly and Matthew Aldrich, [Men and fatherhood: Who are today's fathers?](#) Modern Fatherhood, 2013

- A statistical look at fathers: whether they are biological or social fathers, where they live and who with and their economic status

[Gender roles An incomplete revolution?](#) British Social Attitudes 30, 2012

- A statistical look in the changes in attitude towards men and women's role in families

[Men in Families and Family Policy in a Changing World](#), United Nations, 2011

- A large document with a global perspective. Chapters 1 to 3 look at men in families and as fathers. This includes:

²⁹ [Boys' Reading Commission final report](#), All-Party Parliamentary Group on Literacy, National Literacy Trust, 2012

- Men, masculinities and families: changing manhood, manhood in crisis, transition to manhood
- Trends in engaging men in sexual and reproductive health
- Poverty alleviation strategies and men's roles in families
- Social policy implications for the United Nations, national Governments, local government, civil society and research
- Fatherhood and families
- Fathers and fathering, and other male family figures in different cultural contexts
- Fathering and children's development
- Fathering across generations
- Fathering and the work-family balance
- Mental and physical health of fathers
- Implications for social and family policy
- Fathers separated from their children
- When fathers hurt or do not help: domestic violence, drug and alcohol dependency and other problems related to men in families
- Fathering issues related to major social groups

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